

Biology Department Expectations for Professional Faculty

The Mission Statement of the college:

Augustana College, rooted in the liberal arts and sciences and a Lutheran expression of the Christian faith, is committed to offering a challenging education that develops qualities of mind, spirit and body necessary for a rewarding life of leadership and service in a diverse and changing world.

The Mission statement of the department:

The mission of the Biology Department is to help undergraduate students develop into biologists. Our students are challenged to learn both the content of biology as well as to learn, through their own experience, what it means to inquire, communicate, and reason as a biologist. We strive to help our students become life-long learners and informed citizens who purposefully reflect on and explore their vocation and who they want to become.

The purpose of this document is to clarify the Biology department's interpretation of the college's mission in terms of expectations and standards for professional faculty. All colleagues should read the relevant section of the faculty handbook (Section 4.5, Chapter 5) on professional faculty advancement. Please note that in all cases, the faculty handbook is the official policy of the college. Faculty are encouraged to use the Faculty Welfare Committee's preparation documents and [website](#).

Although departments may vary in terms of their interpretation of specific types of activities and availability of resources, departments are not free to establish criteria that conflict with the letter or spirit of the handbook. What follows, therefore, is not so much a discussion of policy, but rather of departmental culture and emphasis. This document addresses departmental expectations for promotion, and is intended to serve as a guide for the evaluation of professional faculty in the Biology department.

Teaching and Advising.

The Biology department holds the achievement of excellent teaching to be the *highest and best expression of our institutional values*. The work of developing qualities of mind, spirit, and body in our students is by far the most important work of the college. This work is the core of both the college's and the department's mission. *We seek, therefore, to hire and retain faculty who value teaching above all other professional aspirations.*

The handbook discusses guidelines for the evaluation of teaching in terms of instructional delivery, instructional design, content expertise, and course administration (Faculty Handbook Ch. 3). The evaluation of teaching, as laid out in the handbook, is based on the evidence of classroom performance drawn from various sources (e.g., colleague observations, colleague evaluations of syllabi, assignments, exams, labs, course assessment data, and other course material, interviews with students, and IDEA reports).

The biology department places a high priority on the development of scholarly teaching, a practice that we see as two-fold. First, scholarly teaching is connected to and uses the literature on teaching and learning to inform practice. Note that scholarly teaching, by itself, does not require faculty to contribute professionally to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), but rather that faculty become intelligent consumers of that literature. Second, scholarly teaching is evidence based. Faculty should be able to provide *significant evidence of student learning in their classes*. What are your goals and objectives for each class? What are your students learning about biology in your classes? What are they learning about themselves as learners or potential practitioners of a vocation? *How do you know they are learning these things?* The department does not mandate that this assessment be done in a particular way. Different courses will certainly benefit from different kinds of assessment. Both qualitative and quantitative measures can be useful. Faculty members are responsible for constructing their own strong, evidence-based, case for student learning in the context of specific course goals and objectives for their

classes. The department recognizes that this is a large and time-consuming task. We expect faculty to apportion their energies towards, campus service, and public service in a way that does not conflict with (or better still augments) the central goal of scholarly teaching.

The Biology Department plays a strong role in guiding professional faculty in their development as teachers. The department chair and an assigned departmental mentor provide written feedback based on in-class observations at least once each academic year (more optimally once a term, but time constraints do not always permit this). By the time a colleague is up for their first formal review, all or nearly all of the tenured colleagues in the department should have observed and evaluated his/her teaching. A colleague's yearly departmental mentor will be happy to discuss problems or issues that arise in teaching and the mentor should be considered a good first source for information about the department's teaching expectations.

