Partnership for Undergraduate Life Sciences Education: PULSE

Problems have been identified, remedies have been proposed... now it’s time for action. Join PULSE in a national effort to transform undergraduate biology education at the department level:

http://pulsecommunity.org

What is PULSE?
PULSE is a joint effort by National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health/NIGMS (NIH/NIGMS) and Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to stimulate systemic changes within biology departments at all types of post-secondary educational institutions, based upon the findings from the 2011 report Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology Education: A Call to Action and other similar calls for transformation of undergraduate life sciences education.

How will PULSE achieve that goal?
PULSE held a call for applications during the summer of 2012 and competitively selected a team of 40 Vision and Change Leadership Fellows. Over the next year, the Leadership Fellows will lead a national conversation to develop effective strategies for the sustained implementation of the Vision and Change recommendations and assessment of progress towards those goals. During the process, they will participate in intensive workshops, produce draft roadmaps, engage the broader biology education community to secure critical feedback, and refine their work. The outcomes will be shared in summer 2013.

Why the focus at the department level?
Though the appropriate level for change may vary between institutions, cultural and institutional change will require targeting such things as reward structures, motivation to focus on student learning, and strategies to develop and transfer skills between colleagues. Departmental chairs are often the people who make curriculum decisions, hiring decisions, teaching assignments and provide immediate faculty evaluations. At the same time, they are intimately familiar with the diversity of faculty stances regarding undergraduate education and the personal dynamics of their faculty.

Who will listen to/read what the Leadership Fellows put together?
NSF, NIH/NIGMS, HHMI formed PULSE because they want to know whether their investments can help move undergraduate biology education reform from actions of individual faculty to system-level change. Outcomes will be shared with professional societies and disseminated as widely as possible. Leadership Fellows will also be able to suggest investment strategies that could be effective at the academic department level. Sustained system-level change will require articulating which parts of the system own which parts of the challenge; it will also require development of assessment strategies to gauge progress toward achievement of the project goals. Thus, the year-long PULSE activity as a whole will seek to identify messages that can be carried to different audiences, strategies to bring them on board, and ways to chart impact.

How can I contribute and be part of this effort?
PULSE is looking for significant contributions from a greater colleague community throughout the year-long project and beyond. You can help by providing critical feedback to the Leadership Fellows as they work to develop an implementation framework for systemic change. Your unique experiences, based upon your institution’s culture and structure, will allow the project to incorporate diverse perspectives and ultimately strengthen the resulting product. In addition, you can help spread the word about the work of the Leadership Fellows and allow others to learn about the process and outcomes. To learn of these opportunities as they arise, join the PULSE community at http://pulsecommunity.org

Questions? Email: support@pulsecommunity.org