

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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December 23, 2004

Professor Linda Griffith
Chair, Biological Engineering Undergraduate Programs Committee
MIT, Room 16-492

Dear Linda,

My apologies for the delay in confirming more formally the details of the plan to control temporarily the size of the major in biological engineering, which was approved uniformly by the Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP). Much of this information was captured in the notes of the meeting of September 22, 2004, but I thought it would be helpful to convey directly the details of the plan upon which we agreed.



CUP members agreed wholeheartedly with Biological Engineering's assessment that student interest in the BE major would exceed the Institute's ability to provide the lab space and instructors needed to support a full enrollment of majors, at least in the short run. Therefore, the CUP approves as a five-year experiment your proposal to establish a lottery through which a fixed number of students will be allowed to declare biological engineering as a major. This approval is based on the understanding that, to be eligible for the lottery, students must pass BE.100 Statistical Thermodynamics of Biomolecular Systems in the fall of their sophomore year, and that this subject will be scheduled so that it does not conflict with the required subjects of majors from which lottery applicants would be drawn. It is the further understanding of the CUP that the lottery will be random and conducted via a web-based process during the last part of the fall term, and students will be able to enter the lottery only once during the fall term of their sophomore year. Students will be notified of the lottery's outcome in early January, and a wait list will be established. Students who do not lottery into the major, but who have a continued interest in biological engineering, will be assigned an advisor to provide input on professional development and selection of subjects that complement whatever major they decide to pursue.

With respect to timing, the CUP expects the first lottery to occur in Fall 2005 for major status beginning in Spring 2006. In Spring 2007, the Committee will review the implementation of the enrollment management plan with a focus on understanding student demand, assessing resource planning, and adjusting the enrollment management plan, if necessary, to ensure fairness. It is the CUP'S intent and expectation that the experiment will expire at the end of the five-year period in Spring 2010, at which point the necessary resources will be in place to satisfy the demand for the major. (In this respect CUP'S endorsement of this experiment is unlike other experiments; we are not testing whether the enrollment management plan will become permanent at the end of five years.) It is our expectation that freshmen in the Class of 2013 will be able to declare a major in biological engineering following the usual Institute

procedures. Until then, the CUP expects that the biological engineering major will not appear on the Freshman Choice of Major form with the available major options, but a note will indicate that the major is available to sophomores via a lottery and provide contact information through which students may seek further details.

Please contact Anna Frazer or me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Mark Schuster", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

J. Mark Schuster
Chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program

cc: R. Bras
R. Kamm
D. Lauffenburger
A. Meyer
R. Brown
T. Magnanti