CPR Report Submitted!

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5	**Institution:**	Columbus State University
6	**Review Status:**	Non-triggered Review
7	**Degree level:**	Bachelors
8	**Degree acronym:**	BA, BS
9	**Degree/Major:**	BA & BS in Biology
10	**CIP Code:**	26010101
11	**College, School/Division:**	College of Science
12	**Department:**	Department of Biology
13	**CPR Plan followed:**	Yes
14	**Future institutional plans for program:**	Expand and enhance
15	**Supplemental file:**	BA-BS Biology Exec Sum.doc
16	**File Type:**	MS Word
17	**CPR Web site:**	aa.colstate.edu/assess/cprtbl.htm

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE BS AND BA DEGREE PROGRAMS IN BIOLOGY

The following narrative describes the results of a comprehensive review of the two degree programs offered by the Department of Biology at Columbus State University (CSU): the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science Degrees. This review has been organized using procedures developed at our institution. Our findings are, for the most part, based on data from Fall Semester of 2000 through the Spring Semester of 2005.

Because our BS and BA degrees are similar in many regards, we have chosen to review them in together and point out differences in the two tracks whenever necessary. The fact that we were allowed to combine the number of BS and BA graduates to determine whether or not our program would be "triggered" substantiates this decision.

Finally, although we now offer a BA Biology plus Teacher Certification degree, it was not implemented until the Fall Semester of 2005. Consequently, this program is not reviewed herein.

Major Findings of the Program's Quality and Productivity

To facilitate the analysis and interpretation of the Biology Program at CSU, our strengths and weaknesses are listed as bulleted items below.

Strengths

- All full-time faculty have terminal degrees
- Faculty have a broad range of interests across the discipline.
- Faculty are professionally active and engaged, as is reflected by their publications and reports and the honors that they and their students have received.
- Use of part-time faculty is minimal.
- Advising is taken seriously and is evaluated in conjunction with instructional loads.
- Faculty and students interact outside the classroom, through clubs and organizations, senior research projects, contract-based research, and international, field-based courses.
- Our curriculum is comprehensive, exposing students to all areas of biology, and providing students with an opportunity to match their degree program to particular career goals.
- Each student receiving a BS is required to complete an undergraduate research project. BA students have this option.
- Students have ample opportunities to take international, field-based courses.
- Both minority and female students who have traditionally been poorly represented in the sciences are well represented in the program.

- Our students increased their performance significantly on a major field assessment test between their sophomore and senior years.
- Virtually all recent graduates are either successfully employed or pursuing advanced degrees.
- We assess the quality of our program annually through our strategic plan and outcomes assessment, and we use this information to improve our program as necessary.

Weaknesses

- We have experienced an unprecedented increase in majors, while the number of faculty in the department has remained basically constant.
- Many of our incoming students are poorly prepared for the academic rigor of our programs. We believe this accounts for our low retention rate.
- Due to the rapid increase of students, a shortage of space is imminent.
- Library holdings in biology are scant, making research by students and faculty more difficult.
- Faculty development opportunities are constrained by limited funding.
- Minorities are underrepresented on our faculty, although the number of women faculty members has improved.

The summary conclusion about the overall strength or weakness of our program's quality and productivity is that it is above average.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality

- Increase the number of faculty in our program. According to the Dean of the College of Science, we are the most understaffed department on campus. A departmental analysis of faculty needs substantiates this assessment.
- Encourage administrative support for the higher academic standards we have established for our program.
- Support university recruiting efforts toward students who have the potential to succeed academically in a university environment.
- Add faculty who will recruit and advise students pursuing the BA Biology with Teacher Certification, as these secondary science education students are now required by the state to receive a degree in a science major.
- Re-double efforts to establish closer ties with our alumni, many of whom are in a position to contribute to the enrichment of our program.
- Provide adequate funding for faculty development.
- Continue the annual assessment of our program and modify our program in light of the results.

Recommendations for Improving Program Productivity

During the past five years, the number of students enrolled in our program has doubled, whereas the number of faculty has remained about the same. Though our program's productivity could be enhanced by continuing to increase enrollments, these additional students will eventually pay the price for this choice by suffering through larger class sizes, fewer interactions with faculty and, ultimately, a decline in achievement. We prefer to improve our program, our productivity, and the quality of opportunities for our students by adopting higher admission standards. Higher standards will benefit our program in two ways. First, students accepted into the program will have the skills and educational background necessary to succeed in what are, admittedly, academically demanding courses. Second, such standards are conveyed by teachers and counselors to high school students, which encourage students at that level to work harder and prepare more fully for the time when they will enter our program. Ideally, a long-term goal of higher education should be to provide all students who wish to obtain an advanced degree the opportunity to do so. In reality, many of our students are unprepared for the academic rigor associated with the attainment of a degree, especially in science. By raising our standards we can, we believe, help contribute to an atmosphere that encourages greater student achievement.

For these reasons, we would prefer to slow growth while enhancing the quality of students and student experiences in our program. Many of our faculty were initially attracted to CSU because of its modest size. Indeed, one of the strengths of our department is the individual attention that we are able to give our students. Without changes, this will become increasingly difficult to do.

Conclusions about the Program's Viability at CSU

The programs offered by the Department of Biology are quite viable. We have a large number of majors whose numbers continue to grow, we have a student-centered faculty who are engaged in the discipline and highly productive, and we produce graduates who are well-prepared to either further their education or pursue a number of different careers.

Program Improvement Plan

The approach we have chosen to improve the quality of our program is to raise our admission standards and recruit additional faculty, two initiatives which we have already begun to do.

Summary Recommendation

In order to maintain the quality of our program, we will need the continued support of the administration to provide additional faculty for our department. We have, in addition, reached a point at which classroom, laboratory, and office space is becoming a problem. The clock continues to tick…