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Challenges and Opportunities For Assessment in First Semester Biocalculus

A growing number of colleges and universities have created biocalculus courses to better meet the quantitative needs of their biology and life science majors. One argument for the creation of such courses is that these students are not exposed to the need for mathematics in their field of study, as the majority of applications in traditional calculus are geared towards physics and engineering. However, little research has been conducted on the advantages and successes of such biocalculus courses. Here I will share my experiences and assessment results from a first semester biocalculus course at the University of Portland, where I have tracked both student performance and attitudinal changes towards mathematics over the course of the semester.