

University of Washington Correspondence

INTERDEPARTMENTAL

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May 17, 2000

To: Lee L. Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha L. Landolt
Dean and Vice Provost

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'M. Landolt', is written over the printed name and title.

Re: Five-Year Review of Department of Comparative Medicine MS Degree Program

Recommended Action: At its meeting of December 16, 1999, the Graduate School Council considered the results of the 5-year review of the Master's degree program of the Department of Comparative Medicine. Within the community, this is viewed as a model academic program. It fits very well with the service mission of the Department. The Graduate School Council recommended conversion of the MS tracks from provisional to continuing status with a review in 5 years. I concur with the conversion in status, but recommend that the next review be conducted in 10 years.

The self-study, the report of the review committee, and the Department's response to the report are attached.

Background. Comparative Medicine achieved departmental standing in the School of Medicine in 1989 after beginning as Experimental Animal Medicine and then Division of Animal Medicine. The post-DVM training program, supported by a training grant from the National Center for Research Resources of NIH, has existed since 1982. In 1993, the Department was provisionally authorized to award the Master of Science degree in Comparative Medicine pending review in five years. The MS has evolved into a four-year curriculum. During the first year, trainees are supported through an internship. During subsequent years, support comes from the training grant. This program is one of a small number nationally and is regarded as a model, perhaps the best program of its kind. The MS degree is advantageous for the employment of DVM's in the academic, industrial and governmental research environments.

Dr. Gerald Van Hoosier, former departmental Chair, continues as PI of the NIH training grant. He supervises the trainees and does a significant amount of teaching in the Department's courses. The MS and NIH training programs rely heavily on his expertise. The expected retirement of Dr. Van Hoosier and his central role in the program contributed significantly to the recommendation that the program be reviewed in 5 years. However, given the abilities of the Department's faculty, the current Chair, Dr. Melvin Dennis, and their commitment to this training program, I am confident that they will respond well.

The faculty have diverse interests and good to strong records of independent and collaborative research. The faculty's clinical expertise encompasses many of the certified veterinary subspecialties. Among the key services they provide is the development and characterization of mutant mice in the Transgenic Core Facility, a state-of-the-art facility appropriately made use of in the training program. The training program and the Regional Primate Research Center also mutually benefit one another.

Recommendations made by the review committee and Graduate School Council:

1. The Master of Science degree program should be converted from provisional to continuing status. Because this is a small program with few graduates and a curriculum that is still evolving, and because of the impending retirement of Dr. Van Hoosier, who has been a key to the success of the program, a review in five years was recommended. The high regard for the program, the abilities of the current Chair and the quality of the faculty convince me that a review in 10 years is appropriate.
2. All students entering the post-doctoral training programs should be expected to complete the MS degree during their training unless they already possess a MS in another scientific discipline or are working toward a Ph.D. in another science department. The Department has agreed to require this commitment of students entering the program in 2000.
3. The training program should be expanded to offer three-year MS degrees to non-DVM's. Non-veterinarians committed to careers in biomedical research involving extensive, highly technical use of animals could derive professional benefit from a Master's degree in Comparative Medicine, although this may entail some modification in the structure and content of the current program. The fact that non-DVM students could not be supported by the current NIH training grant limits the ability of the Department to adopt this recommendation.
4. In response to statements in the self-study that the department was considering the introduction of a PhD program, the committee suggested that such a program is not needed. Students seeking a PhD are well served by existing programs on campus and the independent research strengths of the faculty appear to be insufficient to support a PhD. Before a PhD within the Department could be considered, the independent funding base would need to be broadened to allow more opportunity for students to do sponsored research projects with Comparative Medicine faculty.
5. Student access to training and research opportunities in the transgenic facility and the primate center should be increased. Given the roles many will fill after graduation, students would also benefit from training in management skills and facilities design.
6. The curriculum of the MS degree program needs to be more standardized, with consistent course syllabi and well-defined support material, and less customization of courses for individual students. A standard schedule of classes also needs to be determined. The Department is working on meeting these expectations. They are also updating recruitment materials, as recommended.

Attachments

cc: Melvin Dennis, Chair
Professor Gerald Van Hoosier
Associate Dean Daniel M. Dorsa
Dean Paul G. Ramsey
Professor James S. Fine, Committee Chair

Professor Marilyn C. Roberts
Professor Susanna Cunningham
Professor Ann B. Kier
Professor Christian E. Newcomer