



Life Science Department News

February 26, 2001

Instructional Reorganization

A series of meetings took place during fall 2000 with the associate deans and faculty leadership to reexamine MCC's instructional leadership structure. From these meetings, Gail put together a memo for President Christiansen recommending instructional reorganization possibilities. It recommends a new position as Director of Distance Learning to manage the overwhelming growth in our distance learning program. We currently have over 2,100 students enrolled in distance learning – this number exceeds the current enrollment at Red Mountain. Presently, Doyle Burke is running the distance learning program under an extended contract.

The reorganization proposal will also expand the associate deans from the current four to six by adding an AD for Social and Human Services (previously under Rodney) and an AD for Academic Services (incl. library, counseling, service learning, curriculum, and comm. ed.). Thus, the Associate Deans will include:

- Arts, Communication and Humanities - Rodney Holmes
- Science Math and Technology - temporary
- Business and Information Technology - temporary
- Social and Human Services - temporary
- Academic Services - unfilled
- Red Mountain - Joe Pearson

In addition, there will be four directors

- Extended Campus - Jo Wilson
- Center for Teaching and Learning - Naomi Story
- Research and Planning - Andrea Greene
- Distance Learning - temporary

Thus, there are five open positions. If the President approves the recommendations made, Gail expressed the desire to phase in the new positions rather than a sudden change. For us, that probably means that Carol Achs will be asked to come out of retirement for at least a year to continue as our AD.

These recommendations have not been approved by the President yet, but I wanted to get your feedback. As Dept. Chair, I have found Carol to be very supportive and easy to work with. Because she fully intends to return to retirement once a permanent AD has been hired, I personally see no problem with her continuing to serve us. Let me know if you have any concerns about Carol Achs or the instructional reorganization.

Graduation

Graduation this year is May 18. As usual, we will gather in cap and gown for this event. One new feature is that all Adjunct Faculty are encouraged to join us for the procession and commencement activities. I think Adjuncts were previously invited, but the encouragement of the department may have been lacking. It is my sincere hope that all will feel welcome to join us for this interesting and sometimes moving event.

Withdrawal Forms

New Withdrawal forms are being distributed. The redesign is in part to emphasize our need to keep

track of every withdrawing student's last date of attendance. This is necessary to comply with VA requirements for veterans benefits. So don't forget to keep up with your attendance records, so you can accurately record this information on the drop forms. Otherwise, the drop procedures are the same.

I do however think that we as a department should talk about one aspect of our withdrawal policy, the punitive F. We all know that it is the student's responsibility to initiate the withdrawal paperwork and that we must grant a W (or Y) if requested by the student. We can not refuse to withdraw a student who requests one. Apparently, there is much variation in our department regarding policies for granting withdrawals when a student stops coming to class. Some faculty give F's for students who have stopped coming to class relatively early in the semester without requesting a withdrawal, whereas others routinely grant W's to these students. I have listened to several students explain that they thought they were going to be withdrawn, but that they ended up with an F. It seems that we are penalizing a student rather harshly for failing to complete a form. I do not understand the rationale for failing a student who stops coming to class (even toward the end of the semester) and hope that we can develop a policy to treat these students fairly. What do you think?

New Fossils

I attended the Tucson Gem, Mineral and Fossil Show a couple of weeks ago and bought some fossils for the department. They include a Mississippian Age crinoid, a Cretaceous turtle skull, and a Jurassic shrimp. I intend to make a fossil display in one of the upstairs display cases. Come by to see them if you are interested.

Sherman Forbes - LS Advising Liaison

Last week I met with Sherman Forbes who will be the liaison from Advising to the Life Science department. He was helpful in explaining many of the different degree requirements, and I hope I clarified our changes in prerequisites. He demonstrated all of the online transfer and degree information. If you have advising questions, contact Sherman. He is a recent transfer from PC and will be very helpful for our department.

Peggy's BIO 100 is a WebCT Exemplary Course

Peggy Johnson has won yet another award. She has been recognized for having developed a WebCT Exemplary Course. She has been invited to apply to present at the WebCT conference in June. Peggy, we are all proud of your accomplishments. They are the product of so much hard work and creativity. Congratulations Peggy!

Microscopes

Apparently, we are having some ongoing problems with microscope maintenance by our students. Would all of you lead instructors look into this issue for your courses. It would also help if each individual instructor would ensure that students are cleaning and handling the microscopes properly.

Student Assessment of the College Environment SACE

Last year, about 1700 randomly selected students completed the student counterpart to the PACE survey. The final report from this study is now available. The results generally indicate that they students are happy with the instruction that they receive and facilities, but that they are unhappy with the parking. I have a master copy from which we can make copies for anyone who desires a copy. I encourage you to examine the results for your selves.

