

UMBC UGC New Course Request: NSCI 396 – Communication for Emerging Scientists II

Date Submitted: 4/16/2020

Proposed Effective Date: Spring 2021

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COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Number(s)	NSCI 396 (NSCI = Natural Sciences)
Formal Title	Communication for Emerging Scientists II
Transcript Title (≤30c)	Comms for Scientists II
Recommended Course Preparation	N/A
Prerequisite NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, a prerequisite is assumed to be passed with a “D” or better.	NSCI 395
# of Credits Must adhere to the UMBC Credit Hour Policy	1.0
Repeatable for additional credit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Max. Total Credits	1.0
Grading Method(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Reg (A-F) <input type="checkbox"/> Audit <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pass-Fail

PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION (Approximately 75 words in length. Please use full sentences.):

NSCI 396

This course is required for STEM BUILD Trainees. The first part of the course will build on content from NSCI 395, by guiding students through the application process for particular research and/or conference opportunities. This includes writing and revising short answer essay questions, tailoring the resume and personal statement for particular opportunities, requesting recommendation letters, and writing thank you notes. This course will also further develop students’ ability to share scientific research with a broad audience on a range of platforms, grow their e-portfolios, and enhance their presentation skills.

RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE:

NSCI 396 is the second course in a two-course sequence that is required for STEM BUILD Trainees (a group of students involved with the STEM BUILD 2.0 initiative). Students will take the courses in their second year of the program. The courses will be taught each fall (395) and each spring (396) at least until AY 2023-2024, when the final cohort of the formal STEM BUILD program will complete the sequence. There is a possibility the courses will be opened to a wider range of students and continue to be offered beyond that time.

These courses are designed to provide support to the BUILD trainees in their endeavors to obtain summer research positions by directly instructing and coaching them on the critical elements of applications for these positions. This training will continue to serve them throughout their pursuit of graduate school and/or careers. NSCI 395 will focus on personal statements, cover letters, and resumes/CVs. Students will also be introduced to ways to share their research effectively with the non-scientist community, including via blogs and social media, and how, in order to be effective, that type of communication must differ from writing a formal research paper or proposal. Students will also be coached on their presentation skills and given opportunities to practice, which will benefit them during the interview process and throughout their careers as scientists. The students will create an e-portfolio with some of the documents they create, that they will continue to add to in NSCI 396.

NSCI 396 will guide students through a specific application process of their choice (with approval from the instructor and BUILD team), including short answer/essay completion, requesting recommendation letters, writing thank you notes, and refining and tailoring documents prepared in NSCI 395. NSCI 396 will also continue to grow their skills in sharing science with non-scientists.

This course is needed now, because STEM BUILD students need this training to increase their chances of applying successfully for summer internships after their second year. The course is at the 300 level because it provides specialized skills training for students who are expected to pursue research. While it may include some introductory-level writing training, the overall goal is to prepare students to apply successfully for research internships, travel grants, and other opportunities targeting upper level students. It is offered in the pass/fail format because the primary goal is for the students to obtain needed skills and gain competency in writing about themselves and their research for a range of audiences, not to overburden students already pursuing challenging majors. Consistent effort and participation, combined with the ability to demonstrate competency in the skills taught by the end of the semester will be considered successful completion of the course.

The course dovetails perfectly with the rest of the BUILD programming. The summer before they'll take this course, the students will have completed a Summer Bridge, in which they will have prepared a draft personal statement that we will refine in NSCI 395. Other elements such as professional communication with faculty members and choosing the right opportunities to apply for, will be introduced in Summer Bridge and reinforced in this course. Other staff from the BUILD program, such as academic advisor Ms. Pauline McKelroy and BUILD program specialist Ms. Meika Samuel, may be brought in to the course as guest instructors on topics such as resumes and how to help prospective employers or research mentors outside UMBC understand the BUILD program.

The prerequisites for this course are minimal - completion of NSCI 395 is all that is required.

This course is not repeatable for additional credit.

OTHER NOTES/REQUESTS:

N/A

ATTACH COURSE SYLLABUS (mandatory):

See attached.

