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Context For Planning

A major strength that benefits the Biology Department is being housed in the new Kindschi Hall of Science, a building that the Biology faculty helped design to meet its own specifications. Working in this custom-designed facility will greatly enhance the department's ability to foster student learning and collaborative scholarship for years to come. The Biology Department finalized major reviews and substantial program revisions to its undergraduate Biology and Natural Resources Management majors in 2015 and 2016, and will be fully implementing the revised programs during the current strategic plan time period. As a result of the major revisions to the undergraduate Biology and Natural Resources Management curricula, the department will need to carefully assess the impact these changes will have on program and student outcomes and student learning objectives. If the desired effects of these curricular changes are not obtained, the department needs to be ready to institute corrective revisions promptly. By updating its undergraduate curricula, the Biology Department is well-placed to continue providing a high-quality education through state-of-the-art programs to students in its undergraduate Biology and Natural Resources Management majors. Students in the Biology Department are involved in research, internships, service learning, and international experiences through their association with the Biology Department, and these are activities we will continue to encourage. The Biology Department recognizes and rewards its faculty for excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service. Multiple University awards attest to the teaching excellence of the Biology faculty. The Biology faculty is actively engaged in scholarship, and includes a substantial number of exemplary scholars with national and international reputations. Both undergraduate and graduate students in the Biology Department also are actively engaged in scholarship with faculty mentors. The Biology Department faculty provides substantial service to the college, university, and community, and faculty members occupy leadership roles in all of these service areas. The service provided by the Biology faculty is a source of substantial synergism with both teaching and scholarship and is a collective strength that the Biology Department should not relinquish. Even though the department successfully hired seven tenure-track faculty members from 2009 to 2016, as a result of resignation, retirement, and administrative reassignment, the total number of tenure-track faculty in the Biology Department actually declined during this time period, from 35 in 2009-2010 to 32 by the end of 2015-2016. As a result, the Department remains dependent on affiliate, visiting, and adjunct faculty to instruct a substantial number of course sections, especially in its introductory lecture and laboratory courses. This also was identified as a challenge in the 2003-2008 self study, and is an area of continuing concern to the department. For this reason, the department needs to continue its efforts to increase and then maintain the number of tenure-track faculty so that it is better able to support the substantial teaching, scholarship, and

service duties expected of its faculty. The strategic plan detailed below was developed based on the specific challenges identified through the unit-level and programmatic self studies completed in April, 2016, and focuses on actions to address those challenges. Those things the Biology Department does well, as detailed in the unit-level and programmatic self studies, will continue to be done well, even if they are not specifically represented by formal strategic plan objectives.

Mission

The Biology department offers undergraduate programs in Biology and Natural Resources Management and a graduate program in Biology. The Biology department is an inclusive learning community that engages in critical inquiry extending scientific knowledge and practices to foster engaged citizens, and mentor creative and competent professionals in the biological and natural resource sciences.

Vision

The Biology department will provide students with theoretical and practical skills by offering a rigorous and challenging curriculum rooted in intensive field and laboratory courses. We will encourage creative and critical thinking by providing opportunities for independent research projects both inside and outside of the curriculum. In order to do this, we recognize that we must support faculty and students to be engaged in scholarly pursuits. We will foster an atmosphere where student learning, discourse, discovery, and reflection are encouraged throughout the curriculum. By the time undergraduate or graduate students finish our program, they will be competitive applicants for employment or admission to professional or graduate school in the biological or natural resource sciences.

Values

The Biology department values: 1. A broad, challenging, and current curriculum featuring intensive field and laboratory courses. 2. Opportunities for faculty, graduate, and undergraduate research experiences both inside and outside of the classroom. 3. An engaged, diverse and responsive faculty, dedicated to excellent teaching, scholarship and service at all levels. 4. Faculty and student involvement in education, scholarship, community engagement, and professional service related to the scientific aspects of biological, ecological, and environmental sustainability.

