Program Name: Biology (Pre-Physician's Assistant Track)

Assessed by: Jeff Goff, Dept. of Natural Sciences

Date/Cycle of Assessment: Submitted on 12/19/2019;
Reporting cycle of January 2018 – December 2018

Mission Statement:

The Malone University Department of Natural Sciences exists to engage students in the study of God's majesty and character by exploring His handiwork as it is revealed in Nature, both animate and inanimate; to promote the wise and thoughtful stewardship of the natural resources He has entrusted to us; and to encourage students to demonstrate God's love in their respective communities by using the knowledge and skills they acquire here.

Program Goals:

- Students should comprehend the central concepts of biology and chemistry, the underlying assumptions of biological knowledge and chemical knowledge, and be able to employ the methods of inquiry commonly utilized by practicing biologists and chemists at a level sufficient for entrance into graduate school, professional schools, and other biological vocations (Stems from Malone Educ. Goals A4, D1, and D3).
- Students should become proficient in solving biological and chemical problems using both quantitative and qualitative approaches and in analyzing / interpreting data generated by experimental protocols commonly employed by practicing biologists/chemists (Stems from Malone Educ. Goals C3, D4, and D5).
- Students should be able to apply the principles of Christian Stewardship to biological practice and interpret biological and chemical phenomena within a Christian worldview (Stems from Malone Educ. Goals D2, E1, and E5).
- Students should develop an enriched understanding of the nature of human identity, development, and behavior through a study of human anatomy and physiology. (Stems from Malone Educ. Goal A3)

MALONE UNIVERSITY ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT (See Appendix for Raw Data and Detailed Analysis)

Department: *Natural Sciences*
Program: *Biology (Pre-Physician's Assistant Track)*
Assessed by: *Jeffrey M. Goff - Dept. of Natural Sciences*
Time Period Covered: *January 2018-December 2018*
Submission Date: *12/19/2019*

Program Intended Learning Outcomes (PILO)	Means of Program Assessment & Criteria for Success	Summary of Data Collected	Use of Results
Demonstrate the capability of integrating data and assessing phenomena within a Christian paradigm (Departmental Outcome A).	1) Average cumulative score $\geq$ 12; minimum cumulative score of 8; no individual component score of 1 on the Faith and Learning Assessment Instrument as scored by the associated rubric.	Average composite score = 15.92; minimum composite score = 10; all individual component scores were 2 or higher.	Average composite score, all individual composite scores, and all individual component scores met the departmental criteria for success. No changes to curriculum deemed necessary.
Demonstrate a comprehension of the central concepts of chemistry including the major theories and laws which govern chemical phenomena (Departmental Outcome B).	1) Mean score no lower than 0.5σ below national mean and no individual score lower than 1.5σ below the national mean on the ACS Gen Chem II Exam when administered as a post-test. 2) Average Cohort score on ACS Gen Chem II Exam should show at least a 70.0% improvement over the average cohort score when used as a pre-test.	1) Mean score on the ACS Gen Chem Exam is 36.07 (-0.16σ). This year, only one student failed to meet the -1.5σ criterion with a score of -1.54σ. 2) Class average on ACS Gen Chem pre-test is 18.30 giving strong evidence of student improvement (97.1% improvement in score from pre-test to post-test).	This year, the class average met the –0.5σ criterion and we had only a single individual score that failed to meet the –1.5σ criterion. Although the single individual score is disappointing, it is an improvement over last year when 5 students failed to meet the individual score criterion, and the class average has improved as well. Although several reasons were listed in the appendix in support of the fact that results on this instrument need to be used "with a grain of salt", we are encouraged by the improvement. The improvement over the last 2 years might possibly reflect the introduction of the new, alternative "Zoo Chem" option for Zoo & Wildlife Biology majors. Over the next 2 to 3 years, the efficacy of this curriculum change should become more conclusive. The department has opted to postpone any remedial chemistry course development until this 2 to 3 year time window is complete. The ACS Gen Chem II pre-test scores, when compared to the post-test scores, are extremely strong evidence that our students are improving as a result of our freshman chemistry sequence. The department has concluded that whether or not our students enter below the national average, they show significant improvement in content knowledge as a result of this course sequence. STEM readiness scores for this cohort suggest that only 35% of the class was "ready" for Chem 131.

