Astrobiology Education and Outreach at UCLA: New Cluster Course Sequence GE 70ABC - “Evolution of the Cosmos and Life”

Greg Schultz: UCLA Physics & Astronomy

In 1998, UCLA was selected as one of the 11 initial members (5 of which are universities) of the NASA Astrobiology Institute. Concurrently, UCLA implemented a brand new General Education cluster course, GE 70ABC: “Evolution of the Cosmos and Life,” which is unique for several reasons. It is (a) interdisciplinary, introducing students to both the life and physical sciences, (b) team-taught by 4 distinguished professors, and 4 advanced graduate teaching fellows, (c) offered for (150) freshmen students exclusively, and (d) a year-long sequence, incorporating lectures, laboratory/discussion sections, field trips, and in the spring quarter, small satellite seminars led by the individual instructors on topics radiating from the cluster theme. Further information about GE 70ABC can be found at the course website (http://www.ess.ucla.edu/Cluster_TOC.html) and the website for UCLA’s GE cluster courses (http://www.college.ucla.edu/ge/clusters.htm).

This poster will outline the GE 70 content, and describe some of the course’s materials, activities, assessment, and student characteristics. Additionally, focus will be placed on the GE 70C seminar course component called “Life In the Cosmos,” designed and offered by the poster author for the Spring 1999 quarter. This seminar features a student-centered approach - with lecturing minimized and active learning a key objective - and addresses the extraterrestrial life debate from historical and cultural perspectives as well as the current scientific approaches in astrobiology/bioastronomy.