Objectives

Strategic Priority Areas	Outcomes				
	A. Grand Valley's learning environment is personal, challenging, and transformational, supporting excellent academic programs and co-curricular opportunities.	B. Grand Valley is diverse and inclusive.	C. Grand Valley has mutually beneficial relationships, partnerships, collaborations, and connections with local, state, national, and world communities.	D. Grand Valley supports innovative teaching, learning, integrative scholarly and creative activity, and the use of new technologies.	E. Grand Valley strategically allocates its fiscal, human, and other institutional resources.
Strategic Priority Area 1. Actively engage learners at all levels.	<p>1.A.1</p> <p>BIO and NRM undergraduate programs will implement advising plans to improve student advising at all levels. 100% of undergraduate majors will receive advising instruction in introductory courses (NRM 150, BIO 210), and advising impact will be assessed in all BIO and NRM capstone</p>			<p>1.D.1</p> <p>The Biology MS Program will develop a curriculum that supports students in a variety of sub-disciplines, and these course offerings will be stabilized so that routinely offered courses meet or exceed minimum enrollment requirements. To achieve this goal, the BIO MS Program</p>	<p>1.E.1</p> <p>To increase the competitiveness of and enrollment in the Biology graduate program, the BIO MS Program will seek sources of consistent external funding to provide additional assistantship or research support for our graduate students.</p> <p>Baseline: The BIO</p>

sections.

Baseline:

Baseline:
All students enrolled in NRM 150 receive specific advising assistance through a required assignment (approximately 75 NRM majors/year). We seek to expand this to BIO majors (approximately 150/year) by instituting a similar activity in BIO 210. Programmatic advising impact is not currently being consistently assessed in the capstone courses, but this will be instituted in 2016-2017.

1.A.2

will review and revise the graduate program curriculum to keep it current and aligned with current Graduate School policies.

Baseline:

The current BIO MS Plan dates to 2000, with no major changes since 2004.

1.D.2

To help students develop the skills and capacities needed to succeed in their upper-level coursework, we will revise BIO 120 in parallel with the inquiry-based approaches being developed

MS Program currently is allocated a total of 8 internal graduate assistantships. We seek to augment this number with additional externally funded assistantships and other sources of research support to improve program attractiveness to students, allow for program growth, and maintain competitiveness with other similar programs.

BIO and NRM undergraduate programs will encourage students to participate in high-impact experiences in BIO/NRM 399, 490, 499, study abroad courses, and non-credit-bearing research and work experiences with a goal of increasing participation in these activities from current levels. These experiences will be in addition to the high-impact experiences that all students receive through SWS, Capstone, and upper-level BIO and NRM laboratory courses.

in BIO 121 and BIO 210.

Baseline:
BIO 120 has not had a major revision since 2003.

Baseline:

For the period from spring/summer 2009 through winter, 2016

Approximately 13.4 % of BIO and NRM undergraduate majors completed one or more additional high-impact experiences through BIO/NRM 399 (2.7 %), 490 (4.9 %), 499 (3.4 %), and study abroad courses (2.4 %).

The percent of students involved in non-credit-bearing research and work experiences is currently not quantifiable.

Strategic Priority Area 2. Further develop

2.A.1

exceptional personnel.

In support of the CLAS goal to increase the credit hours taught by tenure-stream faculty by 10%, the Biology Department will increase number of full-time, non-reassigned, tenure-track faculty from 32 to 36, and maintain at least 36 full-time, non-reassigned, tenure-track faculty in the department thereafter.

Baseline:
 Baseline: 32 current full-time, non-reassigned, tenure-track faculty (does not include faculty with majority joint appointments with CMB, or

faculty reassigned to administrative roles in CLAS, BCOIS, or Graduate Studies).

Strategic Priority Area 3. Ensure the alignment of institutional structures and functions.

3.B.1

The Biology Department will increase number of faculty members qualified as Inclusion Advocates from 4 to 6, and maintain at least 6 faculty members as approved Inclusion Advocates thereafter.

Baseline:
Four faculty members now serve as Inclusion Advocates

Strategic Priority Area 4. Enhance the

4.A.1

4.C.1

4.E.1

<p>institution's image and reputation.</p>	<p>At least 75% of NRM graduates are employed or pursuing advanced degrees in a natural resources-related field within 5 years of graduation.</p>		<p>The NRM undergraduate program will establish an external professional advisory council that will meet annually to confer with the faculty to ensure the program continues to reflect current needs in NRM-related fields.</p>		<p>The NRM undergraduate program will apply for accreditation as a professional natural resources program through the Society of American Foresters.</p>
	<p>Baseline: Based on a recent alumni survey, approximately 70% of NRM graduates are employed or pursuing advanced degrees in a natural resources-related field.</p>		<p>Baseline: The Natural Resources Management program faculty determines that the program reflects the current needs in NRM-related fields.</p>		<p>Baseline: The Natural Resources Management program is currently not accredited, putting it at a competitive disadvantage with other natural resources programs regionally and nationally.</p>

