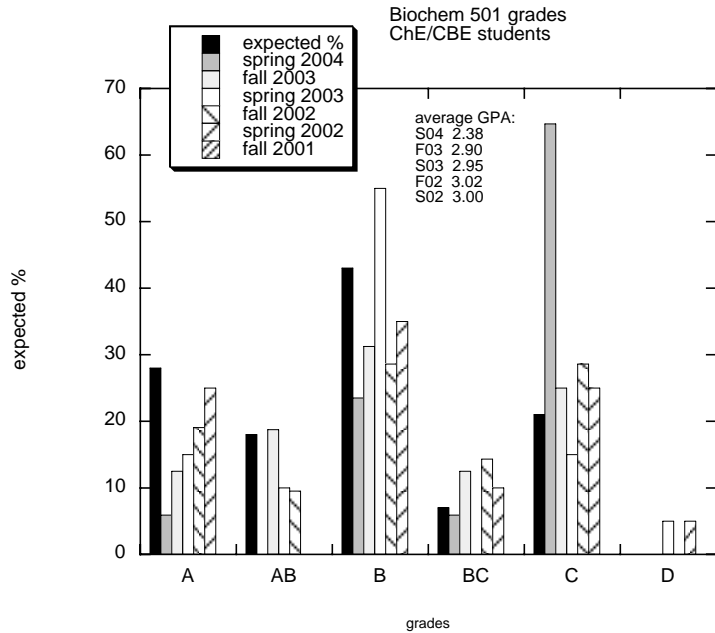October 25, 2004

To: CBE faculty
From; RMM
Re: Follow-up on Biochem 501 concerns

As we discussed at an earlier faculty meeting this fall, Bill Reznikoff (Biochemistry) raised some concerns regarding the performance of CBE students in Biochemistry 501. We collected some data that did indeed indicate that CBE students were less likely to get an A or AB, and more likely to get a C, than the total population of students taking Biochem 501. The difference between CBE and all students was particularly striking in Spring 2004.

We were particularly concerned that this trend may accelerate once all CBE students are required to take Biochem 501. Prof. Reznikoff's offered the qualitative observation that the CBE students have a particularly hard time with the Molecular Biology portion of the class.

We identified the students who are currently enrolled in Biochem 501 and sent them an email suggesting that they avail themselves of tutoring opportunities if they are struggling with the class. The email message is pasted below. We will check the Biochem 501 grades of this cohort at the end of the semester. If there continues to be a problem then we will discuss with the Biochem 501 instructors and interview students in the class, in an attempt to identify an appropriate solution.

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To: CBE students in Biochemistry 501
From: Prof. Murphy, Associate Chair for Undergraduates

We want to make you aware of tutorial services that are available to some students enrolled in Biochemistry 501. Senior undergraduates majoring in Biochemistry provide individual tutoring assistance. There are only a limited number of tutoring slots available. Preference is given to students who apply early and who are struggling with the course material. If you are having a difficult time with this class, you may contact Dan Barnish at 265-9846 to see if you are eligible for this service.

We also strongly urge all CBE students to attend the discussion sections for 501, where teaching assistants review problem sets and concepts from lecture.