

MSU Departmental Assessment Update Spring 2007

Department: Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology

Department Head: John Sherwood

Assessment Coordinator: Norm Weeden

Date: Summer 2007

Degrees/Majors/Options Offered by Department

Bachelor of Science in Plant Science

- Crop Science Option
- Plant Biology Option

Bachelor of Science in Biotechnology

- Plant Systems Option

Bachelor of Science in Horticulture

- Horticulture Science Option
- Landscape Design Option

Assessment and Outcomes Progress 2006-2007—Department of Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology

The five areas of undergraduate instruction in the Department of Plant Sciences and Plant Pathology (PSPP) (horticulture, landscape design, plant biology, crop science and plant biotechnology) each have separate assessment plans. Over the last year progress has been made toward the implementation of each of the plans, with the most changes having been made in horticulture and landscape design as a result of feedback from students and recent faculty hires.

The undergraduate curriculums in both horticulture and landscape design were both thoroughly examined during a two-day retreat of the relevant faculty last fall. Direct comparisons were done with horticulture and landscape design programs at similar institutions throughout the United States in order to identify gaps in our coverage and streamline the presentation of some material. A number of significant changes were made both in the sequence of courses and the actual content of courses. A new course has been added in computer graphics and plans are being developed for a new design course and one or more summer courses. Some of these revisions represent a further modification of changes made last year. A phase implementation plan was developed to provide for a smooth transition. It is felt that the new curriculum will better meet the interests and needs of the students as well as more appropriately reflect the expertise of the faculty.

PSPP is charged with teaching the two general genetics courses on campus (BIOL 301 and PSPP 305). A survey was taken last summer of the departments requiring or recommending a genetics course for their undergraduate majors in order to ascertain whether BIOL 301 (Principles of Genetics) and/or PSPP 305 (Practical Genetics) were fulfilling the needs of the students. In general, the feedback was positive, although some departments had little knowledge of the content of PSPP 305, and BIOL 301 was occasionally reported to be somewhat difficult, containing material beyond the needs of certain curricula while omitting other more relevant material. In spring semester '07 an attempt was made to allow students and departments to determine which genetics course better fit their needs by offering the two courses at the same time and with the same text, so that students could easily switch from one to the other after comparing syllabi and course goals. At least initially it appears that for many students in Fish and Wildlife, Exercise Science, Horticulture and certain other majors, PSPP 305 was a much better fit for their needs than BIOL 301.

We have continued to annually assess advising using the survey form developed previously. Analysis of the responses indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the advising the students are receiving.

Respectfully submitted,
N.F. Weeden, Chair,
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee