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What My Biology Students Taught Me About Mathematics

Many colleges and universities struggle with finding ways to meet the quantitative needs of their biology and life science majors. At the University of Portland, these students have in the past been enrolled in the traditional calculus sequence, where the majority of applications are geared heavily towards engineering and physics. Our biology and life science majors come out of this course not only feeling as though calculus had no connection to their discipline, but also struggling more than students in other disciplines, possibly from lack of motivation. Here I will share my experiences in the development and implementation of a first semester biocalculus course and what I learned from my students, including their beliefs about mathematics pre- and post-biocalculus as well as similarities and differences in their styles of learning mathematics.