

## Natural Sciences

Office or Department of Academic Affairs

Administrative Unit Assessment

Year Reporting: FY 20 (July 2019-July 2020)

### Department and Assessment Report Information

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For which department or area are you reporting?	Natural Sciences
What is the name and MGA email address of the person responsible for this report?	Dawn Sherry, dawn.sherry@mga.edu

### Departmental Mission and Goals

The mission and goals of the department should be consistent over a 5 year period, although some institutional changes may necessitate and prompt a change in mission or goals for specific departments. In this section, you will report the mission statement for your department as well as the long term goals (5 year range) for the department.

<b>What is the mission statement for this department/area? Your mission should explain why the department/area exists and who it serves.</b>	The department of Natural Sciences prepares students for rigorous post-baccalaureate programs or to enter into today's competitive job markets by providing opportunities for students to advance their knowledge through undergraduate research and through experiential learning. The Department of Natural Sciences supports the scholarly atmosphere of the university by promoting faculty research and scholarly activity through grants and travel awards.
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<b>What are the goals for this department? These should be the "big things" the department/area intends to accomplish within 5 years.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. To increase student engagement by advancing scientific knowledge through undergraduate research.</li><li>b. To contribute to faculty research and the scholarly atmosphere of the university.</li><li>c. To expand student access to experiential learning opportunities.</li><li>d. To increase number of graduates in the B.S. Biology program.</li></ol>
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## Objectives

Each year, every department should identify objectives the department hopes to accomplish in the next year. These should align with departmental goals and the MGA strategic plan. In the next section you will be reporting on the objectives you set and whether or not you achieved them in FY20. Later in the document you will report on objectives you hope to accomplish in the coming fiscal year, FY21.

### Objective 1

<b>Objective 1: What was this department's first objective for this fiscal year? Objectives should be specific, measurable, and achievable within one year.</b>	To increase number of students involved in undergraduate research.
<b>Objective 1: Detail how your department measured this objective? (Survey, budget number, number of participants, jobs completed, measurable time and/or effort)</b>	Enrollment in SCIE 2999 courses & in courses offering Course Related Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs)
<b>Objective 1: What was your target outcome for this objective? (1.e. 80% participation, 5% enrollment growth, 7% change in engagement)</b>	Our target outcome was to increase the number of students enrolled in SCIE 2999 or CUREs by 5%.
<b>Objective 1: At what level did the department/area achieve on this objective? (This should be a number, i.e. 82%, 6%, 345 attendees, 75% engagement)</b>	FA 19 enrollment: 12 students in 2999, 29 students in CURE's SP 20 enrollment: 10 students in 2999, 28 students in CURE's
<b>Objective 1: Did your department meet this objective?</b>	The department exceeded this objective.
<b>Objective 1: What did your department learn from working toward this objective? What changes will you make based on this effort next year?</b>	The department was trying to expand opportunities for students to participate in undergraduate research experiences. Course-Related Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) were developed to do this. As a result, more students participated in undergraduate research experiences than in the past.

**Objective 2**

<p><b>Objective 2: What was this department's second objective for this fiscal year? Objectives should be specific, measurable, and achievable within one year.</b></p>	<p>To provide faculty seed grants for scholarly and creative activity focused on undergraduate research.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: Detail how your department measured this objective? (Survey, budget number, number of participants, jobs completed, measurable time and/or effort)</b></p>	<p>Number faculty offering SCIE 2999 or CURE's. Number of faculty receiving grant funds in support of undergraduate research.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: What was your target outcome for this objective? (1.e. 80% participation, 5% enrollment growth, 7% change in engagement)</b></p>	<p>To increase the number of faculty participating in undergraduate research by 5%. To increase number of faculty receiving seed money for undergraduate research by 5%.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: At what level did the department/area achieve on this objective? (This should be a number, i.e. 82%, 6%, 345 attendees, 75% engagement)</b></p>	<p>Fall 2019: #faculty offering SCIE 2999 was 8; # faculty offering CURE's was 2; total faculty participating=10. Spring 2020: #faculty offering SCIE 2999 was 6; # faculty offering CURE's was 2; total faculty participating=10.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: Did your department meet this objective?</b></p>	<p>The department met this objective.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: What did your department learn from working toward this objective? What changes will you make based on this effort next year?</b></p>	<p>The number of faculty offering undergrad research opportunities is holding steady but not growing. We will try to recruit some of the new faculty in the upcoming year.</p>

