**Associate of Science Transfer in Life Sciences Program Prioritization Response to Narrative Feedback**

October 2, 2014 by Ted Williams

Response to suggestions for improvement to the AS-T in Life Sciences program of study:

Criterion 5: The suggestion for improvement states that “Data regarding the learning outcomes was unavailable for review.” Presumably, the recommendation is to gather and report on program assessment. It is true that assessment data has not been collected for this program during the time period that this program has been in existence. This was an intentional decision as the program assessment process was starting up in the past three years the focus was on programs that were more active and, in particular, had enough graduating students to assess. Little emphasis was placed on the AS-T in Life sciences since the inception of the BSNES program. Currently, there are more students declaring this program than in previous years so assessment may be reasonable during AY2015. The suggested course of action if for the Science Program Chair to work with the science faculty to determine how and if this program should fit with other science programming – the AAS and BS in Native Environmental Science. If the AS-T in Life Sciences is to be retained then it should be assessed during AY2015.

Criterion 9: The suggestion for improvement states “… the committee recommends that a larger discussion and more action steps to discuss the future of the program, reassessing the demand from the community would be an important step and looking at the program as a pathway to other programs.” This is an excellent suggestion that needs to be incorporated into the AY2015 workplan for the science department. The first step, as noted in the suggestion, would be to reassess the community demand. Much has changed since this program was started at NWIC and the need for a life sciences track is unclear. The fact that there are increasing numbers of students who are declaring this program makes it particularly important to determine how the program fits into science and other programing at NWIC, including health science pathways in workforce education, and whether the program is fitting student and community needs in the best possible way. This will require coordination between the Science Department, ORSP (for needs survey data), and perhaps Workforce education. As the idea of building a stronger health sciences pathway was under consideration several years ago, it may also require discussion and clarification at the administrative level once current community and student needs data is available.

Next steps:

1. Discussion and planning within the Science Department concerning
   1. Collection and analysis of needs data
   2. Initiating program assessment of current students
2. If a decision if made to continue to offer the AS-T in Life Sciences program then the Science Department needs to focus on it more than it has in the past several years, which will likely require additional faculty with a life sciences background, particularly if the program is intended to be a bridge to health careers, given that none of the current science faculty have expertise in the health sciences.