

PROGRESS REPORT

Working Group Name: Life Science First Year Program – Transition of BIMS to CAS

Working Group #: 13

Chair: Tim Scott

Date: February 14, 2022

Update on Actions Taken Since Last Report:

This is the initial report. An introductory meeting with all members of the working group was held on February 8. All members of the working group were in attendance. The convener (Dr. Louchouart) presented a power point presentation with the working group charge and a proposed vision and mission. A long discussion ensued on the “existence” of a common general curriculum in life sciences and the lack of much flexibility in changing the core requirements of the first year. The representative of the Galveston Campus (Department Head of Biology) shared that they recently implemented a 1st year common curriculum for 4 degree programs in life sciences. That campus developed two required courses that provided an overview of all the life science degrees linked to the first year and an opportunity for community building. The working group discussed how such a first-year experience should not be called “meta-major” since it didn’t lead to a discrete major but should probably be modeled after the First Year Life Science program at North Carolina State University (<https://departments.sciences.ncsu.edu/lsfy/>)

Part of the discussion also involved a clarification of the vision being focused on the success of students from recruitment to graduation in the life sciences.

The group subdivided the future work into a set of five sub-groups and the co-conveners would call volunteers by email in subsequent days. The sub-groups are formed and the group assignments with broad tasks to answer are presented in appendix.

Also in appendix is the work performed to identify shared required coursework in the first two semester for degrees that will be in the College of Arts and Sciences. This mapping of overlap might be of use when the sub group starts discussions on the potential partner programs/degrees in other colleges that might be associated with a first year program. Degrees in other colleges with substantial overlap in first year courses with the degrees that will be in CAS include: Animal Science-Science Track, Biochemistry, Genetics, Entomology, Forensics & Investigative Sciences, and Nutrition. All of these also support many pre-professional students similar to BIMS and BIOL.

Next Major Issue to be Addressed:

The sub working group dedicated to evaluating the administrative and leadership structure of the unit will work in close collaboration and coordination with the similar subgroup in working group #17 (Interdisciplinary Studies).

Similarly, the group will need to address how to transition the BIMS program to the unit for Interdisciplinary Studies with as little impact to current students as possible.

The advising structure for these programs will need to be identified quickly, especially with respect to the management of the first-year life science (FYLS) program. This group will need to coordinate with Dr. Ann Kenimer's working group on centralized advising to make sure the proposed structure is integrating the concepts and approaches of centralized advising.

Problems or Barriers Encountered and Solutions Identified:

No major barrier encountered yet other than defining the structure and advising of the FYLS.

Deliverables Completed:

The assignment of sub working group and charge letter have been completed. A draft of an organization structure is presently being shared with the sub group on leadership/administrative structure.

Timeline for Completion of Remaining Deliverables:

Upcoming deliverables and anticipated dates:

February 25 – Draft recommendations regarding the administrative organization of the unit for FYLS (with a proposed name) will be submitted to SIC for review

March 11 – Recommendations regarding a way to move forward the life sciences programs and BIMS into the unit for interdisciplinary studies, and the advising organization will be submitted to SIC for review