

Unit Work Sessions/Biology

The Biology work session began in the E.E. O'Bannion Building, Room 102 at 10:00 a.m. The faculty members in attendance were Dr. Harriette Block; Dr. Alphonso Keaton; Dr. Cleveland Lane; Dr. Joy Marshall; Dr. Edward Martin; Dr. Gloria Regisford; Dr. Nathaniel Shelton, Dr. Seab Smith; Dr. Deirdre Vaden and Dr. Carla Whittaker. Two faculty members were absent. Dr. Brown was attending the American Society of Microbiology conference in Philadelphia and Dr. Burrs had car problems that would be resolved later in the day.

Dr. Keaton, the facilitator, commenced the session with a reminder to the attendees, regarding mandatory faculty and staff Roster forms for each semester from Fall 2007 to Spring 2009. Dr. Block also stressed that official transcripts and a current curriculum vita for each member of the Biology department must be on file. She further requested that everyone send her a copy of their updated curriculum vita, in Microsoft word format.

The mission statement was read by Dr. Block. We also examined the "Six question model and the Strategic Plan Update. This led to Dr. Marshall raising the question about tutorials for Biology majors. There was a consensus that our majors are not as well prepared when they enter PVAMU, hence we need to provide tutorials in the true sense of the word. Dr. Keaton suggested that student organizations, such as Tri-Beta, should be responsible for tutorials. Drs. Marshall, Vaden and Smith disagreed, both suggesting that formal tutorials should be done by the professor. Drs. Block and Lane reported that students are currently employed in the Biology department to provide tutoring to our majors; however this service is under-utilized except around exam times. It was also noted that students report about the lack

of tutoring for Biology in the library. In order to improve students' performance, Drs. Block and Keaton recommended mandatory formal tutoring by the professor for students who are doing poorly. Anyone attaining less than 75% on the first exam is required to attend formal tutorials. Dr. Regisford suggested peer tutoring as a non-intimidating format to help improve students' performance on exams.

Dr. Block speculated that the increased number of Biology students who are not performing up to par maybe due to two reasons: (1) the E.E. O'Bannion Building, which was designed to support academics, is no longer conducive to learning as it is no longer open after 7:00 p.m. (2) the General Biology courses (Biol 1015 and Biol 1025) were not effectively providing a good foundation to the students, and they need drastic modifications.

At this point, our Provost, Dr. Joahanne Thomas-Smith, and Dean, Dr. Danny Kelley, visited our work session. Dr. Block asked our visitors if anything is being done about extending the open hours of the E.E. O'Bannion Building, to allow students' access to study resources and facilities. Drs. Thomas-Smith and Kelley assuredly reported that while keeping the building open after hours is financially, the issue is being reviewed in higher offices.

Dr. Block emphasized that the General Biology courses will be modified for the 2010 academic year. The courses will have three sections of 32 students each taught by three different faculty members, instead of one section of 96 students. Moreover, assigned lectures and laboratory practicals must be complementary. Drs. Marshall, Regisford and Vaden suggested that these courses should provide a firm basic foundation in cell biology, so that the students could better handle upper-level courses such as Genetics, Microbiology and Cell

Biology. Dr. Lane informed the attendees that assessment has been done for graduating students and furthermore, assessment in the form of pre- and post-test will be implemented with the incoming Fall 2009 freshman class.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon with the promise that everyone present will be back for the afternoon work session. Dr. Keaton had made a prior commitment with a visitor to his lab and informed us that he will not be available to facilitate the afternoon work session after 2:00pm.

The afternoon session resumed at 1:50 p.m. with everyone in attendance except for Dr. Brown. We examined and revised our "Strategic Plan Update for Fiscal Years 2009-2013. (See attached). At approximately 2:00 p.m., Dr. Block said that Dr. Keaton had to exit the meeting and assigned Dr. Whittaker to complete the facilitator responsibility in Dr. Keaton's absence.

Drs. Block and Martin noted a few important issues as reported below:

(1) Dr. Cleveland Lane is not listed as Adjunct, but as a Lecturer.

(2) The Biology department provides leadership for the state, in terms of producing minority graduates who go on to professional schools. At least in the state of Texas, we are the top leaders in producing minority professionals. As a state supported school, we are the top producers across the country, and also the top producer of science teachers.

(3) There is a need to enhance the curriculum. For example, adding a Biology methods class and Biology for Teachers class at the undergraduate level.

(4) There should be a continuous goal which should be updated to meet the needs of the 21st century.

Dr. Block said that the main thrust is on updating the Biology curriculum to meet the needs of the university. The department has a social responsibility by having our graduates attend professional schools, Furthermore, we must also focus on using biological education to improve the environment, provide service learning etc. She also reported that there are two health courses that Dr. Daniels, director of the Medical Academy, teaches in the health department. She said that Dr. Daniels wanted to get Biology credits for those courses, but since they didn't have the BIOL code it was not possible.

Dr. Martin remarked that when the university's mission is supported, one must be accountable. This entails showing statistics of how the students move on to professional careers. For example, surveys can be done to track students. Dr. Block assured us that she has documentation on students who have moved on to professional schools, medical, pharmacy and graduate schools. A list is kept from every graduating class in Dr. Block's office. For example, Anthony Hayes has been accepted to pharmacy school and Britney Mott has been accepted to graduate school for this academic year.

A few important questions were raised by the session participants. What has been the major outcome achievement going back to 2004? How can we become more visible in the community? Campus clean-ups, visit nursing homes were some examples that were suggested. It also goes a little bit further because lots of non-biology majors are also educated and they transfer the knowledge they get from the program into the community and to other areas.

The session was adjourned after G-2 with the promise that we will meet at later dates to complete The Strategic Plan.