### Objective 3

<b>Objective 3: What was this department's third objective for this fiscal year? Objectives should be specific, measurable, and achievable within one year.</b>	To increase number of students enrolled in the B.S. Biology program
<b>Objective 3: Detail how your department measured this objective? (Survey, budget number, number of participants, jobs completed, measurable time and/or effort)</b>	Count of the number of students enrolled in the B.S. Biology program.
<b>Objective 3: What was your target outcome for this objective? (1.e. 80% participation, 5% enrollment growth, 7% change in engagement)</b>	5% enrollment growth
<b>Objective 3: At what level did the department/area achieve on this objective? (This should be a number, i.e. 82%, 6%, 345 attendees, 75% engagement)</b>	400 students enrolled
<b>Objective 3: Did your department meet this objective?</b>	The department did not meet this objective.
<b>Objective 3: What did your department learn from working toward this objective? What changes will you make based on this effort next year?</b>	Enrollment in the B.S. Biology program was down in fall, however, the department will continue to work with recruitment specialists, advocate for advertising and promote the B.S. Biology program students and faculty through social media.

#### Objective 4

<b>Objective 4: What was this department's fourth objective for this fiscal year? Objectives should be specific, measurable, and achievable within one year.</b>	To create experiential learning opportunities for students (e.g., internships, etc.)
<b>Objective 4: Detail how your department measured this objective? (Survey, budget number, number of participants, jobs completed, measurable time and/or effort)</b>	Number of experiential learning courses offered will be counted. Number of participants in experiential learning opportunities will be counted (e.g., student participants in undergraduate research conferences, internships, etc.)
<b>Objective 4: What was your target outcome for this objective? (1.e. 80% participation, 5% enrollment growth, 7% change in engagement)</b>	5% increase in experiential learning courses offered. 5% increase in participant number in undergraduate research conference presenters.
<b>Objective 4: At what level did the department/area achieve on this objective? (This should be a number, i.e. 82%, 6%, 345 attendees, 75% engagement)</b>	SCIE 2999 sections: Fall 2019-8 sections; Spring 2020-6 sections. BIOL 4120-1 section; BIOL 4894: 4 sections. Undergraduate Conferences were cancelled due to COVID-19 this past spring.
<b>Objective 4: Did your department meet this objective?</b>	The department met this objective.
<b>Objective 4: What did your department learn from working toward this objective? What changes will you make based on this effort next year?</b>	Senior faculty may be less inclined to offer undergraduate research opportunities, the support for this may be softening among some of the senior faculty. The Department will continue to recruit new faculty to the effort. All spring conferences were cancelled due to COVID-19 which impacted student's ability to present and participate in this experience.

## Future Plans

<p><b>Please identify and detail three to four measurable objectives for the next fiscal year. In listing the objectives, please use the format shown in these examples. 1) The Department of X will improve services levels by 5% as measured by our satisfaction survey. 2) The department of X will provide training in ABC for at least 73 MGA faculty and staff.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Department of Natural Sciences will increase number of students involved in undergraduate research in SCIE 2999 or CURE courses by 5% as measured by enrollment reports.</li> <li>2. The Department of Natural Sciences will provide faculty seed grants to support and increase the number of faculty participating in undergraduate research by 5% as measured by a count of faculty offering undergraduate research and by a count of faculty receiving seed money for undergraduate research.</li> <li>3. The Department of Natural Sciences will increase the number of experiential learning opportunities available to students as measured by a 5% increase in enrollment in experiential learning courses and in a 5% increase in participation in the undergraduate research symposium.</li> <li>4. The Department of Natural Sciences will increase the number of B.S. Biology graduates in 2020-2021 as compared to the previous year.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Based on this assessment, please share your thoughts on the current status and future direction of this department or area.</b></p>	<p>The Department of Natural Sciences is committed to growing both student and faculty scholars over the next five years. Both groups will benefit the local, state and regional community. Although some goals were not met, the B.S. Biology program is the 7th highest enrollment program at Middle Georgia State University and should be promoted as an affordable way to obtain a quality science degree in Georgia. A Biology degree translates into jobs in environmental sciences, laboratories and government agencies. It is also an important step in the pathway to graduate or professional schools. The program would benefit from the institution following alumni to determine job placement and graduate/professional school acceptance.</p>

## Open Box for Additional Comments

<p><b>Open Text Box For Assessment Comments:</b></p>	
<p><b>If the COVID-19 pandemic impacted this assessment cycle, please provide specific details below.</b></p>	<p>Most conferences that our students would attend were cancelled in the spring semester due to COVID-19. Students were going to present at a Middle Georgia State University undergraduate</p>

	conference, the Georgia Academy of Sciences conference or the Association of Southeastern Biologists conferences. All were cancelled.
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