



September 13, 2007

RE: Request to terminate Medical Biology Degree

Section I: Request

The College of Science is requesting the termination of the Medical Biology Degree that is administered by the College. The Medical Biology Degree was originally intended for those students wishing to attend medical or dental school. Candidates for the degree are required to complete 102 semester hours and be admitted to either medical or dental school. The application for graduation is typically done in the third year after all University requirements with the exception of upper division credit hours are fulfilled. After successful completion of the first year of professional school, the student transfers back to the U 20 credit hours, which then satisfies the upper division credit hour requirement and the degree is then conferred.

It is now the case that almost all medical schools and increasingly more dental schools require a BS or BA before admission. The majority of the twenty applicants for the Medical Biology Degree per year are dental students, but there are also applicants wishing to enter medically related professions such as chiropractors, etc. More recently, the College has had requests from students in the Pharm. D. program, who want to use the degree to obtain an undergraduate degree from the U.

Elimination of the degree will steer pre-professional students towards more traditional majors in the sciences. As the Medical Biology student only takes classes through their junior year, they typically do not take any science classes numbered 4000 or above. Elimination of the degree will lead to a modest demand in upper division science classes.

Students who are currently declared Medical Biology majors, or who become matriculated students at the University of Utah and declare Medical Biology as their major, will be allowed to graduate under the conditions and requirements of the General Catalog in the year they declare Medical Biology as their major. However, as stated in PPM 9-8 Rev 10, Section 6, in no case may a student select a set of requirements that was in effect more than four years prior to the catalog year in effect at the time of graduation. Therefore, if the Medical Biology Degree is discontinued at the end of the 2007-08 Academic Year, declared Medical Biology majors and those planning to declare Medical Biology as their major will have at most five years to complete the degree. With the assumed 2007-08 date of approval, the catalog life of the degree would expire in 2011-12, after which time this degree will no longer be offered by the University of Utah.

SECTION II: Need

According to Dr. Lynn Powell, Dean of Dental Education at the University of Utah School of Medicine, national trends indicate students applying to dental schools (the population best served by the Medical Biology degree) without bachelor's degrees in hand are at a significant disadvantage in the admissions process. In addition, numbers from the Pre-professional Advising Office indicate that an average of 20 students a year declare the Medical Biology major but only half those students actually graduate, the difference is due to students being denied admission to dental school. This creates a minor retention problem with those who have not been admitted or who have chosen to not accept their offer of admission, as they have few options for completing an alternative undergraduate degree in anything approaching a timely manner.

Eliminating the degree will enable pre-professional advisors at the University of Utah to fulfill their job description more fully, steering students into traditional bachelor's degrees and increasing the likeliness of student success in the dental school admissions process.

There may also be a net retention benefit to the university among this group of students in having them choose traditional majors, because many students now declare themselves Medical Biology majors and are subsequently unsuccessful at obtaining admission to dental school.

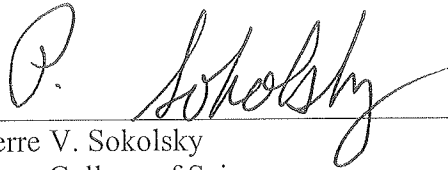
SECTION III: Institutional Impact

Institutional impact will be minimal. Student numbers in this major are very low. Tying the elimination to catalog year will be equitable for those already in our system. The Medical Biology degree is not an advertised degree and thus its termination should not pose a problem for recruitment. Students typically inquire about it in their sophomore or junior year after word of mouth has reached them. The pre-professional advisor, John Nilsson, has spoken with pre-health advisor counterparts at the other four-year in-state institutions and found that the University is out of step with all of them on this. The closest program is Brigham Young University's BS in Biology, which allows students to transfer a limited number of professional school credits to complete Biology department electives, but is in every other way the equivalent of a traditional Biology degree, including the core curriculum and capstone requirements.

In summary, the Medical Biology major is a relic of an era when dental school enrollments and admission requirements were low. Terminating this degree option will increase the chances of our student's success in the professional school application process.

SECTION IV: Finances

There should be very little or no financial impact to any of the departments in the College.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Sokolsky', is written over a horizontal line.

Pierre V. Sokolsky
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Professor of Physics

David W. Pershing
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