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Mini-course program in biology doubles enrollment

By APRIL APPERSON
Of the Emerald

This year's "mini course" undergraduate program in the biology department has doubled last year's enrollment, according to Gordon Murphy, an administrative assistant in the department.

The mini-courses, or single-topic courses as Murphy prefers to call them, were created as an alternative to the old undergraduate general biology and honors sequences. Under the new program, each quarter of Biology 101 through 107 covers a single, different topic. A student taking Biology 102 in the fall would take a different course than a student taking Biology 102 in the winter or spring. This applies to all seven courses (101 through 107), so theoretically, the department is offering a program of 21 courses. A few holes appear in the schedule, however, for various reasons, so the actual number of courses offered is more like 18. Also, the department discourages students from

taking any one course, such as Biology 106, more than one quarter. Although the course material may be different in spring and winter quarters, the number designation remains the same, and having Biology 106 appear two or three times on a student's transcript can cause misunderstanding and trouble, said Murphy.

The program, Murphy stated, is aimed at the student not majoring in biology; it is intended "specifically for those people who are science shy," for those who simply want to fulfill a science requirement. It is a layman's view of science, he said, "the exciting parts, the interesting parts."

The advantages of the new program, he said, are that the students know what they are getting into — the titles of the courses are quite specific — and the possibility of the students thinking that the courses are in any sequence is reduced.

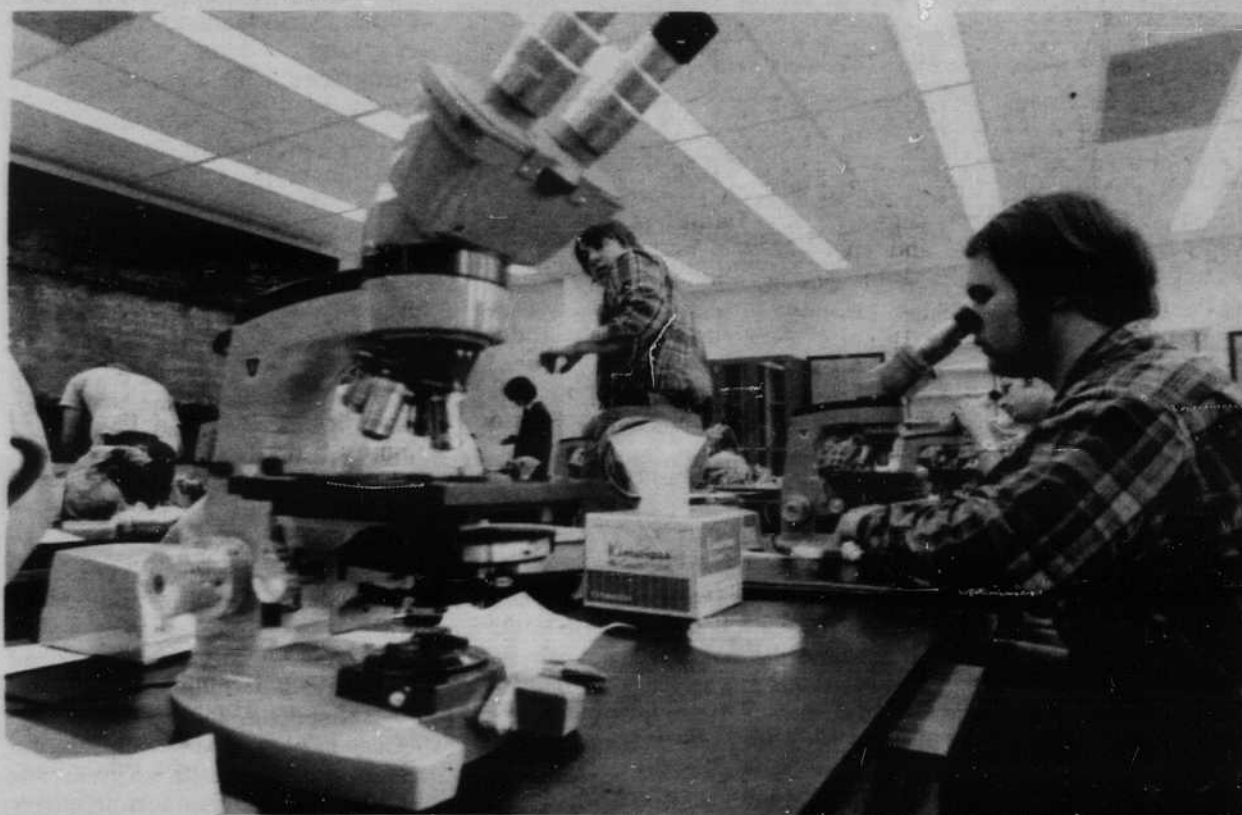
These were two major complaints with the old program, he

said. Even though the courses in the old program were no in sequence, the students often were afraid to take a spring term course without having taken the earlier courses, Murphy explained. Under the new program, the students don't worry about this, he said. By encouraging the students to vary the courses they take, Murphy added, the department exposes them to a broader experience in biology.

The one disappointing aspect of the program, commented Murphy, is that because of the large enrollment increase, the classes aren't as personal as the faculty had wanted them.

No just the students are favoring the program, according to Murphy. He said that while many of the faculty were opposed to the program at first, the general feeling among the faculty members is now taking a positive turn.

Any changes in the program next year, he said, will reflect staffing patterns — the organization will be the same.



Beginning biology students at the University are now working with some of the most sophisticated equipment available for introductory biological investigations, in the University's newly completed science addition.

Science III opens

Undergraduate biology lab sessions at the University finally moved this spring out of "temporary" laboratories in an old workshop building into a new structure, Science III, for which planning first began 11 years ago.

The "temporary" laboratories in a renovated physical plant were used for more than a dozen years, according to Sanford Tepfer, University biology department chairman.

The new building features four large teaching laboratories, plus research facilities for neurobiologists, animal physiologists and other zoologists.

Plagued by funding delays and escalating building costs, Science III set a record at the University for the length of time between onset of planning and final completion.

But the final result is possibly the most functional building on campus, according to Tepfer, who took an active part in the

planning and design from the beginning in 1962.

He believes "No department anywhere was ever so closely involved in the planning for a building," and points to the fact that the teaching laboratories were designed with the needs of specific courses in mind.

The four new laboratories, which replace three in Science Annex B (the former workshop building) and one in the University's first science building, mean that beginning biology students, as well as biology majors, will be able to do far more sophisticated experiments than ever before possible at the University.

The fact that the project budget included funds for equipment has allowed the biology department to catch up with equipment needs for the first time in several years, according to Tepfer.

"Modern biological investigation requires the use of phase contrast microscopes, which cost about \$1,000 each," explains the biology chairman.

"We have been able to provide such microscopes for the use of all students working in this building."

Nearly half of the cost of Science III was paid for by federal grants.

The physical arrangement of the new building will afford better use of teaching staff, as well as of materials and equipment. Science III has a central instructional materials storeroom, so that each course no longer needs its own equipment and supplies.

Each laboratory is directly connected to a series of three small rooms: an instrument room, a room where continuing experiments may be conducted, and a room with vibration-damped tables.

Special features are emergency showers in each laboratory for safety purposes, fume hoods which provide ventilation necessary to work safely with certain chemicals, and water tables.

Friday, April 13, 1973