

Academic Program Termination: Professional Science Master's (PSM) in Applied Biotechnology (AB)

BACKGROUND

Program Proposed Termination Date

Fall 2018

Program Description

PSM program in Applied Biotechnology (PSM AB)

Link to full Curriculum Proposal System entry:

<https://secure.oregonstate.edu/ap/cps/proposals/view/93584>

The proposal is to terminate the PSM in Applied Biotechnology (PSM AB) degree. The original goal for the PSM AB was to provide graduate students with training, education, and professional development to enable them to be successful in a career in the biotechnology industry. At the time the PSM program was being created at OSU, there was a major nationwide effort to establish another graduate pathway for students in science using the Masters in Business Administration programs as a model. The Sloan Foundation was a major supporter of PSM program development. The PSM degree was designed as a non-thesis MS degree in which applied biotechnology course work was complemented by special courses in business management, communications, and ethics. The final degree requirement was completion of a four to six month internship. Students wrote a technical paper based on their internship experience and presented it to their committee for approval. Since its creation in 2003, a total of 29 students successfully completed the requirements for their non-thesis master's degree in this program. The last students were admitted in 2013 and completed the program by 2015. Most students were able to complete their degrees in under two years. The program is proposed for termination for the combination of reasons described below.

Program Context

In 2003, a grant from the Sloan Foundation was used to establish four PSM degrees on campus. The Molecular and Cellular Biology program (MCB) became one of these to allow students interested in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) disciplines to earn this non-thesis, interdisciplinary master's degree. To speed up the implementation of the PSM model, students were accepted into existing master's degree programs. From 2005-2010, students graduated with a MS in MCB with an area of concentration in Applied Biotechnology. In 2010, the PSM degree was created through a Category I process that involved review at the university and state level, and individual programs were included under this new degree. Beginning in 2011, graduates received a PSM degree in Applied Biotechnology.

In 2012, the Deans of the College of Science (COS), College of Agricultural Sciences and the Graduate School discussed ways to develop greater funding for the PSM programs on campus. Through those discussions, it became clear that there was little support for maintaining the central administrative structure necessary to administer the PSM program. The decision was made that the individual PSM programs should be given the opportunity to determine which professional courses best suit their students and individual PSM degrees should be fully managed within their respective degree-granting department or program.

As part of the ongoing discussions of the program, it became apparent that the PSM courses (PSM 513, 565, 566 and 567; PHL 547 and Comm 550) did not have enough students enrolled in the Ecampus courses to be self-supporting, and COS funds were no longer available to continue to pay instructors to offer these courses. These courses were the mainstay for the professional courses that PSM students needed to take, and there were no real alternatives for students.

The program has not been continued due to this lack of funding for administration and low enrollment in the PSM core courses along with challenges in finding suitable internships for students without dedicated central support. Students already admitted to the MS/PSM or PSM program were retained and completed their degree. However, the last cohort of students admitted to the program was in 2013. There is currently no dedicated staff for the PSM program. The website for the PSM program was dismantled in 2016. The PSM professional courses are no longer offered.

Program Financials

There is no budget for the PSM degree in Applied Biotechnology. There were no additional facilities or budget provided for the administration of the MCB PSM program. Faculty advising PSM students and serving on committees did so to support their research agenda and as part of their service to department and college.

RECOMMENDATION

All appropriate university committees and the OSU Faculty Senate have reviewed and support the proposed termination. The Provost recommends that the Academic Strategies Committee approve the termination of the PSM degree in Applied Biotechnology, effective Fall 2018, pending the approval of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission.