

## MEMORANDUM

To: Sophia Maggelakis, Dean, COS  
From: Jeremy Haefner, Provost and Senior Vice President  
Subject: M.S. Biotechnology Concept Paper  
Date: May 1, 2016  
Cc: William Destler, Chris Licata

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Dean Maggelakis:

On behalf of President Destler and myself, I thank you and your faculty for the work you all do for the university, particularly as it pertains to the development of new academic programs. We know how much time and effort goes into writing an academic program concept paper and even more goes into the construction of an academic program. We also know that approving an academic program is an extremely serious commitment that the campus undertakes and so making sure that our review and decision-making process is as stringent as possible is a priority for me.

So thank you for submitting the concept paper for an M.S. in Biotechnology.

By way of context, it is important to understand the recent activity with regards to new programs here at RIT. An analysis of the new program activity found on the Academic Affairs Academic Program Management website

(<http://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/academicprogrammgmt/>) indicate the following:

- Since 2012 (when the conversion moratorium was lifted), there have been 52 concept papers for certificate, bachelor, masters, or doctoral degree programs;
- Of those 52 concept papers, 11 (including yours) were submitted for approval this spring;
- Of the remaining 41 papers, 39 received an approval for further development;
- Of the 39, 20 have emerged as full proposals that are currently under consideration by NYSED for approval;
- Of the 20, 16 have been approved, are now operational, and all have appropriate resource demands; and
- Of the 16 operational, less than 40% are meeting their enrollment targets.

Also, if we look at the new program proposal trajectory prior to the moratorium (2007-2012), there were 29 additional new programs approved by NYSED during that time period alone.

Finally, there was a full proposal approved by the Academic Senate this year which is part of the spring approval process. And I anticipate at least one additional full proposal before the end of the year.

I am sure you will agree that RIT is creative, ambitious and agile when considering new programs.

Adding to the context is the exciting new RIT Strategic Plan “Greatness through Difference” which articulates a number of bold goals and objectives that will place RIT in the forefront of higher education. While many goals could and will shape and impact the future programs we add to the portfolio, there are some that stand out. First, there are several goals that will push the university to becoming first among private universities for the production of STEM graduates. We wish to be first among private universities for graduating the most number of women STEM graduates, AALANA male STEM graduates, and Deaf and Hard-of-hearing STEM graduates. Second, we wish to increase graduate student enrollments by 30% in a fiscally prudent manner. Finally, we wish to materially increase our student-centered research footprint. All of these aspirations require considerable resources and strategic decisions.

It is in this context that I met with the President, SVP Jim Watters and SVP Jim Miller to review program proposals.

With regards to your concept paper for a Biotechnology M.S. program, President Destler did not approve this concept to move forward at this time and suggests that it be modified and resubmitted during or after the 2017-2018 academic year. We agree that this program offers a good fit for the strategic direction of the campus due to its research nature, its ability to attract women students, and its ability to increase graduate student enrollments at RIT. However, we have concerns that this program faces considerable competition (particularly from AITU schools) and would require aggressive marketing for a modest enrollment intake of 10 students per year. We have reservations that the program would require 2 new TT faculty lines and that there would be significant additional space demands put on the campus. The case made in the concept paper did not indicate why the computational research could not be achieved with the M.S. in Bioinformatics. We advise the faculty to develop an advanced certificate in order to test the market. Such a degree offers many additional advantages in that it could afford a stackable approach that would be enticing to part-time students.

Moving forward, we continue to encourage faculty to be creative and innovative with new academic program concepts. As general guidance, we suggest:

- Undergraduate and graduate degree programs that have a minimum intake of 15 1<sup>st</sup> year students (not including transfers);

- Graduate degree programs that offer a non-thesis option so as to appeal to the student wanting to upgrade their skill set;
- A focus on degree programs that will materially allow the campus to reach its goals of being a leader in STEM degrees, but that also include important pivotal skills from non-STEM disciplines;
- Degree programs, particularly graduate degrees, that offer degree completion through a set of stackable certificates;
- Degree programs that can be offered online or in a competency-based format so as to reduce costs, particularly capital expenses; and
- A freedom to pursue innovative approaches to both content and delivery methods such as the MicroMasters degrees.

While I regret conveying this outcome to you and your faculty, I thank you for submitting this concept paper and the work that went into its development.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Haefner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeremy Haefner  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs