

The Human Biology Program, A Summary

The Human Biology Program at Hunter College is designed to provide students with the ability to analyze and address humanity in a multidisciplinary framework including behavioral, cultural, social, and biological approaches. Human Biology programs have emerged as an important and attractive major program at many universities, including Cornell, Indiana University, Pitzer College, Stanford, and UC Merced. Because of our significant student interest and faculty strength in fields related to Human Biology, Hunter College is ready to join these other institutions and offer students a Human Biology Program.

Hunter's proposed Human Biology Program will offer an integrated view of humans derived from coursework and faculty from Anthropology, Biological Sciences, Psychology, Sociology, and Urban Public Health. The Human Biology Program will be administered by a Director and Faculty Committee from these departments. The Director and Faculty Committee will be responsible for the continued development and stewardship of the Human Biology Program at Hunter College.

Curriculum Overview

The Human Biology major curriculum has three key parts: a "core," a "track," and a "capstone." All students will take a 15 credit "core" of courses in anthropology, biology, and statistics. This will help students develop proficiency in biology and statistics. Then, students will choose one of three 18-credit "tracks" of courses ("Body, Mind, and Health;" "Human Evolution and Variation;" or "Human Organizations") enabling them to develop strength in a particular area. Finally, students will participate in a 3-credit "capstone" seminar that is designed to bring together students from the different tracks to engage with some of the key challenges and debates in human biology. This capstone experience will allow students to apply and synthesize their knowledge while working with students and faculty from across the three tracks. Students will also have an option to conduct independent study or internships to enhance their experience further.

Student Interest and Future Opportunities

Human Biology is relevant to students interested in topics such as human health, diversity, and evolution. Though Hunter offers an array of courses on these topics, they are found across many different departments and majors throughout the College. The Human Biology Program will unify such courses into a coherent and intellectually rigorous major. We anticipate that this multidisciplinary major will be attractive to students interested in topics such as health, organismal biology, and human evolution.

This interest is evident from a non-scientific poll of Hunter College students in Human Biology-related majors and those with interest in pre-health professions. Among the 920 student respondents, 74% were 'very' or 'somewhat' interested in declaring a Human Biology major and 69% said that they would be 'somewhat' or 'very' likely to declare Human Biology, if they were unable to declare their intended major.

The Human Biology major will provide students with preparation for a range of future possibilities. These include study in medicine and the allied health professions (students will be advised on additional courses required for various professional

schools or programs) or academic fields such as anthropology, biology, human biology, psychology, public health, and sociology. In addition, students may wish to enter careers including nutrition, education, environmental management, health education, health care administration, marketing, forensics, research, and animal care and conservation.

Hunter Faculty Interests and Governance

The Human Biology Program unifies existing faculty strength at Hunter College stemming from both the social and life sciences. Faculty from Anthropology, Biological Sciences, Psychology, Public Health, and Sociology have expressed interest in participating in this program. These faculty have teaching and research interests which dovetail well with the multidisciplinary nature of the Human Biology curriculum. The participating faculty will be charged with the stewardship of the Human Biology Program at Hunter College.

The Program will be administered by a Director and Faculty Committee. The Faculty Committee will have five members, drawn from each of the key participating departments and the School of Public Health (Anthropology, Biological Sciences, Psychology, Sociology, and Public Health). Full-time faculty participants within each department will vote for their respective Faculty Committee Member as vacancies occur. The Faculty Committee will vote for the Director. After the inaugural terms, all subsequent terms will be three years.

The Director and Faculty Committee will meet regularly to discuss issues such as curriculum implementation, inclusion of novel courses in the major, designation of faculty participants, capstone topics, symposium planning, advising, student concerns, choosing student mentors, and other issues, as required. The Director will also serve as advisor to student majors and oversee a small number of student mentors. The Faculty Committee and the Director will confer with departmental chairs on issues relevant to the implementation and progress of the Program. In consultation with the Faculty Committee, the Director will report to the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences on the state of the Program. An annual report on the activities of the Program will be distributed to participating faculty, departmental chairs, and the Hunter College Administration.