



In the Loop

Swiss delegation checks out iCons

November 9, 2011

Scientists from the ?École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), one of Switzerland's institutes of technology, traveled to campus in med October for a one-day meeting with faculty, students, and staff of the Integrated Concentration in Science (iCons) program, a new College of Natural Sciences curriculum that teaches undergraduate students to integrate various technology areas to solve global problems.



The Swiss team, including Prof. Thomas Rizzo, dean of science at EPFL, and Dr. Pascal Vuillomenet, were gathering information to support future construction of an integrated sciences program and building at EPFL for undergraduate students. They toured the Integrated Sciences Building and spent the day learning how the UMass Amherst iCons program is structured to provide interdisciplinary science education. Rizzo, Vuillomenet and colleagues told iCons director Scott Auerbach that they learned of iCons through an international article in [Chemical & Engineering News](#), published in July.

Auerbach said that in meetings on Oct 19, he and more than a dozen iCons faculty and staff from the biochemistry, biology, chemistry, computer science, geosciences, microbiology and physics departments described in detail the basic elements of iCons:

- problem-based science and engineering
- multi-disciplinary student teamwork
- student-driven learning
- peer and near-peer mentoring
- assessment and evaluation

The faculty also answered questions about how these elements are expressed in the four iCons offerings:

Year 1: Global Challenges, Science Solutions

Year 2: Integrative Science Communication

Year 3: Team Discovery Lab

Year 4: Interdisciplinary Capstone Research

More Information

[iCons - Scott Auerbach, director](#)