

GPSS Report
Graduate Program Review
Department of Microbiology
June 15, 2009

On June 1st, the University of Washington Graduate and Professional Student Senate dispatched one GPSS Senator to attend a program review meeting with students from the Department of Microbiology. A peer committee also attended the review meeting and held a discussion with the students concerning their opinions of the Microbiology graduate program's strengths and weaknesses. This report also includes responses from the UW Catalyst Survey. Salient points of the students' comments are summarized below.

Collegial Environment

- Fellow students are friendly and helpful. The department exhibits an "open" environment and faculty are very helpful. Students mentioned positive interview experiences and an evident camaraderie among the faculty.
- The department's accessible and positive atmosphere was a factor in students' selection of this particular program.

Departmental Fragmentation

- Some fragmentation between bacteriology and virology research groups was mentioned. The geographical location of virologists (at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center) may contribute to this.
- The South Lake Union campus is isolated. Most students on site at UW do not go there to attend talks and vice versa. One student who did make the effort to travel to the SLU campus relied on the shuttle service.

Presentations

- Students expressed a desire for more faculty participation during journal club. They would like to hear faculty responses to their papers and presentations.

Career Guidance

- Preparation and guidance concerning post-degree plans is very lab specific.
- One student voiced the opinion that the graduate program could perhaps give more guidance concerning careers and opportunities after degree completion.
- Students are generally not taking on industry internships and did not express much interest in this.

Research Opportunities

- The lack of parasitology laboratories was pointed out by one of the students. Students may need to be made aware of opportunities to design their own research programs.

Overview

It is important to stress that students were extremely pleased with the Department of Microbiology. All students present at the meeting were very satisfied with the program, their research, and the faculty. There appeared to be no outright complaints and plenty of positive feedback; some level of fragmentation between virologists and bacteriologists was perhaps the strongest of very few concerns raised. Students also would like to see more faculty participation during journal club in order to hear their responses to papers and presentations.