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Members of the Board of Trustees
New Jersey Institute of Technology
Newark, NJ 07102

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

I am a faculty member in the Department of Mathematical Sciences, an associate faculty member in the Federated Department of Biological Sciences (Rutgers/NJIT), and a member of the Graduate Faculty in the Behavioral Neuroscience Program at Rutgers Newark. My areas of expertise are Mathematical and Computational Neuroscience and Dynamical Systems. I build and analyze mathematical models of rhythmic behavior in the nervous system in an effort to contribute to the understanding of how the brain works both in health and disease. My research is inherently interdisciplinary. I have collaborated with theoretical and experimental scientists both at NJIT and other research institutions. I have regularly presented my results at international meetings. This letter is in response to the decision by Provost Gatley, with the concurrence of Dr. Bloom and the Board of Trustees, to deny my sabbatical leave request for the Academic Year 2012-13, despite its strong recommendation by my Chair, my Dean, and the NJIT Sabbatical Committee.

Since joining NJIT in September 2006 I have published 11 papers in prominent scientific journals, a significant accomplishment in applied mathematics, and have been continuously funded by the National Science Foundation since 2008. I have taught, mentored, and advised both undergraduate and graduate students, and I have developed most of the graduate courses I have taught. I believe that we, as members of the academic community, have scientific, educational and social obligations that go beyond our strictly contractual obligations. Based on this "social contract", I have helped students in their effort to become educated professionals and citizens that can positively contribute to both their technical/scientific fields and society.

As it is the norm in research universities, I am expected to be not only an expert but also a leader in my field. This has been further emphasized in my "tenure letter" (June 2, 2011) which reads "A central feature of this [tenure] process was a review of past achievements and an assessment of future potential. You have been identified as one who will play a significant role in NJIT's future. The university can flourish only when

its senior faculty exhibit leadership in their various roles. I am confident that our expectation of you will be fully realized."

The denial of my sabbatical leave application will have a profound negative impact on my work and career. The collaborative work done during a sabbatical leave is an integral component to building productive long-term scientific collaborations which are of paramount importance for the success of interdisciplinary research. Such collaborations increase the scientific productivity of NJIT faculty, provide opportunities for external funding, and increase research opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students to work on cutting-edge scientific problems. I have worked hard to build such collaborations both within and outside NJIT.

My sabbatical proposal aimed at further developing my collaborative efforts. I proposed to further my collaboration with Dr. G. Buzsaki's *in vivo* experimental group at the NYU Medical School and to learn and develop novel data analysis techniques with Dr. E. Tabak at the NYU Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences. Both world-renowned scientists have generously extended invitations for me to join their research groups for next academic year.

The denial of my sabbatical leave has a detrimental effect on my collaborative research and a negative impact of both my reputation and that of NJIT. This decision will harm my research projects and compromise my academic career by affecting my future publications, the quality and nature of my future grant applications, my ability to provide research opportunities for students, and to develop new courses reflecting the state of the art in the fields mentioned above. This, in turn, will affect my future evaluations and my chances for future promotion relative to my colleagues at NJIT and elsewhere.

Based on the reasonable expectation that my application would be approved, I had made commitments for next academic year. The unexpected denial of my sabbatical leave is not merely an inconvenience to me and my collaborators but a blemish to the reputation of a highly-regarded research university. Such commitments are made in advance of the sabbatical approvals with the expectation that they would be approved if strongly recommended. I would like to emphasize that no serious and productive sabbatical plan can be made nor serious sabbatical and productive proposal can be written unless such commitments are made in advance. In fact, Provost Gatley's August 9, 2011 memo to the Faculty stating the Guidelines for Sabbatical Leave for the 2012-2013 Academic Year explicitly calls not only for letters of invitation but also for "proof that arrangements have been made to secure the facilities necessary to conduct the research" and for supplements to the sabbatical application such as "Additional relevant information, such as external grants or job offers..."

In his letter of February 1, 2012, rejecting my sabbatical application, Provost Gatley states that this year there was a large number of strongly recommended applications (15), and that he cannot concur that NJIT is able to have so many faculty members away at this time. In addition, he has stated that by approving a larger

number of sabbaticals he would lose his credibility in front of the Board of Trustees. Dr. Bloom and the Board of Trustees have concurred with the Provost's decision. Only 7 strongly recommended sabbaticals were approved by the Board of Trustees. I disagree with this decision and with the arguments that led to it for the following reasons.

First, faculty members on sabbatical leave are still members of the NJIT community and participate on teaching activities through mentoring of students. They are relieved from classroom and administrative duties. The consequences of this are largely justified by the benefits, both short and long term, explained above.

Second, the number of strongly recommended sabbatical leaves granted for next academic year (7) is a much smaller number than the average number granted in the last few years (12.4). The former number (7) is approximately 2.5% of the NJIT Faculty. Granting all 15 strongly recommended sabbatical applications would result in approximately 5% of the Faculty on leave. This number is certainly less than one seventh of the total Faculty (14%, the percentage of faculty that would be eligible for sabbaticals in any given year). In fact, the main problem of NJIT is not that there are too many sabbaticals granted but that there are too few.

Finally, keeping my word and commitment to my collaborators, given in good faith, is as important as the word and credibility of anybody else on campus irrespective of rank and position. It is the mentoring responsibility of high-ranking academic administrators to do their best to assist research-active faculty members achieve their potential which will derive to the benefit of our Institute. To keep my credibility intact, in the next academic year I have to comply with both my responsibilities on campus and the commitments I have made to my collaborators off campus. The short-sighted decision to deny my sabbatical leave has put an additional undue burden on me, potentially harming my academic career.

I hope the Board of Trustees will come to the conclusion that reconsidering their decision on sabbaticals for next academic year will have serious positive ramifications for both the affected individuals and the university.

Sincerely,

Horacio G. Rotstein, PhD

CC: Dr. Joel Bloom
Dr. I. Gatley
Dr. F. Deek
Dr. J. Luke
Dr. M. Jonakait
Department of Human Resources

