

Dr. Douglas Light: A Window into Lake Forest College Biology

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Dr. Douglas B. Light, a tenured professor of Biology at Lake Forest College, is the newly appointed chair of the Biology Department. Dr. Light enthusiastically accepted this position and approaches his new duties both seriously and with a touch of humor. He explains that being a departmental chair at LFC is different than having this position at major universities.

At LFC, like most liberal colleges, a departmental chair is sometimes hired, but usually appointed for 3 years by the Dean of Faculty and with appropriate suggestions by the previous dean of that department. Some of the responsibilities that Dr. Light faces are mentoring junior faculty and completing annual evaluations of all the faculty of the biology department. In order to complete these tasks Dr. Light assesses the current strengths and weakness of the biology department at LFC.

Undeniably, it was a lot easier for Dr. Light to list numerous strengths of the department although he realizes and works to address the items that can be improved. He put a lot of emphasis on the fact that the Biology Department at Lake Forest College has the privilege of excellent faculty who do not only provide quality teaching and advising, but also bring unique scholarship to the college. Also, Dr. Light stressed that the faculty of the biology department are "genuinely concerned about the students' educational experience". He went on to describe that the biology department has a decent budget which gives the students and the faculty various technological resources and valuable laboratory equipment.

As of weaknesses, Dr. Light suggested that there is "nothing so outstanding that it's interfering with doing our job". He recommended some renovation be done both in the classrooms and in the laboratories. Nonetheless, he stressed that this facelift would mostly be aesthetic since the biology department is not lacking in technology and teaching resources. In addition, although Dr. Light realizes that the biology department is fairly large at LFC (6 tenured slots and

several adjuncts); he would be pleased to see another full-time faculty member who would be able to contribute further knowledge, especially in the areas not being covered. For Dr. Light, the primary goal for the future is to assess the biology curriculum and modify it, if need be, to ensure that the students are getting the latest and the most broad spectrum of information. In addition, he hopes to acquire new equipment for the department through grants.

Dr. Light passionately exclaimed: "The students are getting a darn good education". He went on to talk about the enormous contribution of the students of Lake Forest College to the successes of the biology department. Dr. Light accentuated the various achievements of the students, such as: participating in presentation of novel research at undergraduate symposia, becoming co-authors on journal articles, and succeeding in top-ranked graduate and medical schools. He further highlighted that the students in the biology department are encouraged to actively engage in dialogue with both the faculty and the chair (himself) to address any concerns and suggestions for improvement to the biology department. Dr. Light also gave kudos to our journal by suggesting that Eukaryon is yet another wonderful feature of the biology department that both allows for students to display their scholarship and introduces the distinguished achievements in science at LFC to the rest of the world.

Lastly, Dr. Light emphasized that the biology department has a very significant role in a Liberal Arts education in that it enhances the students' understanding of scientific methods and processes as well as demonstrates what science can and cannot do. It was more than obvious how excited Dr. Light is about being at Lake Forest College and he repeatedly mentioned that his experience at the college "exceeded his expectations". Dr. Light looks forward to the challenges of being chair and accepts his new position as a learning experience and as a means to improve the already outstanding biology department at LFC.

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