

# **Agricultural Biotechnology Implementation Plan 2014 Annual Report**

(Implementation plan submitted May, 2014)

**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, while by Fall 2014 enrollment had increased to 186 students. An initial planning meeting with Dr. Quentin Tyler and Natasha Saunders, CAFE Office of Diversity, was organized by Dr. Sharyn Perry to discuss ABT recruitment activities that can increase recognition of the program across campus and with outside constituents. Discussions have been initiated with faculty members from the College of Medicine, including Dr. Becky Dutch, COM Associate Dean for Biomedical Education, to improve ABT's partnerships with faculty outside of CAFE.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** Enrollment in ABT rose by 25% from Fall 2012 to Fall 2014. Development of competing undergraduate programs has been a growing concern for the ABT Steering Committee, particularly in the new budget model environment. Therefore, enhancing prospective student awareness and strengthening the profile of ABT across the UK campus is an important objective.

**Improvement actions:** The ABT program director will continue to work with CAFE Office of Diversity to increase enrollment, as well as with Dr. Becky Dutch, COM Associate Dean for Biomedical Education to improve ABT awareness in other colleges.

**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, and Esther Fleming accepted the offer to fill the position. Esther started her full-time duties on September 8, 2014. On-going support for ABT TAs has not yet been accomplished.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** The change from a half-time to a full-time academic coordinator strengthened ABT student support activities and put the program on par with other undergraduate degree programs in the College. While the creation of

the full-time academic coordinator (AC) position was a positive step, the creation of recurring support for teaching assistants in ABT 120 and ABT 495 is still needed.

**Improvement actions:** The ABT program director will continue to seek permanent funding for teaching assistants in ABT 120 and ABT 495. A request to establish recurring support for ABT TAs will be submitted to the Dean during the Fall 2014 semester.

**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.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** Although there are some concerns about changing the program name, this action seems appropriate if it will better reflect the scientific disciplines that ABT students engage in while in the program and the career opportunities they pursue after graduation.

**Improvement actions:** The name change will be discussed by the ABT Steering Committee during its Fall 2014 meeting. The new proposed name will be presented to Dean Nancy Cox for approval and submission to the University Senate.

**Action item #4: Establish an ABT alumni database.**

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

**Results:** This has not yet been accomplished.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** The creation of an ABT alumni database will greatly assist the ABT program in tracking the success of its graduates, surveying ABT graduates, and presenting ABT graduates with opportunities to contribute to the program.

**Improvement actions:** This will be a primary task charged to Esther Fleming, the new full-time AC.

**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:** Discussions to improve ABT's partnerships with faculty outside of CAFE were initiated with faculty members from the College of Medicine, including Dr. Becky Dutch, COM Associate Dean for Biomedical Education. Through the efforts of Dr. Bob Houtz (CAFE) and Dr. Joe Springer (Director, M.S. in Medical Sciences), development of a Master's degree option is in progress.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** While these discussions with other faculty members in CAFE and the College of Medicine were fruitful, other contacts within the Colleges of Dentistry and Pharmacy will also be pursued. Faculty in both the College of Dentistry and Pharmacy routinely serve as research mentors for students within the ABT program.

**Improvement actions:** The program director will continue to pursue cross-disciplinary collaboration with other colleges at UK. The new Master's degree will be offered via the University Scholars Program in partnership with the Master's in Medical Sciences program.

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

**Assessment Method:** The completion of the new ABT webpage.

**Results:** The new webpage has not yet been designed or implemented.

**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, it will be beneficial to upgrade the webpage to ensure that it contains useful information and is easy to navigate.

**Improvement actions:** Student input will be solicited prior to the redesign and implementation of the new website. This primary task will be assigned to the new full-time AC Esther Fleming.

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

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

**Results:** Currently, no permanent office space has been assigned to the ABT program. However, an office in the Equine Programs suite, N212J, is being used temporarily by Esther Fleming.

**Analysis of results and reflection:** An office dedicated to the ABT program will enhance the efforts of the ABT Academic Coordinator and will give students greater access to this individual. A suite of offices housing all CAFE interdepartmental program Academic Coordinators is logical, but may not be feasible or necessary.

**Improvement actions:** Permanent office space is being sought 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:** The updating and maintenance of the research mentor list on the ABT website.

**Results:** The ABT program website has not yet been revised and updated.

**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:** Potential mechanisms to help match students to mentors will be discussed by the ABT Steering Committee during its Fall 2014 meeting.