In the months before the formal review, professional faculty will be asked to share a statement of teaching philosophy, syllabi, exams, summary IDEA reports, and assignments with tenured department colleagues for review. College policy indicates that the original IDEA forms are the property of the faculty member. Those forms must be shared with Faculty Welfare Committee, but need not be shared with the department chair or tenured colleagues (though they may be shared at the candidate's discretion). College policy does not require that the summary IDEA data be shared with tenured departmental colleagues, *but it is the long-standing practice of the department that this information be shared.* This information is critical, as it allows tenured department members to put favorable or unfavorable anecdotal comments they may have heard from students into a context of a more complete assessment of student responses. As a final form of assessment, the chair, in consultation with the candidate, will interview selected students about the candidate's teaching at least before the formal review. It is the obligation of the department chair to make any departmental concerns about a professional faculty member's teaching known to that colleague as soon as practically possible.

Candidates for promotion should demonstrate their strengths in the classroom in the same manner as a tenure-track person. The department expects that candidates for promotion or formal reviews will demonstrate continued growth and investment in teaching. However, professional faculty are expected to be able to "chart their own course" with respect to the development of excellent scholarly teaching. The Department Chair will provide annual reviews with a call for feedback from the tenured faculty through the professional faculty's first formal review. Prior to that first formal review, in the third year, the whole Department will be expected to participate in the annual review process. Following the first formal review, annual reviews will occur each odd year of service through the second formal review. Professional faculty colleagues are encouraged to make full use of the college's resources available for faculty development in teaching.

The department recognizes that good teaching means more than just good student evaluations. We value colleagues who are willing to investigate, develop, and assess new pedagogical models and styles of instruction, while keeping student welfare and learning as the ultimate goal. We also recognize that students can be resistant to new and unfamiliar pedagogies. We support faculty engaged in the assessment of new pedagogies, even those which may be initially unpopular with students, so long as faculty members remain centered on student welfare and learning and continue to take student concerns seriously.

The department requires that all faculty construct their courses in a way that supports our shared curricular goals. This is especially important in our core classes (Becoming Biologists, General Zoology, Cell Biology, General Botany, Genetics, and Senior Inquiry (SI)), but is significant throughout the curriculum. Faculty should have a solid working knowledge of IRIS (Inquiry and Reflection in the Sciences) goals and be able to demonstrate how their classes implement and/or support these goals in addition to the College-wide Student Learning Outcomes. Best practices may also include being informed by the Vision and Change curriculum (AAAS) and recommendations of other professional societies. See the departmental Moodle site for more information on the department's curriculum and IRIS (<http://moodle.augustana.edu/course/view.php?id=2878>).

The department stresses that it is the responsibility of each faculty member to build a portfolio of evidence that

documents their development as a reflective and scholarly teacher who catalyzes real learning in their courses. While other faculty can provide guidance and advice to their peers, the motivation to innovate, assess, and reflect upon classroom practice must come from each colleague. Within the broad guidelines above, faculty members are free to develop, assess, and justify their own teaching styles and methods that are consistent with the overall curricular goals of the department.

The Biology Department has always stressed excellence in student-centered advising and mentoring as an important criterion for professional faculty formal review. Faculty in the biology department are expected to lead a **student-centered career**. We recognize the deep relationship between classroom activities and a student's interactions with faculty outside the classroom. *Our future as a college rests on our ability to provide student-centered advising and mentoring*. Knowing how to read the college catalog and navigate through the general education requirements isn't enough. Excellent advising is far more than just assisting students with scheduling issues. Excellent advising involves a working knowledge of a student's (ever changing) goals and values, as well as serving as a catalyst for vocational and sometimes even personal reflection.

This task goes well beyond the list of assigned advisees. Sometimes our most important mentoring work occurs with students in our classes or with students who choose to meet with us informally. This is a deeply rewarding task greatly valued by our students. We recognize that mentoring relationships include heavy investments of time whose product cannot easily be quantified; however, we conform to the College's ethos that one-on-one relationships built between faculty and students are often the most cherished product of an Augustana education. Because our department has among the highest major student to faculty ratios on campus, *faculty must specifically allocate considerable time and energy to student-centered advising and mentoring*. The department expects that professional faculty will demonstrate excellence as an advisor and mentor, and that they continue to develop their advising and mentoring skills over time.

Faculty should provide evidence and have the flexibility in choosing the most appropriate evidence to build their case for effective advising. Examples of evidence may include:

- Senior Survey data comparing individual data to that of the Departmental and the College averages
- Results of a focus group of advisees run by a departmental colleague/mentor
- Data from a survey where advisees assess your work as an advisor
- Providing a checklist of various advising related activities demonstrating knowledge of advising (e.g., do you know how to use Starfish, do you know where to refer advisee for mental health issues vs sexual harassment issues, who in the dept is a good advisor for specific post-graduate areas, what forms do students need to transfer credits to Augie)

It is the long-standing practice of the department to support faculty who make significant investments in student-centered advising and mentoring. All professional faculty have an administrative load that includes additional advisees (usually 10 advisees for every credit of administrative load).

Administration

Professional Faculty have a component of their load assigned to administrative duties in service to the Department and College. These duties range from logistic work to increased advising loads. Using the guidelines in this document, the Chair in consultation with Departmental members will work with Professional Faculty to assign administrative duties that best fit with the candidates skill set and needs of the Department.

Below are three examples of different administrative loads for Professional Faculty currently in the Biology Department.

IRIS and Advising Coordination

- Student enrollment (major declarations, advising assignment, senior inquiry)
- IRIS curriculum

- Program assessment
- Advising (additional load)

Cadaver Coordination/Pre-medicine major Coordination

- Procurement and return of cadavers for school year and summer academy
- Lab safety-formaldehyde testing
- Creating rosters for fall and winter term cadaver
- Keeping supplies stocked and equipment in working order
- Working with other classes on campus to visit the lab and demonstrate cadaveric anatomy
- Summer academy-cadaver dissection course
- Advising (additional load)
- Tracking med school admissions
- Pre-med meetings (fall and spring-juniors, winter freshman and soph)
- Pre-med advisory board coordination
- Travel with students to med school open houses (ex. U of Iowa Pre-Medicine Conference)

Student Services Coordination

- Recruiting and Admissions Liaison
- Tutoring Coordinator (Individual and Drop in)
- Alumni Services and Networking (e.g., homecoming open house)
- Advising (additional load)

Campus Service

The college policies on the evaluation of campus service are in Sections 3.3.1.1.4 & 4.5 of the faculty handbook. Campus service includes, but is not limited to:

- Serving as a Departmental mentor
- Service on Department and campus committees.
- Service on Faculty Council.
- Serving in student recruitment activities.
- Serving as a peer-reviewer of faculty.
- Participation in FYI, honors, or off-campus/study away programs.
- Advisor or guest speaker for a student groups.
- Outside-of-Department representative on faculty searches
- Involvement in assessment planning or procedure.

Beyond mentoring and active engagement with student welfare, all faculty members are expected to invest in the life and work of the department. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to share pedagogy, advising/mentoring, and research ideas with their colleagues. Engagement in the life of the department includes regular meeting attendance, participation in curricular discussions, other departmental subcommittees, interviewing job candidates, as well as full participation in assessment activities and the advising of student clubs.

Community Service

Standards for evaluating community service are laid out in Sections 3.3.1.1.4 & 4.5 of the faculty handbook. Community service includes all *uncompensated* activities where disciplinary or teaching expertise is used to benefit the public. Recent examples from our department include:

- Board membership for other schools and colleges.
- Invited programs for community groups, schools, churches, or civic organizations.

- Unpaid consulting/assessment/environmental management.
- Community service for non-profit organizations.
- Participation in state and local science fairs

The biology department recognizes the value of this work but it is the least critical for professional faculty. In addition, our departmental demands for excellence in teaching, administration, and service may make a significant record of public service difficult to obtain.

Other opportunities, such as scholarship in a specific biological discipline or research program, a professional faculty member may engage in, but are not required. These kinds of activities should be considered only after fulfilling duties of teaching, advising, and administration