



Department of Microbiology

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Dr. Kathleen M. Hallihan
Colleges of the Arts and Sciences
Director: Curriculum and Assessment Office
4132 Smith Laboratory
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Dear Dr. Hallihan,

As you suggested, we shared our plans for revisions to Microbiology 581 with a group of Microbiology majors (rank 2-4) and asked for their comments and suggestions. The students were initially contacted by email with a short note describing the planned changes to Microbiology 581 and how it affected the number of required classes and elective hours needed to complete the major. The students were also invited to take a short survey that we had posted on SurveyMonkey.com. In addition, we reviewed the course schedules of 24 students, 18 of whom graduated in 2008, to explore the “paths” that recent students took to complete the Microbiology major.

I’ve enclosed a copy of the survey questions with the responses, and a selection of their comments. Overall the results indicate a positive feeling among the students, but many are still unsure how they may be affected by the changes. Perhaps more importantly, we did not see a strong negative opinion. The student’s comments point out a few advantages: “This will give undergrads the time to actually take in all that is covered in lab” and “I will be able to take an extra class that I am interested in”, and there were also some concerns. A number of students expressed concern about scheduling changes that would impact them as they neared completion of their program. We are aware of this problem and we propose a modification in the prerequisites for these students that would allow them to take the two classes concurrently if needed to complete their degree. Scheduling should not be a concern for future students. The review of student’s schedules confirmed an earlier objective; namely, that students follow a wide range of “paths” once they have completed Microbiology 520, the first required course in the major. We revised the major several years ago to allow for this flexibility. We also noted that, even within this small sampling, many students were taking more than 40 credits hours of required and elective courses in the major; total hours varied from 40 to 52. As we review our proposed changes, we do not foresee that offering separate lecture and laboratory classes will cause a potential scheduling bottleneck for the students or force them to take unwanted additional classes to balance their schedules. We expect that the change will add more flexibility.

We also noted a surprisingly strong opinion that students would welcome the opportunity to take either or both of the classes in the summer quarter. We see this as a great opportunity to help our majors through the program and we are planning to take this question to the faculty for their review.

I hope this information is helpful and don’t hesitate to contact me if you need further information. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,

Charles J. Daniels, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair: Microbiology Curriculum Committee

Survey of Rank 2,3 4 Microbiology Majors (33 respondents)

1. Changing Microbiology 581 (Microbial Genetics) to separate lecture (3hr) and laboratory (3 hr) courses, where the lecture MUST be completed before taking the laboratory class, is a more effective way to present this material.

39.4%	Agree
21.2%	Disagree
39.4%	Neutral or Don't know

2. Changing Microbiology 581 to separate lecture and laboratory courses will NOT increase the credit hours required for the major, but will decrease the elective hours for the major from 20 to 19.

43.8%	This is helpful; it gives me more flexibility to schedule the classes I need
28.1%	This will limit my flexibility to schedule the classes I need
28.1%	Neutral or Don't know

3. Changing Microbiology 581 to separate lecture and laboratory courses could allow me to take an additional class that interests me.

45.5%	Agree
30.3%	Disagree
27.3%	Neutral or Don't know

4. If the Microbiology 581 classes were offered in the summer quarter I would be interesting in taking

9.7%	M581 lecture
9.7%	M581 laboratory
87.1%	Either, if offered

5. Have you already taken Microbiology 581?

33.3%	Yes
66.7%	No

6. What is your Rank?

15.2%	2
36.4%	3
48.5%	4

7. Do you have additional comments on the Microbiology major that you want to share?

- I trust the instructors in making this determination. If they believe that we will do better if we take the lecture first, then that is what I'll do!
- It depends how the lab is oriented. In 520 and 521, the lecture did not really connect with the lab, and if it did, it was not together. It is a more effective way to present the material if there is a significant amount of time donated at the beginning of each class (or whenever) to educating us about the information in the lab.
- This is a change which will only prove detrimental towards students
- Unless these can be taken concurrently this is rather annoying for scheduling.

- I think it makes sense to learn the concepts before applying it in the lab.
- Some material from the lecture may be forgotten by the time it needs to be applied in lab.
- one credit hour doesn't make a difference. the only problem is when you have to fit in the 3 hour lab with two other micro classes so that now I would have to take all micro classes during one quarter.
- Instead of taking one five credit hour class one quarter, having to take it two separate quarters cuts a class availability. I don't have a two credit hour class to couple with the three hour class, so it's essentially taking up a block that would be a five credit class anyway, since I can't schedule another class along with this one.
- This coming fall when I take the lecture, I will be able to take an extra class that I am interested in.
- More classes need to be offered. Especially over the summer. I'd rather take more electives than 520 and 521. The material was dry at times and gets very repetitive with other classes i.e. mol gen 500 and micro 581. My upper level courses 647, 649, 581 were much more interesting than 520 and 521. Neither of the classes (lectures) seemed to be very useful for upper level courses.
- It would be VERY helpful if 581 (lab and-or lecture) was offered this summer!!
- This will be good in the long run, but at this point in my college planning, it screws me over. 581 should be offered in its old format in addition to the new version, at least for a few quarters to allow people who have planned very specifically on that class the chance to not have everything messed up for them.
- It would be nice if more of the required classes were offered in Winter. Everything is only offered Sp or Au, so that Wi quarters are hard to fill.
- I think this is a great move by the department. This will give undergrads the time to actually take in all that is covered in lab.