Internal Academic Review Committee

Report on the Review of the Department of Physiology

The Department of Physiology is recognized as a strong and healthy unit that has already made substantial progress in its strategic plans, despite the budget constraints within which it has been functioning. While it is evident that research activities are a priority in its strategic planning, it is equally apparent that the Department is strongly committed to excellence in teaching and learning. Features of the Department as highlighted in the reports of the External Consultants and the Review Team include: highly regarded undergraduate and graduate programs; enthusiastic and collegial faculty members who are noted for their exceptional success in obtaining external peer-reviewed research funding; and a loyal staff complement all of whom are dedicated to excellence in what they do. The Department of Physiology has a generally sound and positive prognosis for the future as it moves through its impressive transformation. Nevertheless, it does face some challenges in this evolution, as noted below.

Major Recommendations:

1. UNDERGRADUATE LABORATORIES: The undergraduate teaching laboratories contribute significantly to the quality of the programs in Life Sciences, Medicine and Nursing, and indeed are of crucial importance to the continued excellence of the Life Sciences program in particular. Everyone involved in the internal academic review process expressed concern about the current state of these laboratories. This is a problem that is common to all of the Basic Health Sciences Departments and the IARC has

recommended an integrated approach to resolving this issue. (see "Common Themes" submission).

2. GRADUATE EDUCATION: The Department has been proactive in rebuilding its graduate program and increasing its overall enrolment to optimal levels. Efforts to recruit more doctoral level students should be continued at both the national and international levels, especially through exploitation of the opportunity provided by the establishment of interdisciplinary research entities. The IARC is recommending a collaborative approach to developing a strategy for the recruitment of graduate students and recognizes that greater opportunities to attract graduate students will ensue from building on research strengths and aligning graduate programs with interdisciplinary entities such as the Centre for Neuroscience Studies (CNS) and the Cardiac, Circulatory and Respiratory Research Program (CCRRP). (see "Common Themes" submission)

Other Recommendations that the Department may wish to consider

1. The IARC recommends that the Department review and up-date relevant course Calendars so that they accurately reflect current offerings both in the undergraduate Life Sciences program as well as in the graduate programs.

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).