

October 12, 2014

University Faculty Senate,

In April 2010 the Faculty Senate provisionally approved the Master of Science (MS) in Bioinformatics & Computational Biology with a Concentration in Computational Sciences and a Concentration in Life Sciences, as well as the Professional Science Master's (PSM) degree in Bioinformatics with a concentration in Computational Sciences and a concentration in Life Sciences. Both the Bioinformatics & Computational Biology MS program and the Bioinformatics PSM program are scheduled for a Permanent Status Program Review (PSPR) in Spring 2015.

The Program Director and the Bioinformatics Steering Committee have initiated the review of the PSPR Self-Study reporting and approval process. Building upon the research strength, education resources and bioinformatics infrastructure from 16 departments and academic units across colleges and the Center for Bioinformatics & Computational Biology, the degree programs were designed to meet the needs of the emerging and rapidly expanding multi-disciplinary scientific discipline of Bioinformatics. In four years, the MS program has enrolled 23 students, graduated 11 students, majority of whom have gone on to PhD or MD programs, while others have secured industry positions. The PSM program, however, has graduated only one student, likely due to its extensive curriculum requirements (42 credits for PSM vs 33 credits for MS). Along with the Graduate Certificate in Bioinformatics approved in 2010 and the PhD program in Bioinformatics and Systems Biology approved two years later in 2012, 50 students have enrolled (currently 33) in these cross-college graduate programs, with primary thesis/dissertation faculty advisors from across 5 colleges. We expect a great upward potential for the enrollment, especially in light of recent career highlights (e.g., "An Explosion of Bioinformatics Careers" featured in the [sciencecareers.org](http://sciencecareers.org) in June 2014).

Given the complexities inherent in the Bioinformatics Master's programs, we are requesting an extension of two years to respond to the PSPR. Several issues will be addressed in the interim, including the potential of revamping the PSM program, the option of converting the College of Engineering-based MS program to an interdisciplinary program (as with the Bioinformatics PhD program), as well as cross-college resources needed for sustaining and expanding such a program. A two-year extension will allow us to conduct a thorough self-study with program assessment, and develop a thoughtful proposal for program changes to institutionalize the long-term sustainability and broaden the impact of the program.

Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or address any questions about our request.

Sincerely,



Cathy Wu  
Program Director



Errol Lloyd  
Chair



Babatunde Ogunnaike  
Dean