

To: Allena Nguyen, English 301 Student

From: Daniel Chen, English 301 Student (D.C.)

Date: March 14, 2016

Subject: Peer review of formal report draft on improving undergraduate student enrolment in the UBC chemistry program

Thank you for this well written formal report draft. It was intriguing reviewing your progress on the suggested strategies for improving the undergraduate student enrolment in the chemistry program at UBC. Please find below my comments for each section. I hope this is beneficial for you as you finalize your formal report.

Content

Introduction

The report clearly stated the problem of declining rates in undergraduate student enrolment in the UBC chemistry program since 2010. You gave sufficient background of the chemistry program and the process of enrolment required by the Faculty of Science. There is also a clear statement of what your report is focusing on, "the following report focuses on the most popular chemistry programs: majors and honours chemistry." A summary of the methods used to gather data added direction to the study.

Data Section

The summary of data collected in the short survey and interview were clear and were complimented well by the figures. Overall, your report was extremely easy to follow along. To improve this section, include percentages when summarizing the figures to strengthen your data.

The first paragraph seems misplaced in the data section, and is more appropriate in the introduction as it explains the details of the curriculum.

One thing that was unclear was the responses from the interview questions. My impression of this section was that it mainly displayed the data from the survey. I would recommend mentioning briefly which pieces of data were obtained by the survey and interview.

I would recommend adding a summary of the demographic of the participants that you surveyed and interviewed (if this data was collected) as this would greatly strengthen your report.

Conclusion

The problem was interpreted well and you provided good explanations of the data, such as “The structure of the new laboratory experiments prevents students from fully understanding new experimental techniques and concepts.” Recommendations for improving undergraduate student enrolment in the UBC chemistry program are clearly stated and practical. I like how you acknowledged that it is not feasible to change large portions of the curriculum, but small changes are a great way to improve the problem.

Recommendations

The recommendations were clear, practical, and affordable. As mentioned before, including percentages in this section will also strengthen your recommendations. For example, “Include more applications of chemistry as requested by 25% of participants.”

Since you presented a great explanation as to why students tend to struggle with the laboratory component, I would have liked to see a recommendation to improve the laboratory component. An example for a recommendation could be to have online lab quizzes instead of during lab time to maximize time allotted for experiments.

While reading the recommendation of spending less time on topics such as quantum mechanics, I noticed in the data section you briefly stated that these topics are abstract and students struggle to relate these concepts to application of chemistry, however it was not mentioned if this data came from the survey or from the interview. I would include more evidence for this claim.

General Feedback

- Definitions were used appropriately. There was chemistry related terms such as organic, inorganic and materials science that were not defined. However, it did not hinder the argument being made.
- The report was logically laid out. Overall the plan for the report flowed extremely well from the introduction to the conclusion and strong recommendations were made.
- Each section was relevant to the reader. The introduction was clear and concise while giving a great summary of the direction of the report and the method to be used to obtain data.

Organization

Overall, the formal report draft was organized exceptionally well. The data section incorporated the corresponding figure after each summary paragraph, which made it easy to follow. Also, the subheadings in the data section particularly helped in understanding the topic of discussion. The clickable table of contents improved the ease of navigating the report.

Style and Design

Your tone was objective and you demonstrated your attitude in your formal report draft very well. Overall, the report was easy to follow with clear explanations. The graphs are extremely clear, well named, and contain an informative label. While summarizing your data, you made multiple references to the figures, which added to the ease of reading. The report was well spaced out and contained appropriate headings to orient the reader.

Final Remarks

Overall, you make a great case for improving undergraduate student enrolment in the UBC chemistry program. The report was strengthened by your data and the interpretations of your findings. Your recommendations are clear, practical, and well supported. I hope my comments and suggestions help you as you continue finalize your report. If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at dchen121@gmail.com.