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NEWS

Job demand has BU putting more students on fast track

By Debbie Swartz  
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VESTAL -- Fast-track programs, intended to let students earn a bachelor's and master's degree in five years, are becoming more popular at Binghamton University.

The programs -- offered for a variety of majors -- benefit students in several ways, Graduate School Dean Nancy Stamp said. Not only do students take graduate classes their senior year, while paying an undergraduate admission, they also get their degrees one to three semesters quicker than students enrolled in traditional programs.

"They're getting through faster and saving money," Stamp said.

The programs are designed for students who have a clear idea of their career goals, she said, because there is little room in the accelerated schedule for a student to sample other majors. "It's not for every student," Stamp said.

Several BU fast-track programs were recently approved by the state Department of Education, including several programs for future math and science teachers. The college did not offer an undergraduate teacher program, leading prospective students to study elsewhere, associate professor of science education Tom O'Brien said. Now, BU offers prospective students the chance to obtain a master of arts in teaching in several fields, including physics, biology, chemistry, geology and mathematics. Teachers in those fields are in demand, and students have already signed up for programs that begin in the fall.

"We're at a time when there are real needs out there," he said.

Programs also are available for Harpur College of Arts & Sciences majors, and allow them to get a master's in business administration in five years, Stamp said. Accounting, philosophy, economics and several engineering majors also are available as a fast-track program.

Within months, BU also could gain state approval of other fast-track programs, Stamp said -- including three master's in public administration degree options.

Fast-track programs are popular with many high school juniors and seniors who are looking to save money while getting a college education, she said.

"For those students who know what they want to do, it's a great program," Stamp said.

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