Biology Committee Pathways Meeting Summary

In attendance: Jürgen Polle, Brooklyn; Stephane Boissinot, Queens; Sarah Salm, BMCC; Charles Kramer, CSI; Mary Dawson, KBCC; telephonically: Patricia Ferdinand, Medgar Evers.

In brief, the Biology Committee discussed and reached some preliminary decisions regarding which course we would recommend for the Pathways project. After comparing requirements and basic curricula across the represented colleges, the committee reached a consensus that two majors’ introductory bio courses, with laboratory components, are appropriate as entry-level bio courses. The committee further agreed that the courses should be divided between a cell/molecular focus for one course, and an organismal approach for the other course.

It was decided to leave the decision about the sequence of these two courses up to the individual colleges. The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for these courses will be developed at our next meeting, since as a committee we would like to review the current ILOs at each branch of CUNY in the interest of inclusiveness.

As far as number of credits and lecture/lab recitation time, the committee agreed the bio course should be 4 credits each for “Bio1” and “Bio 2”, with the split between lab/lecture/recitation up to the individual college.

Some colleges refer to the entry-level or gateways course as “pre-majors’ courses”, whereas some colleges include them in the major. The committee feels that the individual institution may refer to these courses as either, as long as they are recognized as the basic (first) courses of the sequence.

Some members of the committee brought up the issue that many colleges offered “biology preparedness” courses – a sort of intro to or remedial bio course for underprepared students. It was the feeling of the committee that while these courses are useful and should not be eliminated, that they should not be included in the major. The committee leaves it up each institution as to how the credits would be allocated upon transfer.

The issue of Advanced Placement Biology credits was also discussed. The committee agreed that the assignment/allocation of AP credits should be an individual college decision, and not be part of this initiative.

The committee then discussed courses outside of the discipline that are both required, and essential for a biology major sequence. The committee agreed
that at a minimum, students should be required to take one semester of majors’ inorganic chemistry with a lab. Bear in mind however, that this topic is still under deliberation and will be revisited at our next meeting.

Finally, the committee felt that as part of this document, we should specify that the minimum grade acceptable for transfer credit will be ‘D’ with a note to students that individual colleges may have stricter requirements for their major and a student may have to repeat the course to obtain a higher passing grade.