AOC Summary of Biology Assessment Review

On February 8, 2010, the Assessment Oversight Committee (AOC) conducted an assessment review of Biology. Dr. Jeffrey Huebschman presented the report. He noted that in 2007 the Biology Department began a series of curriculum revisions, with student learning outcomes in mind, and core biology courses address these new learning outcomes in terms of attitude, skills, and knowledge. He added that the Biology department uses a variety of assessment tools, including discussion, labs, case studies, written assignments, presentations, etc. to evaluate student learning. They have added to their course evaluations a series of questions to assess a student’s development of attitudes about biology and science. Their analysis of Fall 2009 evaluations indicates that in their self-assessment, the majority of students agree that the course improved their attitudes about science. On average, majors show a slightly higher score than non-majors. The Biology department has also tried senior exit surveys, but Huebschman admitted that they have difficulty obtaining replies. As a result, they are moving the senior exit survey online. Finally, Huebschman noted that the department is still looking for a better means of collecting storing, and analyzing data.

The AOC commended Dr. Huebschman on the work biology is doing and their efforts to assess and make changes based on assessment. The assessment report was very good. The AOC encourages biology to explore ways of assessing specific content beyond requiring that students pass a particular course. Biology should also consider whether two sets of student learning outcomes are necessary. A more simplified set of outcomes would be easier to assess.