Summary of Decisions – Undergraduate Programs – MAY 2017

Undergraduate program and course issues are addressed throughout the academic year as needed. Our primary assessment exercise occurs during a one-day faculty in-service Planning and Assessment Workshop held at the end of the school year. This workshop was held 8 May 2017, 8:30a – 3:00p

Information used to support assessment and planning:

Instructor reporting on student performance in classes used to evaluate progress on the Learning Objectives for WATS majors.
IDEA surveys for individual courses and department summary
2017 Graduating Senior surveys and exit interviews with Department Head
Review of enrollment, graduation, and placement for WATS majors: 2005-2017
Degree requirements and 4-yr plan for revised major: Mgt. and Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems
Revised degree requirements and 4-yr plan for major in Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences

Principal Decisions

1. Science Foundation

Our specific focus in May 2017 was on Science Foundation Classes required in the MRAE and FAAS programs. Prior to the workshop, faculty teaching required classes in the majors were asked to review the appropriateness and application of science foundation classes in their instruction. Specifically, they were asked to provide examples of when and how principles of chemistry, biology, physics, and calculus were used.

Because some of our undergraduate majors transfer in after their freshmen or sophomore years, completion of a full slate of science foundation prerequisites can present a formidable barrier. Hence, the discussion focused on the essential principles used in upper level classes for the major and whether prerequisite classes in chemistry, biology, physics, and calculus are needed.

Based on a review of course content in required classes, and input from faculty advisors (Belmont, Gaeta) and Department Head exit interviews, the faculty decided to drop Physics I (with lab) and Chemistry II (with lab) from required Science Foundation Classes in both MRAE and FAAS. It was determined that this would not degrade the content or quality of later classes and would allow majors to graduate in a reasonable amount of time. This action does not require R401 approval and will be implemented immediately.

We discussed STATS 3000 (currently required for both majors). Concern has been expressed about the theory/application balance in this class and the fact that students find parts of it tedious. It was agreed that the course is necessary and Dr. Hammill volunteered to explore whether an alternative class based in QCNR might be possible.
2. Courses

WATS 3910 *Climatology & Hydrology for Western Watersheds*: Dr. Jin will offer this NEW class, which is similar to one he taught when his appointment was split with the Dept. of Plant, Soils, and Climate. The course will have applications geared to WATS students and will be required for MRAE majors.

*Capstone I & II: Management and Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems*: A two semester course will be presented for the first time AY 2017-2018. The fall semester will cover professional topics and an introduction to the design projects. The spring semester will focus on the design project. Existing courses used to provide capstone experience are either no longer offered or not specifically directed to providing a capstone experience.

3. Program Assessment

The faculty agreed to adopt a revised set of Learning Objectives for MRAE and FAAS. The linkage between objectives and courses required for the major were updated. The current version will be posted on the WATS Assessment web page.

Submitted by

Peter R. Wilcock
Professor and Department Head