

Internal Academic Review Committee

Report on the Review of the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology

Both the external consultants and the university review team offer high praise for the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, noting that it ranks among the top departments in its field nationwide. The Department is described as having undergone a dramatic transformation in the past few years. It has strengthened and broadened its research profile and has experienced a remarkable increase in external funding and awards received by faculty members in the unit. High quality programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels are well established, and a number of innovative teaching techniques have been developed and implemented in support of these programs. Moreover, the Department has maintained a collegial environment and has demonstrated resilience in preserving excellence in teaching and scholarship in the face of increasing enrolments in the undergraduate ranks and continuing budgetary and staffing pressures.

Major Recommendations:

1. STAFFING ISSUES: One of the major challenges facing the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology is the need for revitalization and retention in both the faculty and staff complements. Technical and support staff reductions have resulted in increased workloads and stress, threatening not only general morale but potentially the quality of the educational experience. Renewal on the faculty side is also necessary and important to maintain the quality of both teaching and research. The IARC has recommended that the five Departments in the Basic Health Sciences group work together to meet the range

of staffing challenges - faculty, technical and support staff - that they are all facing. (see “Common Themes” submission)

2. UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING LABORATORIES: The Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology is facing the same pressures as all of the units in the Basic Health Sciences group insofar as the laboratories used in the delivery of the Life Sciences program are concerned. As noted in the report from the university Review Team, hands-on training is an essential element of a high quality anatomy teaching program and therefore resolving the problems related to the laboratories must be a priority. The IARC has recommended that the five Basic Health Sciences Departments examine this issue collectively and work toward an integrated solution. (see “Common Themes” submission)

3. STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN: Over the past several years, the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology has moved from a single focus on teaching gross anatomy to becoming a highly research-intensive unit involved in a number of leading-edge fields of multi-disciplinary study, such as neurobiology, cardiovascular research, and fertility and reproduction. The move away from confining research endeavours within traditional disciplinary boundaries, and expanding to interdisciplinary research themes is evident throughout the Basic Health Sciences units. The IARC has recommended that the Basic Health Sciences Departments continue to collaborate in research endeavours and build on their strengths through the support of theme-centred efforts and other interdepartmental ventures. (see “Common Themes” submission) Within the context of an integrated

approach, it is recommended that the Department of Anatomy develop a strategic research plan which would target specific directions for future development and complement the multi-disciplinary research themes identified as priorities within the Faculty of Health Sciences.

4. GRADUATE PROGRAM: The Department of Anatomy faces the same challenge as other units in the Basic Health Sciences group in the recruitment of graduate students, particularly at the doctoral level. The IARC is recommending that the Departments work together to develop a recruiting strategy that will highlight the active interdisciplinary research environment and reach beyond the pool of Queen's undergraduate Life Sciences students to attract students from across the country and around the world. (see “Common Themes” submission)

Outcomes of the Review:

The following response was submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and presented at the Basic Science Council:

The continuing evolution of scientific discovery has outgrown many of the traditional disciplines that have comprised the Basic Medical Sciences. Where we once had disciplines based on anatomic, functional or biochemical levels of knowledge, advances in science have moved knowledge and research to a more fundamental commonality.

Furthermore, research increasingly embraces the breadth of inquiry from the gene to the health of populations, involving those from a variety of “traditional” disciplines, no longer so relevant. In fact, many of our research programs cross Faculties and have become thematic, addressing health issues deliberately, such as Cancer, Heart and Stroke, etc.

Reflecting this reality, our educational programs have become collaborative and generic at the undergraduate level, and thematically follow our research programs at the graduate level.

It is within this context that budgetary constraints causing harsh consequences provide an opportunity for optimizing our various functions and responsibilities. The following initiatives have been taken or are being considered:

- 1 The Canada Research Chair allocation process is strategic, non departmental, and vested in the Research Advisory Committee of the FHS. CRCs are the major source of new faculty at present.
- 2 Basic Science Council will discuss further the creation of a Basic Science staffing committee.
- 3 Basic Science Council, Research programs and Departments will be encouraged to develop policies to recruit graduate students from a wider national and international pool.
- 4 Basic Science Council will be asked to create a subcommittee to review all the undergraduate laboratory curricula with the view of further integration and cost-effectiveness.
- 5 Basic Science Council will be asked to consider ways and means of integrating the annual budget preparation, with the goal of avoiding any duplications and improving administrative and academic efficiencies.
- 6 The FHS is dedicated to furthering our existing Research Strategy, which is thematic and programmatic, has been recently reviewed and ratified, and which is firmly embedded in the strategic plan of the Faculty.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place in the annual budget and staffing strategy meetings between the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Vice-Principal (Academic).