NEW GRADUATE DEGREE OFFERS DIVERSE CAREER OPTIONS

THE BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT now offers an innovative graduate degree, the Professional Science Master’s (PSM), for students seeking an alternative career option. PSM programs are designed to allow students to pursue advanced training in science, technology, engineering and mathematics while simultaneously developing workplace skills that are highly valued by the life sciences workforce community. San Francisco State University’s (SFSU) PSM program, with two new concentrations in Biotechnology and Stem Cell Science, obtained final academic approval from the California State University Office of the Chancellor in July 2009. In the development of this program, a CSU system-wide PSM initiative initially completed a feasibility study, which included a statewide and local industry-needs assessment, and a statewide student-interest survey. The positive outcome of the feasibility study resulted in a three-year grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation to help advance PSM programs on 14 CSU campuses (including SFSU) — making the CSU the largest statewide higher education system to launch PSM degree programs on multiple campuses. SFSU is an ideal location for this program as it serves one of the most diverse student populations in the nation and is centralized in the Bay Area’s vibrant biotechnology industry.

The SFSU PSM program, formally affiliated with the Council of Graduate Schools and the National PSM Association, plans to admit its first cohort class of graduate students in Fall 2010. The core curriculum will include two years of interdisciplinary training in science, technology and business, along with applied research or industrial internships that will prepare graduates for diverse professional careers in biomedical and biotechnology industries, government and non-profit organizations. Students enrolled in the PSM in Stem Cell Science will participate in the newly awarded stem cell student-training program. In spring 2009, SFSU became a training ground for future stem cell researchers through the recognition and support of the California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM). The new stem cell biology training program prepares a skilled workforce that will keep California on the leading edge of stem cell research. It also trains students from diverse backgrounds, helping to ensure that the future stem cell workforce reflects the state’s diverse population.

For more information about the PSM program, visit http://biology.sfsu.edu/faculty-pages/professional-science-masters, http://www.sfsu.edu/~psm or email: psm@sfsu.edu, lilychen@sfsu.edu.

PHOTO CAPTION: Lily Chen, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Director of the PSM Program, worked with Bay Area life science industry leaders to develop two new PSM degree concentrations in Biotechnology and Stem Cell Science.