I. Welcome / Introductions / Call to Order

Following dinner, Ron Dewlen welcomed everyone and thanked the advisory committee members for their attendance. He noted that the advisory committee's role is an important service to the college's biotechnology program. Following this, everyone introduced themselves.

The meeting was then called to order by the Chair at 6:30pm in Room A102 at Lone Star College-Montgomery.

II. Minutes

The minutes of the April 17, 2008, meeting was reviewed. A motion was made by Eric Buxton to accept the minutes, seconded by Janet Varela, and approved unanimously.
III. Reports

A. Enrollment

Danny reviewed the enrollment figures for the period Fall 2006 through Fall 2008 and noted that enrollment in the program remains fairly steady. There are 15 students on track to graduate in the summer of 2009. He noted that BITC 1211, Introduction to Biotechnology, is the “test the waters” course for the program, so its enrollment is higher than the other program courses. The program has great diversity in terms of student age, background, etc., as shown in the picture of the 2008 interns that was shared with those present.

The advanced technical certificate (ATC) program is going very well. It is a condensed version of the program designed for people with degrees who are looking for a quick track into industry. Fifty percent of next year’s graduating class will be receiving the advanced technical certificate.

Anne Bettinger asked about the course requirements for international students at the community colleges. At the M.D. Anderson School of Health Sciences, their international students are now required to take courses in U.S. history and government as part of their certificate program. Danny will look into this to see if these courses will be required of the community college certificate programs.

B. Outreach

Danny reported that he was approached at the start of the school year by Quest High School, in the Humble ISD, for internships for their students. As a result, two of their students have been interning at the college this semester doing a variety of projects. This has developed into a beneficial arrangement for both parties.

There was an inquiry from the advisory committee about Spring ISD’s requirements for their student interns. Claire Hellendag responded that their internships are done during the school day, but after school internships would be better. She added that Spring ISD is very open to any internship possibility.

Danny reported on the program’s new biotechnology resource guide. It has been designed as a resource for the high school counselors and teachers, to help them answer the students’ questions about the biotech field in general and about the college’s biotech program in particular.

C. Skills Standards Alignment Award

Danny reviewed the college’s skills standard grid. These skill standards have also been adopted by Austin Community College and Collin County Community College. The skill standards are leading to collaborations among the biotech programs throughout the state.

Ron Dewien reported that the State of Texas is moving toward college readiness standards. This, in conjunction with the skills standards, will be important as the program works to develop career pathways. The program will need to work on partnerships with industry in the coming future.

As reported at the last meeting, the college had been awarded a TSSB Skill Standards grant. Danny reported that some of the grant monies were spent on podcasting equipment to develop a podcasting series on the program. He asked the advisory committee members to participate in the podcasts by talking about what they do in industry, etc. He also wants to film proper lab techniques, so the students can observe the techniques in action.
A. New Health Science Building

The college’s new 60,000 square foot health science building is currently in the planning stages. Danny asked for the advisory committee’s input on the setup and layout of a new biotechnology lab. He offered a tour of the current lab following the meeting. Alan Lennon invited Danny to tour their lab facilities at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center.

Animal handling, which is a State of Texas skill standard, has been mentioned to the college’s building design consultants. Support of animal handling as an entry-level job skill varies throughout the advisory committee. Some of the facilities feel this is very important, while other facilities do not since they feel it is a skill that can be acquired on the job. It was suggested that the college look into a joint venture with a facility that has an animal handling department. It would be mutually beneficial for both parties and cost effective for the college. It was noted that Galveston Community College has been collaborating with the University of Texas Medical Branch for animal handling. The advisory committee asked about other collaborations throughout the Lone Star College System. It was noted that the new chancellor is moving in this direction since joining the System last year.

The advisory committee asked if the biotech lab will move to the new building or if it will stay where it is and be renovated. Right now the planning committee is leaning toward moving the lab to the new building. The program will have a better understanding by the spring semester of which direction is taken for the lab’s location. It was noted that the lab will still contain space for tissue culture.

Another suggestion from the advisory committee was electronic lab notebooks, along with a clean area within the lab for the students’ laptops. The advisory committee did not have a preference for the electronic lab notebooks at this time.

B. Curriculum Changes

Danny reported the State of Texas has just approved the proposal by Collin County Community College that the introductory course (BIOL 1311 or 1411) be offered for both biology and biotechnology credit. If the program implements the 1411 course, then BITC 1211, the program’s current introductory course, must be eliminated since a two credit hour jump cannot be done.

The program’s curriculum currently contains 71 credit hours. If the program is maxed out on credit hours, then something will have to be eliminated from the curriculum in order to fit in the new 1311 or 1411 course. The advisory committee was asked what course(s) they felt could be eliminated. Suggestions were:

- Have the students take BITC 1191 once instead of twice throughout the program. This would free up one credit hour.
- Have BITC 1191 be offered as a required CE course instead.
- Modify BITC 1191 to use podcasts for the course content, so the course would become a zero hour course. Janet Varela offered to help create podcasts on resume writing, interview skills, etc.

The advisory committee asked about the timeline for this course transition. Danny responded that the college will have a one year grace period once the elimination of BITC 1211 becomes official. The advisory committee asked Danny to research the program’s curriculum to see if there are any courses that are not “core curriculum” courses and could be considered for elimination. Danny was also asked to check on the maximum number of credit hours for the program, whether it is 71 or 72 credit hours. He was asked to present this information at the Spring meeting so this topic can be better discussed.

Danny also mentioned classroom capturing. He noted that that LSCS is slowly going this direction. It would help the students have a finished portfolio of their work and skills by the time they graduate.
C. Biotech Competition

Alexa Noble reported that the biotech competition will be held on February 28, 2009. A school district must be a member of the Education for Tomorrow Alliance (EfTA) in order for its schools to be eligible to participate in the biotech competition.

The format for the biotech competition will be different from past competitions due to Lexicon being unable to provide technical support. The competition will step back from the higher level competition status it has enjoyed for the past few years. The competition's planning committee has decided to acquire DNA from kits, to write their own scenarios, and to do some electrophoresis. There will still be two levels of competition.

Judges are needed and Alexa asked for volunteers. In the past, the biotech competition was held the same weekend as the SciTech science fair, making it difficult to get enough judges for both events. This year the science fair will be held one week prior to the biotech competition, so this should make it easier to find judges for both events. Anyone interested in serving as a judge for the biotech competition should contact Alexa, mnoble@conroisd.net.

Alan Lennon graciously volunteered his senior students at M.D. Anderson to serve as judges for the biotech competition.

V. Call for Adjournment

The Chair called for adjournment at 7:45pm. Motion made by Eric Buxton, seconded by Alexa Noble, and supported unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Johanson
Division Coordinator, Natural Sciences & Health Professions

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