

**Statement on Professional Activity**  
**Biology Department**  
**St. Olaf College**  
**October 2004**

**Professional Activity in the Biology Department**

Professional activity, teaching, and service are the three areas in which faculty are expected to make significant contributions to St. Olaf College. This statement is limited to expectations related to professional activity. Hopefully, a faculty member's professional activity will be accompanied by excellent teaching and dedicated service. Promotion and tenure, therefore, will be based not only on documented scholarship (professional activity), but also on the demonstration of classroom success (teaching) and significant contribution to the overall academic environment at St. Olaf (service).

Biology is the study of life, from single-celled organisms to complex communities. Commensurate with the diversity in biology, faculty members in Biology will demonstrate a wide range of creative activity in their professional activity. In the Biology Department, professional activity is viewed as those activities that demonstrate continued academic achievement and service to the field of biology and related disciplines. In most cases, professional activity will be related to a faculty member's research interests associated with his/her particular discipline of biology. However, it could also focus on interests in areas such as science education, pedagogical research, natural habitat restoration, or development of new programs of biology-based study. Professional activity should include the ability of a faculty member to relate research and creative activity to effective teaching and to stimulate the intellectual development of one's colleagues. It is expected that the level of responsibility and leadership of an individual faculty member will increase with experience and rank. Promotion will be based on successful teaching, continued growth as a scholar and leader, and significant contributions to the overall academic environment.

Acceptable professional activity should be discussed between the faculty member and the Biology Department Chair at regular intervals, but should specifically be agreed upon at the time of hire and at any point when a faculty member sees his/her professional interests changing. Because a faculty member's primary focus is on teaching during the academic year, successful development of professional activity normally includes work during the summer. Most often this involves working with undergraduate students on research, but may also include developing new programs/curriculum/research skills or writing manuscripts/grants.

**Components of Professional Activity in the Biology Department**

In the Biology Department, a comprehensive professional activity program includes the following components:

1. *It is expected that professional activity includes components that directly involve St. Olaf students, have a significant impact on St. Olaf students, or have a significant outreach component.* For example, while research per se and the advancement in scientific understanding it brings is valued, our departmental mission to promote undergraduate research places greatest value on research that actively involves St. Olaf students. As another example, professional activity in science education is also valued both for its pedagogical advancement as well as for its impact on students.

2. *It is expected that professional activity will include communication of the results of such activity with the broader scientific community.* When a research project has reached a publishable stage, it is expected that a faculty member will submit manuscripts for publication in scientific journals and will persistently pursue publication. Students should be included as authors when they have contributed substantially to the overall project. It is understood in the sciences, that quality research frequently involves collaborative ventures, and consequently, publications can involve numerous co-authors. It is also, far more common for science publications to appear as articles rather than books. Faculty and students who work on a research project are encouraged to present their results at local, regional, or national meetings. Faculty seminar presentations or talks at symposia are other examples of communication with the broader scientific community.
3. *It is expected that professional activity will include careful consideration of opportunities to obtain external funding to support the projects.* Most areas of professional activity in the biological sciences can be supported by grants. It is expected that if sources of funding exist in a faculty member's area of interest, that proposals for funding will be submitted. External funding is also necessary to sustain institutional programs such as the Summer Research Program. In addition, there are opportunities to submit institutional proposals to obtain funding for major pieces of equipment for research and/or teaching. Submission of these types of institutional proposals is crucial to the institutional research mission. Success in the acquisition of external funding is highly valued, but at a minimum it is expected that individual and/or institutional proposals will be submitted and, if necessary, revised and resubmitted in an attempt to obtain funding.

### **Sustainability**

The faculty in the Biology Department believe that the achievement of excellence in professional activity, teaching, and service is immensely rewarding, both personally for the faculty member as well as for the students and broader community. However, we also recognize that the pursuit of excellence in these areas must be properly managed in order to be sustainable. In the Biology Department, we are committed to establishing a sustainable balance that allows faculty members to achieve excellence in professional activity, teaching, and service while still having time to enjoy activities and interests outside of their professional commitments to St Olaf.

As it relates to professional activity, sustainability is addressed in part by taking a long-term view of professional activity. The question to be asked is not whether a faculty member is involved in all components at a given time, but rather whether there is evidence over a longer time period that a faculty member has contributed in the indicated areas. We expect there to be a balance between active creativity (e.g. generating new knowledge through research), summation (e.g. writing manuscripts or preparing presentations), and renewal (e.g. grant writing or other explorations of new directions). For example, there may be a time when grant and/or manuscript writing is a higher priority than mentoring undergraduate research students. In such a situation, using the time to write grants and/or manuscripts in lieu of mentoring research students would be viewed favorably by the Biology Department. As another example, at an appropriate time in a faculty member's career, faculty members are encouraged to obtain released-time grants to provide dedicated time for professional activity with reduced classroom demands.

In sum, the Biology Department is concerned with our faculty as people, and wishes to create an environment that maintains balance and perspective in life. We believe that, with careful planning, excellence in professional activity can be balanced with classroom success and

important service in a sustainable manner that allows a faculty member to make ongoing contributions to the Biology Department, to St. Olaf College, and to the broader scientific community.

### **Examples of Professional Activity**

The list below illustrates various examples of professional activity, in categories for organizational purposes only, that are valued in the Biology Department at St. Olaf.

#### A. Research Activities

- ◆ Undergraduate-based research, including a summer research program and supervision of independent research students during the academic year.
- ◆ Faculty and/or student publication of research articles in refereed journals, published symposia, edited books, or other collections.
- ◆ Faculty and/or student presentations of research at local, regional, or national professional meetings.
- ◆ Faculty and/or student publication of abstracts and non-refereed publications associated with presentations of research at professional meetings.
- ◆ Submission and acquisition of grants to fund individual and institutional research and teaching activities or to obtain major pieces of equipment.
- ◆ Invited seminars, panel discussions, or talks at symposia.
- ◆ Subject-reviews for scientific journals or books.

#### B. Pedagogical Activities and Development of Biological Resources

- ◆ Publication of educational works such as textbooks, chapters in books, laboratory manuals, or articles in teaching journals.
- ◆ Participation in outreach-oriented educational activities.
- ◆ Development of St. Olaf's natural resources (e.g. forest, prairie and wetland restorations) for teaching and research.
- ◆ Development and maintenance of St. Olaf's teaching and research-related biological collections.
- ◆ Development of pedagogical instrumentation.
- ◆ Creation and dissemination of software with biological applications.

#### C. Professional Service Activities

- ◆ Attendance at courses, workshops, seminars, or professional meetings related to professional activity.
- ◆ Chair of a session at a professional meeting.
- ◆ Organizer or leader of symposia, courses, or workshops related to professional activity.
- ◆ Editor of a scientific journal.
- ◆ Reviewer of textbooks, journal articles, or grant/fellowship applications.
- ◆ Membership and/or leadership in professional organizations.
- ◆ Professional consultation.