



**FOR APPROVAL AND RECOMMENDATION**

**TO:** Arts & Science Council

**SPONSOR:** Mary Pugh, Acting Vice-Dean, Undergraduate & International

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**DATE:** December 6, 2017 for December 13, 2017

**AGENDA ITEM:** 5

**ITEM OF BUSINESS:**

**Closure of the Specialist Program in Developmental Biology, Department of Cell and Systems Biology**

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

Section IV-7 of Arts & Science Council's Constitution indicates "Council shall consider the content, quality, and requirements of the academic programs and courses of study that lead to degrees, diplomas, certificates, credit and non-credit courses over which the Faculty has authority; **it shall consider proposals for the closure of any such programs or courses of study** [emphasis added]; and it shall monitor the quality and standards of the programs and courses of study."

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

1. **Arts & Science Council [For approval and recommendation] – December 13, 2017**
2. Committee on Academic Policy and Programs [For approval] – January 11, 2017

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

The Developmental Biology Specialist program within Cell & Systems Biology has seen a dramatic drop in enrolment over the last ten years: approximately 100 to 10, and now six, as admissions were administratively suspended this past spring. This is contrast with enrolment in the Cell and Molecular Biology specialist and major, which has grown considerably (zero to 40 and 600, respectively). A self-study in the spring of 2015 identified this closure as worthy of consideration given there is also significant overlap between this specialist and the CMB specialist; the self-study also identified a need to reflect current developmental biology research, especially on stem cells."

Last year, the Department introduced a focus in "Stem Cells and Developmental Biology" (along with two other focuses), finding in effect a better curricular format to set this line of disciplinary research in the broader context of the Cell and Molecular Biology specialist. This also helped ensure developmental biology would be connected to more current research of relevance to students. On top of that, the focus integrates a learning community to provide enriched academics through exposure

to peers, alumni, and faculty associated with this area of learning and research. Student consultation regarding the creation of the focus was positive when it was clear that the focus could not only provide direction and flexibility in the same needed course offerings, but would address weakness in the developmental biology specialist: engagement in second year, a narrower menu of CSB courses (reducing the need to take courses from other departments), and provide small-group learning through the learning community. There was some discussion around the fact that the focus has a grade requirement for entry, but there were no strong objections.

Student consultation also confirmed no objections to closing the specialist as long as current students were accommodated. There are currently six active students and the expectation is they will be accommodated with a final closure of the program in June 2022. There are fifteen inactive students also in the program, and there is a commitment to allow them to finish their developmental biology program should they return, with one-on-one counseling to help them manage changes in course options.

**MOTION:**

THAT the closure of the Specialist Program in Developmental Biology, as described in the attached proposal, be approved, with full effect on June 30, 2022.