

**Teaching Focused faculty meeting**  
**Biological Sciences**  
**Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2017**  
**Stephens Room, 3503 Thomas Hall**

Meeting begins at 12:05

Jerry LeBlanc: Why don't we get started? Group's getting smaller.

Group: It is spring break.

Jerry: Is it spring break today?

Group: According to students it started Wednesday.

Everyone has the flu.

Jerry: I think we made great progress on the agenda during our last meeting so I hope we can chip away at it again today. There were no additions other than what I added this morning which is the strategic plan. And as a group, there are some things I would like you thinking about, so if there's time, we'll talk about that.

Ok, first on the list is Quantitative Biology, and the reason it's on there again today is because in a discussion between Kathleen and I it seemed there might be more to talk about after the last meeting. Jenny Campbell raised the topic for discussion and she's not here.

Group: She teaches right now.

Jerry: Ok, is there anything else anyone would like to talk about on that subject?

[No response]

Ok, next on the agenda is Majors and concentrations, which is another issue she's raised, so I don't know if it's something that any of you—look who's here!

Jenny Campbell arrives.

Jerry to Jenny: So we were just looking at the agenda, and it's basically the same, just items we didn't get to last time, and the first item was the quantitative biology class, and we put it on the list, where you aware of anything particular we should know about it?

Jenny: I just thought folks would be generally interested in hearing about it, and I don't have anything to tell you about it.

Faculty member: When is it supposed to be offered?

Jerry: Gavin Conant is supposed to teach it in Fall '17.

Group is uncertain about date.

Jerry: Bucky, do you know anything different?

Bucky: No.

Jenny: I think it might be Spring '18.

Bucky: Yeah, I hadn't heard that Gavin was teaching it in the Fall.

Jerry: Ok, I'll get clarification on that. [NOTE: Gavin plans to offer the course in Spring 2018.]

Jenny: When I was chair of this working group, I remember thinking one of the most important things was creating a class that students wouldn't hate. I feel like it's one of the most reviled classes on campus or at least our department, but we may have to wait and do that and get more faculty input.

Jerry: Certainly we should get together and with your expertise, look at it together.

Jenny: If we're going to make it required it needs to be carefully crafted.

Jerry: Ok, for our third item, [how to better serve students], Lisa is here. Would you mind?

Lisa Paciulli: Like many people said at the last meeting, I wasn't sure what the format of this meeting would be, so what I meant was, if you and Jane could tell teaching faculty what your perspective is, other than what's in our SMEs and FARs, just looking at what we do to serve students, how can we do that better.

Jerry: Moving right along—[group laughs], no, I will give that some thought, and talk it over with Jane for our next meeting.

Jennifer Landin is also here and her topic was 'job security in an age of politicization of biology/science—

Faculty member: And budget cuts...

Jerry to Jennifer: Can you take the lead on that?

Jennifer: Again, like some others I didn't know the format of the meeting, but many of us have been marching for about a month, it's become a new exercise at this point [group laughs] and I've been teaching students about some of these issues in my 105 class, things like gender identity, and luckily I don't get nearly as much backlash as I might expect, but I think some of that has increasingly, recently become a bigger issue...

Jerry: In the classroom or nationally?

Jennifer: Nationally. Again, I haven't had that much of an issue yet...

Faculty member: I have a personal example: My class 'Human Animal Interactions' was rated 1 of the 10 stupidest classes at NCSU by Art Pope.

Jennifer: My concern is that some of us have the potential to get targeted, and without tenure and no possibility for tenure, are there any kind of ideas in place for protecting—

Faculty Member: The integrity of these courses.

Jennifer: Yeah, the integrity of these courses, these faculty, is there anything that's already written-up, that's a standard? I know xxx taught large courses in environmental issues and was targeted by Duke

Energy because of her teaching about climate change and fossil fuels and she got fired. I guess I have some concerns.

Group: Can you clarify?

THAT's why she got fired?

Various members explain nature of her classes, 400 seat lectures, word got out about the subject matter and her contract was not renewed.

Jerry: I sympathize with you and your concerns, but you need to always remember is that your job as science teachers is that you teach science; do not voice your political views or teach science that's not really science, pseudo science, but I would guarantee that if you are doing your job properly, you would be supported by the department, the college, and the university, but I can't make any guarantees about powers above that (e.g., legislators). Again, if you're doing your job properly you shouldn't have any issues.

As it relates to that, I don't know if you got wind of this or not, but the university got concerned about faculty and staff representing the University in some way at political marches, demonstrations, etc. They are preparing a guidance document for faculty and staff, which mentions that you are free to participate in marches, but you cannot invoke the university in a manner that suggests the university is supporting you. [NOTE: these guidelines have been published since this meeting.]

Faculty member: I just want to echo what I think Jennifer is getting at, and that's that there is an intersectional nature with science and politics, and with many of the things we're seeing right now, so I think it's challenging to teach this subject well without mentioning all these other things. For example, my background in science is infectious diseases; I can't teach about those completely without talking about access to care, and all the things that impact access to care, yet those can be charged issues.

Jerry: Definitely charged, and you shouldn't shy away from charged issues. If ever an issue like that arose...(inaudible).

