

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION FOR MARINE BIOLOGY

STRENGTHS:

- Strong enrollment with growing demand for MS and PhD programs in spite of low number of faculty.
- Faculty are well integrated across CFOS, e.g. serving on non-MB graduate committees; faculty also serve on grad committees at other UA campuses, across UAF, and nationally or internationally.
- 50% of graduate students stayed in Alaska; most plan to continue in academia; next is agency employment or NGOs, and then the private sector.
- Faculty are very successful at landing external funding.
- Faculty service on boards and councils underscores the value Marine Biology holds for the state of Alaska.
- Faculty are very productive researchers; graduate and undergraduate students are very involved with faculty research, and are key to the faculty's research success.
- Since 2016, over 45% of graduate students were supported by RAships through grants obtained by faculty and 36% were self-supported, e.g. through employment in agencies—this documents that agencies recognize the importance of Marine Biology.
- The creation of the undergraduate Ocean Sciences concentration has increased enrollment in Marine Biology classes.
- Faculty have been recognized for their excellence in research and teaching, including a Usibelli award.
- Undergraduate students are required to do an internship which provides not only educational opportunities for students, but also builds the connections between Marine Biology and Alaska's agencies and private industries.
- Relative low student to faculty ratio (according to the department) allows for small classes, and therefore faculty and students are able to build a sense of community; this aids in retention.

WEAKNESSES:

- Low student to faculty ratio is costly; to rectify this faculty are creating asynchronous courses that are expected to increase enrollment.
- Master in Marine Studies graduate degree has no students.
- Minor in Marine Science has few new enrollments since the Ocean Sciences concentration began in 2016, although offering the minor has the potential to increase enrollment in MB.
- Loss of faculty due to retirement means there are fewer faculty to mentor graduate students.

OPPORTUNITIES:

- Enrollment growth is expected as faculty create more online asynchronous classes.
- A majority of the students in the Fisheries program are interested in the Ocean Sciences concentration, especially the MB program, which is an important opportunity for Marine Biology to grow its enrollment.

- The new Master in Marine Studies graduate degree, which is a non-thesis degree, provides a significant opportunity for Marine Biology to grow its enrollment; this online program is unique in the nation and there is a demand from working professionals.
- Strong demand by potential graduate students to study marine vertebrates, though they cannot currently enroll because of lack of faculty specializing in this area (9 recent retirements); the strong demand indicates an opportunity to increase enrollment if additional faculty members could be hired.

THREATS:

- Enrollment and retention has declined significantly.
- 30% of students who are eligible for graduate enrollment are turned away because they cannot find a faculty advisor.
- Nine recent retirements of faculty who specialized in marine vertebrates.
- Lack of university-sponsored TAships makes recruiting potential graduate students difficult; this lack also reduces the mentoring possibilities for those graduate students who desire to follow an academic pathway.

CENTRALITY TO MISSION:

- Marine Biology is central to the mission of CFOS and to the UAF.
- The department's documents note that the state of Alaska is surrounded by three oceans; the research and teaching that is accomplished within the Department is critical to Alaska, and indeed, to the entire planet.

INDICATORS OF QUALITY:

- Faculty are successful at landing grants to study Alaska-critical issues and to build vital research infrastructure.
- Faculty are very productive researchers and often include students as co-authors.
- Graduate and undergraduate students are very involved with faculty research, and are key to the faculty's research success; most faculty publications include student authors, usually as lead author; students also very active in conference presentations.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS:

- Faculty are very successful in attracting external funding.
- ~2.25 FTEs for 45 students, with an unrestricted salaries and benefits cost of approximately \$360,000.

	MAJORS	DEGREES
Marine Studies MMS	FY15: 0/ FY19: 1	FY15: 0/ FY19: 1
Marine Biology MS	FY15: 22/ FY19: 13	FY15: 7/ FY19: 6
Marine Biology PhD	FY15: 23/ FY19: 10	FY15: 2/ FY19: 2

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Master in Marine Studies MMS:

RECOMMENDATION:	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:	DATE FOR FOLLOW-UP:
Continuation w/ improvement plan (8 votes)	The program is developing, but currently has one student. Student numbers need to increase substantially for program to be sustainable.	Two years

Marine Biology MS:

RECOMMENDATION:	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:	DATE FOR FOLLOW-UP:
Continuation (8 votes)	long-term sustainability is in question without increased faculty numbers and student enrollment	

Marine Biology PhD:

RECOMMENDATION:	ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:	DATE FOR FOLLOW-UP:
Continuation (8 votes)	long-term sustainability is in question without increased faculty numbers and student enrollment	