

Science Education

September 26th, 2016

Dear SEA-PHAGES Faculty Member,

We are writing to encourage your participation in the program evaluation of the SEA-PHAGES project. Like last year we will be using a tool, termed the *PITS* (*Persistence in the Sciences*) survey, developed by our assessment team specifically for assessing the impact of the SEA-PHAGES program on student development and persistence. This tool is different from the SEA-CURE survey and is designed to evaluate a series of specific psychological outcomes that have been shown in previous research to be of significance for enhancing retention in the sciences.

With your help from last year, the *PITS* data we collected has been very helpful in allowing us to understand some of the strengths and impacts of the SEA-PHAGES program. We are currently working to get a manuscript together in the near future that describes the findings. We will keep you posted.

In order to continue this process of exploring and understanding the SEA-PHAGES program we will need to collect additional data. Continued widespread participation in the *PITS* survey is critically important for the SEA-PHAGES project. Approximately 50% of SEA-PHAGES institutions participated last year, and we are hoping to increase that this year. The larger the dataset and the greater the variety of institutions participating, the stronger the conclusions are expected to be, and hopefully reports and publications.

If you used the *PITS* survey last year we hope you will use it again. **You do NOT need to send us another letter of approval for data collection if you sent us one last year.** If you offered the course but were not able to make use of the survey, or are new to SEA-PHAGES, then we strongly encourage you to use the *PITS* survey this year. Details are below on the steps needed to use the survey.

The *PITS* survey is a simple on-line tool that students should complete in the last two weeks of the semester (or quarter). Data collection takes place only once a semester and the survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

To use the *PITS* survey at your university we need to navigate the appropriate IRB approval processes. We currently have in place an IRB approval from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board stating that compliance can be satisfied by a simple letter from you and co-signed by your Department Head (or Dean, Vice Dean or Provost) stating that you are aware of this data collection process in the SEA-PHAGES course. The format and content of the letter is attached.

You will need to print the attached letter with your institution's letterhead and return to David Hanauer at hanauer@pitt.edu no later than Friday the 21st of October. We thank you for your support in this matter.

Assessment of your students' progress is important for us to understand the effectiveness of the national SEA-PHAGES program, and also is important for each of the member institutions. In addition to participating in the evaluation of the program, each participating school will be provided an individualized report that provides feedback on your students. We anticipate that such data might be helpful as your institution reviews its course offerings.

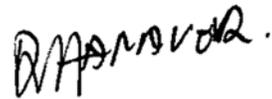
Yours,



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