To: Department of Biology

From: James Ermatinger, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
Lynn Pardie, Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education & Research  
Harry Berman, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Subj: Memorandum of Understanding for continuation of MS degree

Date: 8/20/2010

The department of Biology has submitted a request (memorandum dated March 4, 2010) to allow a continuation of the MS program. The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education & Research, and Provost (hereafter Administration) believe that, in order for the graduate program to continue, it must become sustainable. The Biology Department (hereafter the Department) must realize that continuation of the graduate program will occur with limited resources due to the budget situation. For example, the Department will have only one graduate assistantship for fall 2010. The Biology faculty is therefore encouraged to seek outside grants to support their graduate students.

The Administration will agree to allow a continuation of the MS program in Biology as long as the Department agrees to two benchmarks of viability that can be tracked and compared across campus, and to the stipulated actions to strengthen recruitment and admission to the graduate program at the departmental level.

The benchmarks that the Administration sets as a minimum, and that must show improvements during the two years (2010-2012), are actual new student enrollments for fall 2011 at 10 and for fall 2012 at 10 (new spring enrollments will count towards the subsequent fall enrollments). For each academic year, these admissions must be confirmed by June 15th and students need to be enrolled by August 1st of the preceding fall semester. If this benchmark is not achieved by Fall of 2012, the Department agrees that admissions to the graduate program will be informally suspended. The 2nd benchmark will be a 3-year graduation rate of 30%. This benchmark must be achieved by Spring 2013.

The Department must also clearly delineate the procedures and responsibilities for assessing and acting on new applications, including clearly setting out a complete set of time-lines, responsible parties, and notifications. To accomplish this goal, the Department agrees to designate one faculty member as its graduate admissions director for the two-year period of continuous review and, as a department, to work closely with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education & Research to review and strengthen the graduate recruitment and departmental admissions process. At a minimum, it is expected that the Department will adopt and exercise best practices in responding to prospective student inquiries, in processing admission decisions, and in the timely notification of applicants.
The Department also agrees to take the lead in making the curricular revisions and developing the program recruitment materials proposed in its March 4th memo (under Immediate Changes to Marketing/Recruitment and First Year Program Changes), and to submit the material for review and approval through the appropriate governance committees and administrative offices. The Administration agrees to support the marketing efforts by allocating a budget of $5000 administered by the Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences to help cover marketing expenses such as travel to colleges to recruit, printing of materials, media advertising etc. The Department should work with the institution’s marketing office. The Administration will help in the marketing of the material, but not its creation. The Department must finalize proposed curricular revisions to the MS program including proposals such as a 3+2 BS/MS proposal or converting the program to online or blended delivery format. The Department agrees to submit the material for changes by October 2010 in order to move it through the governance. If the material is not submitted to the College of Liberal Arts and Science Curriculum Committee by October 31, 2010, the Department agrees to informal suspension of admissions to the graduate program for Fall 2011.

The Department’s acceptance of this memorandum of understanding requires that a vote on acceptance by the Biology Department faculty be taken and the final count entered below. A majority vote by the faculty and the signature of the Department Chair below will signify that the Department agrees to the terms and conditions of this memorandum of understanding.

vote of faculty 4 yes 2 no

Amy McEuen
Chair, Department of Biology

Jim Ermatinger
Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Lynn Pardie
Associate Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education & Research

Harry Berman
Provost & Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

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