Demonstrate an understanding of the relationships between structure and behavior of the chemical elements in their various forms and combinations (Departmental Outcome C).	1) Mean score no lower than 0.5σ below national mean and no individual score lower than 1.5σ below the national mean on the ACS Organic Chem Exam. 2) Mean score no lower than 0.5σ below national mean and no individual score lower than 1.5σ below the national mean on the ETS chemistry exam Organic sub-category.	1) Mean score on the ACS Organic Chem Exam was 46.4 (+0.59σ). No individuals failed to meet the -1.5σ criterion. 2) Average sub-score on the Organic section of the ETS chemistry exam was 43.7 (–0.30σ). No individuals failed to meet the –1.5σ criterion on the organic section.	1) ACS Organic Exam scores were acceptable this year. 2) ETS Organic sub-scores were also acceptable this year. The department has opted to not make any changes to the curriculum at this time.
Demonstrate an ability to analyze various kinds of experimental data used in the chemical disciplines including the output of various instrumental techniques (Departmental Outcome E).	1) Each student must obtain a minimum cumulative score of 15 on each of 5 instrumental assignments (i.e., IR/MS/NMR assignments) completed in Chem 322.	All students who passed the class met the minimum score of 15 on all 5 assignments.	In Spring 2014, the instructor who initially developed the first 5 instruments implemented a policy of assigning a grade of "Incomplete" until a student had met the minimum criteria on all 5 assignments. As a result, the number of deficient criteria has dropped dramatically over the last couple of years. At the encouragement of the Chemistry Program's external reviewers, the departmental chemistry faculty have agreed to add an additional 4 instrumental assignments to the existing slate of 5. The chemistry faculty were hoping to implement these new assignments within the next one or two reporting cycles. The timeline for implementation may be delayed somewhat due to the retirement of one chemistry faculty and the fact that his replacement left after only one semester. To get the ball rolling, the faculty are shooting for Fall 2019 for full implementation. At the moment, however, no changes are warranted other than those already in motion.

Demonstrate an understanding of the biological characteristics of each of the major kingdoms (Departmental Outcome F)	1) Mean score no lower than 0.5σ below national mean and no individual score lower than 1.5σ below the national mean on the ETS biology exam Organismal Sub-score.	1) Average Organismal sub-score is 53.1 (+0.00σ). No individuals failed to meet the –1.5σ criterion.	In light of the successful scores of several recent cohorts on the organismal sub-section of the ETS, the department has opted to not make any programmatic changes at this time based on this instrument. Individuals missing the criterion of –1.5σ on other sub-sections or even as composite scores are a concern for us, but legitimate reasons for individual students missing the cutoff (e.g., illness, test anxiety) do exist. The department is more concerned when students who have struggled throughout the curriculum at Malone, eventually graduate, but perform poorly on the ETS exam. This has occasionally happened, but not routinely. Historically, we have indicated that "No changes appear warranted at this time", but we have reached the point where we believe curricular changes are warranted. Departmental action is anticipated in some form by the next report (i.e., setting minimum grades for specific courses and/or limiting the number of course repeats might prevent this from recurring).
Demonstrate an understanding of the fundamental concepts of molecular biology and genetics (Departmental Outcome G).	1) Mean score no lower than 0.5σ below national mean and no individual score lower than 1.5σ below the national mean on the ETS biology exam Molecular Biology and Genetics sub-scores.	1) Average Molecular Biology/Genetics sub-score is 47.5 (–0.40σ). Two individuals failed to meet the –1.50σ criterion (–1.70σ and –2.30σ).	The average sub-score has dropped significantly from last year's value and is actually the lowest sub-score recorded for us since at least 2009. Still, the cohort average meets the departmental standard of –0.5σ. Nevertheless, the abnormally low average score coupled with the fact that 2 students failed (badly) to meet the –1.5σ criterion have set off alarm bells for us. One of the students that missed the individual standard (–2.30σ) had a major GPA (2.31) which barely met the major GPA requirement for graduation (2.25) and scored below average in their Genetics course. The department has had multiple, at-length conversations regarding students who successfully complete the curriculum and manage to miss minimum scores on standardized tests at graduation. Historically, we have indicated that "No changes appear warranted at this time", but we have reached the point where we believe curricular changes are warranted. Departmental action is anticipated in some form by the next report (i.e., setting minimum grades for specific courses and/or limiting the number of course repeats might prevent this from recurring).