Jennifer: Say a student comes in and complains I've been promoting a certain gender topic, is there a procedure that you would then come to me and look at my slides, or my tests, and see if I'm teaching anything other than how gender develops?

Jerry: I don't think there's an actual process, does anyone know?

Group: Hearing by the faculty senate.

Faculty ombuds.

As long as you stick to the facts you should be fine. I've run into this with the subject of evolution.

Group agrees stick with the facts, stick to the science.

Jerry: When I had students that complained about the actions of a faculty member. I would meet with the student and the faculty member independently, and if necessary, with them together. I've always been able to resolve the issues.

Anything else on that? Ok, our next bullet is Betty's, 'Content and skill-building progression throughout curriculum'. Betty?

Betty: Well, what I was thinking of, and some of us have discussed this amongst ourselves, is we expect seniors to have certain fundamental knowledge and skills; some would be the same for some majors, and others would be different for other concentrations, and it would be good to know those so we can ensure we're including some of those in our courses. There might be an opportunity to build on those and I'm not sure what we even know what people teach for a prerequisite—there may be some way to have more knowledge about curriculum as each student progresses.

Jerry: So how do you accomplish that?

Betty: That's my question.

Jenny: That's why we have this quantitative biology class. It something many thought students needed.

Betty: See that's what I mean—what do we expect people to know about quantitative biology?

Faculty member: You just need an outline of the course.

Betty: Well we need an outline of what we expect the students to know and then address those in our curriculum.

Jerry: We can go through course syllabi and see what the expectations are.

Betty: We can do that with a lot of courses [mentions 180 and 181 amongst others], and determine whether it's fulfilling the needs of the next course. I feel bad because I have no idea what we expect our seniors to know.

Jenny: Well each major has outcomes, and those are all assessed.

Betty: But I don't know what those are.

Faculty member: Do you know any other universities that do that?

Discussion of curriculum and skillsets:

[Vision and Change document](#) was used to map out what we should be doing.

Betty: That's pretty general, too, though.

[Request for further explanation of Vision and Change]: Doc that came out of a AAAS (The American Association for the Advancement of Science). They put us into rooms and gave us the charge of identifying what biology students should know, and all these people, big think tank just came up with white documents and published 'Vision and Change' that goes through different standards targeted at different levels and their support.

Same way, same topics?

Not really about topics, but more about skills. Quantitative analyses, hypothesis-building, communication skills, critical thinking, etc. Skills that are very broad and can be applied in many different ways to curriculum, to decipher what students should be leaving with.

And it does have some content, too, but nothing too specific.

It spans across the disciplines that would be taken by micro students, bio students, genetics students, a lot of it was about data visualization, the main thing everyone could agree on.

That's true in any field.

I think a lot of this info exists, but maybe the challenge is how do we share it in such a way that's meaningful.

Jerry: I agree, we have the annual assessments for the various programs and within that assessment what we expect students to learn, and maybe we could go through and pull out the commonalities from all of our curriculums. We can do that. Right Kathleen? We can do that!

Faculty member: Instead of us finding out what we want them to go away with, we're now drawing on what we're currently teaching, therefore they should have this. But now I think about what you said, about identifying who are we as a department, and we can't know what we hope our students to take away until we know what we want to be. What do we currently teach and how do they relate to the...(in audible), and now we change our courses to match, might be a good start,

Faculty member: There should be some commonality, and then tackle what's different and specific with the majors.

Faculty member: Good plan, but we gotta maintain flexibility so we don't teach the same things, we'd become like a big online university.

Also so advanced classes don't have to go back and reteach everything...

Faculty member: Another helpful thing to consider are classes we lose when people retire; if we know the role, we know what to do with that class when the person who's been teaching it leaves.

I suggest we do go through the program assessments and identify what's there now in common and then we say ok this is sort of the product of a year or longer of bio at NCSU; where do we go from here? What are we missing, what do we want to augment, what do we want our students to have that we don't see here, then what do we do with that information. Revitalize courses?

And then how do we approach assessment?

Jerry: It could also be an opportunity to consolidate the assessments to a common document, rather than having everyone doing their own thing.

Faculty member: This could go to the strategic plan, if this could fill potential holes.

Jerry: Yeah, absolutely, I think they come together very nicely.

As for the Strategic plan--for those of you who have read the goals, to those who have contributed to the goals, thank you. I see a lot of new items here and I think they go along perfectly with our strategic plan.

For the first set of bullet items---I probably said this when I sent it out , but I looked at the university plan, then I looked at the college plan, then I thought about ours, and I just thought it was important, if we're going to get buy-in at some point, that our plan is relevant to theirs, so that's how I organized it.

Next step then is to now provide a strategy; ok we have this item, how do we approach it? What are our landmarks for this goal and where do we want to be in 5 years as it relates to this goal? I'm going to ask who would be willing to serve on a committee and perhaps divvy up responsibilities. [Show of hands, majority in support.] Ok, I'll send a note out. I'd like to advise and give you my opinion about how best to approach these things. That's all I have. Does anyone else have anything else?

Faculty member: How about something that has to do with digital resources? You want me to add it?  
Ok, I'll do that.

Jerry: Well most importantly I have a party coming up, and I understand people have busy schedules, but I hope to see many of you for some food, a beer and maybe we can talk about something other than NC State and science.

Meeting ends at 12:40 p.m.