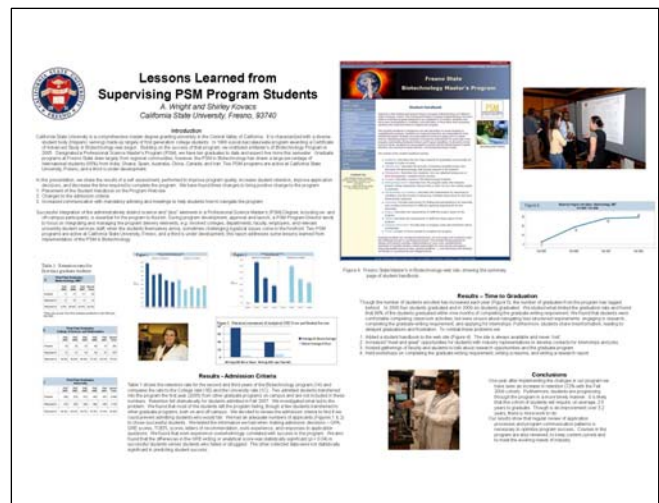


Lessons Learned from Supervising PSM Program Students

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Successful integration of the administratively distinct science and “plus” elements in a Professional Science Master’s (PSM) degree, including on- and off-campus participants, is essential for the program to flourish. During program development, approval and launch, a PSM program director tends to focus on integrating and managing the program delivery elements among involved colleges, departments, faculty, employers, and relevant university student services staff; and sometimes when the students themselves arrive challenging logistical issues come to the forefront. Two PSM programs are active at California State University, Fresno, and a third is under development. This report addresses some lessons learned from implementation of the PSM in Biotechnology.

1) Frequent communications with students are crucial—academic units operate with distinct graduate degree guidelines; students will assume that the most personally desirable rules apply. Dispensing correct information and dispelling student rumors can benefit from a detailed website “degree handbook,” program-wide meetings, and consistent and frequent academic/professional advising sessions between



students and the program director(s) and/or coordinator(s).

2) Consistently completing certain Graduate School-mandated requirements, such as a Graduate Writing Requirement, can be challenging for interdisciplinary programs and often requires assessment and negotiation. For the writing requirement, assessment data suggested that GRE writing score admission criteria be strengthened; negotiating efforts helped to develop mentoring mechanisms, such as employing scoring rubrics to ameliorate some inconsistency issues.

3) New college graduates and international students dominate our clientele, so substantial mentoring has been required to secure and prepare students for internship placements. One unexpected problem has been transport to internship sites such as remote agricultural field stations. Career Services staff members have aided job document/interview preparation skills; our staff Program Coordinator, the main program communication link with both employers and students, augments these efforts. A company networking event, coupled to our internship presentation forum, as well as program-wide meetings on internship conduct and procurement, have proved valuable; transport limitations remain a concern.

4) Our degree requires a project or thesis. Connecting students and faculty with applicable projects remains haphazard, but “meet and greet” events are currently being expanded and implemented earlier in the program to facilitate success.

The PSM in Biotechnology degree has attained its target enrollment of 40 students (i.e. 20 entering and 20 continuing students) after four years of operation. Even in a tight economy, five of its ten graduates are employed in industry, often with the internship firm; two others had offers from their internship firms—one selected further graduate study and the other pursued a different biotechnology direction; one is a Community College instructor; and two are employed in temporary positions, awaiting industrial opportunities. Five more students will graduate in December 2009.