Demonstrate an ability to properly relate biological structure and function (Departmental Outcome I).	1) Mean score no lower than 0.5σ below national mean and no individual score lower than 1.5σ below the national mean on the ETS biology exam Cell Biology sub-score.	1) Average Cell Biology sub-score is 51.2 (-0.13σ). No individuals failed to meet the -1.5σ criterion.	This sub-section of the ETS has historically been our lowest. For this reason, a curricular change was proposed and passed by the full faculty that added one credit hour to the introductory Cell Biology course effective Fall 2012. This year represents only the third year that this curricular change would be expected to have any bearing on assessment scores of graduating seniors. Several years will be required, though, before the results could approach statistical significance. Although every student met the minimum criteria this year, two students who completed an entire Malone biology curriculum missed the criterion of -1.5σ last year. These two students had to retake one or more courses in order to improve their major GPA to the point that they were able to graduate. Historically, we have indicated that "No changes appear warranted at this time", but we have reached the point where we believe curricular changes are warranted. Departmental action is anticipated in some form by the next report (i.e., setting minimum grades for specific courses and/or limiting the number of course repeats might prevent this from recurring).
Demonstrate the capability of analyzing and reporting empirical data from the biological sciences (Departmental Outcome K).	Instrument has been dropped in favor of a newer one that has yet to be developed.	NO DATA	Previous reports have indicated that our department has been having a long and rather continuous conversation about the need to implement a research methods course. This course was developed and approved by the department and full faculty. This course ran for the first time in Fall 2016. The exact nature of the assessment instrument is still in flux, but the department has completed the most difficult step in addressing this shortfall. The instructor of this course has indicated that a specific instrument designed to address this Program Intended Learning Outcome is possible, and several instruments have been deployed within the course. To date, however, a departmental assessment addressing K is still in flux. The instrument should be in place with first data collection by Fall 2020.

Demonstrate a balanced concept of molecular, micro, and macro levels of biological phenomena in the context of human systems (Departmental Outcome L).	1) Mean score no lower than 8/12 on the A&P questions of the in-house biology post-test exam. No individual with a score lower than 5/12. (Note: New instrument – this criterion is still being evaluated). 2) Average improvement on A&P questions from pre-test to post-test should be at least 70% (Note: New instrument – this criterion is still being evaluated).	1) Average post-test score for Spring 2018 was 9.14. Lowest individual score was a 5. 2) Average improvement data is not yet possible for a single cohort (Fall 2018 entry won't have post-test data available until Spring 2022). Nevertheless, we can compare pre-test scores from the Fall 2018 cohort with the post-scores of Fall 2014 (year of entry) cohort collected this spring. Average pre-test score for Fall 2018 was 4.94 and median was 5.0 (compare with average of 9.14 and lowest individual score of 5 for post-test values). "Improvement" in performance across these two different cohorts was 85.0%	This instrument is in its infancy and has been altered twice already to increase its value/efficacy as it is "broken in" over the next year or so. Criteria for success will undoubtedly change over the next couple of years as well. This year, we can at least see that we have met our earliest criteria for success in a somewhat strained analysis (i.e., an 85.0% improvement across two different cohorts). In addition, note that the lowest score on the post-test instrument is better than the average score on the pre-test instrument. No need for curricular change based on these early findings.
Demonstrate the ability to properly relate biological structure and function in the context of human systems (Departmental Outcome M).	1) Mean score no lower than 8/12 on the A&P questions of the in-house biology post-test. No individual with a score lower than 5/12. (Note: New instrument – this criterion is still being evaluated). 2) Average improvement on A&P questions from pre-test to post-test should be at least 70% (Note: New instrument – this criterion is still being evaluated).	1) Average post-test score for Spring 2018 was 9.14. Lowest individual score was a 5. 2) Average improvement data is not yet possible for a single cohort (Fall 2018 entry won't have post-test data available until Spring 2022). Nevertheless, we can compare pre-test scores from the Fall 2018 cohort with the post-scores of Fall 2014 (year of entry) cohort collected this spring. Average pre-test score for Fall 2018 was 4.94 and median was 5.0 (compare with average of 9.14 and lowest individual score of 5 for post-test values). "Improvement" in performance across these two different cohorts was 85.0%	See comments in table cell for Departmental PILO 'L'.

Demonstrate the level of content mastery required for potential successful performance in graduate school biology programs or professional schools (Departmental Outcome N).	1) Mean score no lower than 0.5σ below national mean and no individual score lower than 1.5σ below the national mean on the ETS biology exam composite score. 2) Mean score no lower than 31/50 and no individual score lower than 24/50 on the departmental biology Post-Test (A&P questions excluded).	1) Average ETS composite score is 151.3 (–0.13σ). A single individual score failed to meet the –1.50σ criterion (score of 133 which equates to -1.54σ). 2) Mean score on in-house Biology post-test is 32.93. All individuals exceeded the minimum score of 24 (lowest score was 26).	1) As has been the case for several years, the average ETS composite score has been meeting the departmental standard. Occasionally, an individual student fails to meet the minimum score, and this year is no exception. Historically, we have indicated that "No changes appear warranted at this time", but we have reached the point where we believe curricular changes are warranted. Departmental action is anticipated in some form by the next report (i.e., setting minimum grades for specific courses and/or limiting the number of course repeats might prevent this from recurring). 2) The lowest score of 26 this year on the In-House Biology post-test is sufficient.