

**Department of Biological Sciences
External Review Response**

External Reviewer

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NOTE: This is the initial draft of the departmental response. Due to the timing of the response and the lack of faculty on campus, decisions will be made during the Fall 2015 semester. The final draft will be uploaded in November 2015.

1. Develop a mission statement for the graduate program

The faculty will be asked at our first meeting of the academic year to provide some ideas for developing a Mission statement for the graduate program. These ideas will be compiled into a list and distributed to the Graduate Committee which will meet soon after to develop the ideas into a Mission Statement.

2. Consider emphasis areas within the MS degree

3. Consider utilizing the existing MA track or add a non-thesis option

Both of the above suggestions will require input and approval by the Department of Biological Sciences faculty. The Chair of the Biology Department (Dr. Hargrave) together with the Graduate Coordinator (Dr. Williams) and Associate Dean of Graduate Studies of the Department of Sciences (Dr. Gaillard) will draft a plan that will address implementing the above issues. Historically many faculty have resisted implementing these suggestions but we feel that with the growth of the Department and interest in the Graduate Program the timing is right to develop sub-disciplines within the Graduate Program as well as develop a MA track that can address the needs of Science oriented K-12 teachers.

4. Review graduate student time constraints

7. Time to graduation and student mentoring

We will present to the faculty the given suggestion to increase productivity of the graduate students by introducing Research hours into our curriculum. We also intend to incentivize faculty involvement in Graduate Studies by suggesting a modification to the FES (Faculty Evaluation Survey) form. The modification would adjust credit given a faculty for Graduate mentoring to include points given for the timely completion of graduate milestones such as completion of prospectus and orals.

5. Recruiting initiatives

The Chair of the department has generously agreed to set aside \$2000 of departmental funds for the marketing of our program. The chair and the Graduate Coordinator have also agreed to attend the annual Texas Academy of Sciences meeting. The meetings occur every year and they are a perfect place to set up a recruiting booth for us to advertise the program to the next generation of science-oriented students from across Texas.

“The department may want to consider setting a goal for the number of applicants to the program.” This suggestion will require discussion and approval among the Faculty

6. Graduate student support

The Dean of Graduate Studies is aware that graduate student stipends at SHSU are below national standards and she is working with the President and Provost toward improvement. The most that the Department of Biological Sciences can do is to continue to encourage the faculty to seek grants with summer stipends for graduate students.

The Department will also reexamine how awards are disseminated to identify if indeed research awards heavily bias towards undergraduates.

8. Graduate course offerings

Again we will address this issue when we discuss with the faculty the idea of introducing research hours into our curriculum.

9. Faculty vision of the program

As the Department works towards the development of a Mission Statement our focus should become more apparent. In the coming years we will be hiring 3 additional faculty as well as moving into a new building, this growth will also help us to hone our focus. In addition, if we can successfully lobby the faculty to adopt a non-thesis option as well as research hours into our curriculum we will become a more diverse yet better-focused program.

