

Agricultural Biotechnology Undergraduate Degree Program Implementation Plan Report for 2015

Action item #1: Enhance student awareness and strengthen the profile of ABT across the UK campus

Assessment Method: Increase in the number of students enrolled in ABT

Results: ABT enrollment in Fall 2012 was 149 students. Current enrollment (Fall 2015) is now 175 students, representing an increase of 17.5% over the 3-year period.

Analysis of results and reflection: Development of competing undergraduate programs remains a concern for the ABT Steering Committee. Therefore, enhancing prospective student awareness and strengthening the profile of ABT across the UK campus is an important objective. Based on the increase in enrollment over the past three years, we have been successful in accomplishing this. However, 175 students approaches the enrollment limit for the program based on resources and our commitment to preserving moderate class sizes in ABT courses.

Improvement actions: To maintain awareness of the ABT program across campus, the ABT Program Director, Directors of Undergraduate Study, and the Academic Coordinator will continue to work with program partners, such as the CAFE Office of Diversity, Dr. Becky Dutch, COM Associate Dean for Biomedical Education, and other faculty members outside of CAFE.

Action item #2: Increase funding to establish a full-time academic coordinator (AC) position and recurring support for teaching assistants in ABT 120 and ABT 495.

Assessment Method: The hiring of a full-time academic coordinator (AC) and the initiation of on-going financial support for teaching assistants.

Results: A full-time AC position was approved by Dean Cox in 2014, and Esther Fleming began full-time duties on September 8, 2014. In November of 2014, Dean Cox committed recurring support for teaching assistants in ABT 120 and ABT 495.

Analysis of results and reflection: Establishment of the full-time AC for the program and TA support for ABT 120 and 495 has benefited students in the program and the instructors for ABT courses.

Improvement actions: This action item has been accomplished.

Action item #3: Change the program's name to better reflect the scientific disciplines now encompassed by ABT.

Assessment Method: The actual change of the ABT program name.

Results: Suggestions for new program names were solicited from ABT-affiliated faculty, students, and alumni. A vote by ABT-affiliates selected the new name "Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology." A program change proposal was submitted to CAFE Associate Dean Grabau to initiate the approval process (October, 2015).

Analysis of results and reflection: A change in the program name to "Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology" will better reflect the scientific disciplines that ABT students engage in and the career opportunities they pursue after graduation.

Improvement actions: Once the change has been approved by the University Senate, the ABT Chair, DUSs, and AC will work to publicize the new program name.

Action item #4: Establish an ABT alumni database.

Assessment Method: The actual creation of an ABT alumni database.

Results: To help the program keep track of ABT alumni, Esther Fleming (ABT AC) is developing an "exit survey" that will be sent to pending graduates during their final semester. This is in progress. We were also informed by the CAFE Office of Development that keeping an alumni database was their purview, and that we should consult with them about tracking and contacting ABT alumni rather than establishing our own database.

Analysis of results and reflection: It will be very beneficial if the ABT program can survey ABT alumni, track the success, and present them with opportunities to contribute to the program.

Improvement actions: Although Esther will proceed with the exit survey for graduating students, the program will work more closely with the CAFE Development Office to contact and maintain information for alumni of the program.

Action item #5: Establish more formal partnerships with other Colleges at the University of Kentucky.

Assessment Method: Tracking of partnerships with other colleges within the university.

Results: Through the efforts of Dr. Bob Houtz (CAFE) and Dr. Joe Springer (Director, M.S. in Medical Sciences), a Master's degree option has been established through the University Scholars program. Discussions with Dr. Becky Dutch, College of Medicine (COM) Associate Dean for Biomedical Education, are ongoing to enhance participation from faculty members in the College of Medicine. A proposal to change the program name to "Agricultural and Medical Biotechnology" has been initiated. The new name will strengthen ties with faculty outside of CAFE.

Analysis of results and reflection: Discussions with other faculty members in CAFE and the College of Medicine have been fruitful. The new Master's option with the M.S. in Medical Sciences is expected to be appealing and beneficial to advanced students in ABT.

Improvement actions: The ABT Program Director and Steering Committee members will continue to seek cross-disciplinary collaboration with other colleges at UK. Faculty in both the College of Dentistry and Pharmacy routinely serve as research mentors for students within the ABT program, so discussions with these colleges will be pursued. A Master's option in the area of plant sciences will be pursued. With the College of Pharmacy, a program will be developed that will allow students to complete the ABT BS degree during their first year in the PharmD program.

Action item #6: Revise the ABT webpage to make it more student-centered.

Assessment Method: The completion of the new ABT webpage.

Results: Esther Fleming is in the process of redesigning and updating the ABT website and moving it to the new Drupal web application framework that the University of Kentucky is adopting for all university websites.

Analysis of results and reflection: The ABT webpage may be the first and primary interface between the program and prospective students. Additionally, it should be a helpful resource for current students. Therefore, the website upgrade will help to ensure that it contains useful information and is easy to navigate.

Improvement actions: Student input will be solicited prior to implementation of the new website.

Action item #7: Establish a physical "home" for ABT.

Assessment Method: Allotment of permanent, office space to the ABT program.

Results: An office in the Equine Programs suite, N212J, is being used by Esther Fleming as the ABT “home”. A sign for the Agricultural Biotechnology Program has been added outside the Equine Programs suite to help direct people to Esther’s office.

Analysis of results and reflection: An office dedicated to the ABT program enhances the efforts of the ABT Academic Coordinator and gives students greater access to this individual.

Improvement actions: Permanent office space has been established for the ABT AC.

Action item #8: Establish a more structured process to help ABT students identify faculty mentors for the ABT 395 research projects.

Assessment Method: Establishment of specific events that allow students to meet and talk with potential research mentors. Development of an up-to-date list of past faculty research mentors on the ABT website.

Results: The ABT program website redesign that is currently underway will include updating and maintenance of the research mentor list. Dr. Sharyn Perry has dedicated one class period of ABT 201 (second year ABT students) each fall semester for a “meet-and-greet” mixer with potential faculty research mentors.

Analysis of results and reflection: Some ABT students have difficulty identifying a research mentor for their ABT 395 research experience. A more structured process and better information about potential research mentors would be beneficial.

Improvement actions: The up-to-date faculty mentor list will be posted on the ABT website. Further efforts to help match students to research mentors will be discussed by the ABT Steering Committee.