

CALS Academic Planning Council

6201 Microbial Sciences Building

February 7, 2023, 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Present: Bradley Bolling, Todd Courtenay, Noah Feinstein, Glenda Gillaspay, HuiChuan Lai, Jamie Nack, Patrick Masson, Francisco Peñagaricano, John Shutske, Michael Thomas, Thea Whitman, Michael Xenos.

Not present: Jed Colquhoun, Mehdi Kabbage, Sean Schoville.

Ex Officio: Doug Reinemann, Mark Rickenbach, and Karen Wassarman.

Associate Dean, Karen Wassarman, called the meeting to order at 1:01pm.

1. Jan 17, 2023 meeting minutes for approval

Without revision, minutes were approved and will be posted on the APC website.

2. Forest and Wildlife Ecology Academic Program Review (2nd discussion)

Eric Kruger, Department Chair of Forest and Wildlife Ecology, began the discussion by emphasizing the gratitude for the work of the review committee in this process and noted that the department is happy with the review.

Next, Eric answered the questions developed during the first discussion.

- a. The direct admit and some other features of our graduate programs are simple. Typically, there is a relationship established and cultivated between the PI and the graduate student candidate. Then the student, who is likely to be recruited, is encouraged to apply. All faculty members, without any exceptions, do the same. We usually have an even flow of recruitment during the year with a big Fall recruitment event – this has been working especially well since hiring a talented and energetic Graduate Program Manager.

We also admit students without establishing relationship with any faculty, mostly in the Fall. This group of students is forwarded to all the faculty for review. In general, those students who do not make direct contact with our faculty do not end up joining our graduate student community. Then the question is does this create an unequal opportunity to join our community? We feel that for a student to enter our programs, they must know what they must do, and the best way is to connect with our faculty. We are open to recommendations in this regard.

Remaining 2022-23 Meetings: Feb 21, Mar 7, Mar 21, Apr 4, Apr 18, May 2, May 16

Chair: Glenda Gillaspay

Division 1: Francisco Peñagaricano ('23) Animal and Dairy Sciences | Bradley Bolling ('25) Food Science

Division 2: Thea Whitman ('24) Soil Science | Sean Schoville ('25) Entomology

Division 3: Michael Xenos ('23) LSC | Noah Feinstein ('25) CES

Division 4: Jed Colquhoun ('23) Horticulture | Mehdi Kabbage ('24) Plant Pathology

Division 5: Michael Thomas ('23) Bacteriology | HuiChuan Lai ('24) Nutritional Sciences | Patrick Masson ('25) Genetics

Extension: John Shutske ('25)

Academic Staff: Jamie Nack ('23) | Todd Courtenay ('24)

Question: The question is about students who do not have prior experience or family background with higher education and do not have the knowledge base to know to reach out to faculty members. What opportunities do these students have to be exposed to the faculty?

Answer: There are several faculty members who are working extensively to expand their network. One example is targeting and expanding on Native American community, so we are making progress.

Eric also discussed the alternative, the rotation model of Plant Pathology for example, and explained he does not feel this is achievable due to resource limitations. The discussion followed with an elaboration of how the rotation model works in different places and the practical issues with this model.

- b. The question to grow the Forest Science BS major was brought to the faculty and the group was enthusiastic to grow the program. One plan for increases was a plan to recruit students from the Milwaukee suburb high schools. Our connection with Engineering is another way. Former Engineering students make up a high proportion of our Forest Science major as they are attracted to remote sensing and the technological side of our program. Therefore, creating additional courses for them, using technology and remotes sensing, is something to explore.

Question: Are there resources, financial or expertise, in the college to help with marketing and advising to improve enrollment?

Answer: Dean Gillaspay mentioned that the college is planning to hire a student recruiter and an outreach coordinator in the next year. The two will work to identify what we need to do to increase enrollment.

Next, the idea of targeting transfer students from various external institutions and the need for more flexibility in our majors to accommodate this group of students was discussed.

As efforts to increase recruitment, the discussion included increasing flexibility of prerequisite courses, working on simplifying the language used in program website to help prospective students with navigating the process, offering large entry courses to take advantage of strategic recruitment windows, and offering course twice per semester and increasing the waitlist to better understand student interest and potential bottlenecks.

Question: About accreditation and the criteria you must meet, do students have to be in separate courses to meet each of the competencies?

Answer: No, competencies can be met in any way within the curricula.

Todd Courtenay made a motion to consider the program review complete and Michael Xenos seconded. APC unanimously voted the Forest and Wildlife Ecology Academic Programs review complete.

Note: After the vote, there was a recommendation made to the Dean and that was to consider standard application review rather than the rolling admission process currently in practice.

Academic programs under review:

- Food Science – BS
- Food Science – MS
- Food Science – PhD
- Food Science – PhD minor

Michael Thomas, the chair of the review committee and Professor in Bacteriology, began the discussion by introducing the members of the committee. He, then noted that only the academic programs were under review and how this was different from the review of the department 10 years ago.

Undergraduate program – the review revealed that Food Science is the most respected undergraduate degree in Food Science one can get. It has very strong ties with food industry represented by a vibrant internship program. Michael also talked about department support of their program including the undergraduate program committee, which does the assessment, the ambassador program, and the undergraduate fellowship program. Department is very active in working on ways to diversify the student population.

A challenge of the undergraduate program noted by the review committee was how to grow the program – the numbers of undergraduate students has plummeted without any clear explanation. Other challenges mentioned include the rigidity of the program that prevents students who do not start work on the major in the first year to complete the program in 4 years (despite having a 4-year curriculum).

Graduate Program – the program is going through a major change proposal and working to codify the progression of students through the program. One major issue was that students are taking prelim exam very late in their time to degree, for example one 7th year student who met with the committee had yet to take their prelim exam. The recommendation was to change language to be stronger about when the prelim should occur.

Program changes are required to prevent a high number of exceptions as a result of a number of required courses no longer being taught due to retirements, and also needing to use courses taught outside the department.

The graduate student recruitment was limited and driven by funding, but the department is aware of the issue, and it is working with college to resolve it.

Overall, the review depicts a very positive department that is moving in the right.

Question: The 7-year PhD student, was that an outlier or somewhat a norm? And is that connected to the fact that the courses have not been taught for several years?

Answer: The understanding is that time to degree is most dependent on which laboratory students are in and how PI's run their labs rather than course availability.

APC members commented on the low number of students who participated in the review as contradictory to the welcoming sentiment so confidently stated in the review.

Given the low students participation, it was recommended by the APC for the review committee to get additional feedback from more graduate students, such as by a survey or additional meeting.

Questions for Department Chair:

1. Does the department have other data sources to learn how graduate students feel about the program? For example, it was suggested they might have climate survey data to help address the low turn-out for the meeting with the review committee.
2. The APC members noted an apparent tension between the inflexibility of the Food Science BS curriculum and the desire to grow the program. Please comment on this apparent conflict and discuss what actions are being taken to regrow the Food Science BS enrollment.
3. Graduate recruitment was described as “limited and driven by funding”. Please comment on the recruitment process and how these practices may be contributing to difficulty with recruiting a diverse pool of students.

4. Center for Dairy Profitability – move from CALS to Division of Extension D. Reinemann

Associate Dean Doug Reinemann informed the council that the Center for Dairy Profitability is moving from CALS to the Division of Extension.

Michael Xenos made a motion to move the Center for Dairy Profitability from CALS to the Division of Extension and Noah Feinstein seconded. APC voted unanimously to approve the move.

Meeting adjourned at 2:20pm.