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CU I&E Submission: Establishing a Multi-Departmental Shared Instrumentation Program [1]

Submission Highlights

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What

The BioCore is a new small- to mid-scale instrument sharing program serving MCDB, EBIO, and IPHY. The purpose is to benefit research, efficient instrument utilization, and improved lab space utilization. To date, over $850,000 in instrumentation purchases by faculty labs have been avoided due to this effort through encouraging researchers to share underutilized instruments and by actively connecting researchers with instruments. The majority of shared instruments remain in PI labs, however the BioCore also manages two shared lab spaces that have grown to 85 instruments. The BioCore has drastically reduced the burden for researchers of tracking down needed instruments while simultaneously reducing the administrative burden for CCO Property Accounting, OCG, and FM Property Services. New faculty are able to begin research sooner and conserve startup funds, graduate students have increased access to research equipment, and all researchers and staff are able to contact the BioCore for surplus tasks related to equipment. All surplus equipment handled by the BioCore is vetted for demand and usability, and whenever possible instruments are recirculated back into the labs.

Why

With over 4,000 scientific instruments existing within MCDB, EBIO, and IPHY, there was no standard mechanism in place for sharing most. Researchers therefore spent considerable time (hours to months) and funds ($100’s to $100,000’s) acquiring new instruments. When

researchers did attempt to find existing instruments, they struggled to find and gain access to instruments for multiple reasons, relying on their proximity to other labs, existing partnerships, word-of-mouth, and social structures. Further, I found researchers often chose not to share their lab's instruments due to issues related to training, scheduling, managing repairs/replacement, and contamination/cleanliness, which this program is overcoming.

When

Implementation of this instrumentation sharing program began in May of 2018 and was then named the BioCore in July 2018. This project has been successful within the departments it serves, and has become essential to the heavy users. The idea is that this project will be expanded (into other departments) or repeated (in department clusters) over time if support and funding becomes available, and possibly expanded to other CU campuses as well.

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