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To: David B. Thorud, Acting Provost
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From: Gail L. Dubrow
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Subject: Rehabilitation Medicine MOT 5-Year Review

Summary and Recommended Action

At its meeting of April 22, 2004, the Graduate School Council met with members of the team that reviewed the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine's Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) degree program, the Chair and faculty of the Department, and the Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Education. The Council unanimously recommended that the provisional status of the degree program be changed to continuing status, with the next review scheduled for the 2013-2014 academic year.

I concur with the Council's recommendations and comments.

Background

The Department of Rehabilitation offers the Bachelor of Science in prosthetics and orthotics, the Master of Science, Master of Occupational Therapy, and the Doctor of Physical Therapy degree programs. The Department received Board of Regents approval to offer the Master of Occupational Therapy degree program in 1998. The Department's Master of Physical Therapy degree program was modified to be an entry level doctoral program in response to changes in the field and national accreditation standards. In autumn 2003 Board of Regents authorized the Department to offer the Doctor of Physical Therapy program.

The Master of Occupational Therapy is a practice-oriented graduate program that prepares students for professional practice while it simultaneously facilitates leadership skills in practice, administration, and research. The MOT program currently has five full-time state-funded faculty and one part-time clinical faculty member. The MOT faculty have been in the unit from 10-26 years, except for one faculty member who was hired in 2000. They are recognized as national leaders in the field and serve on numerous national professional committees. Faculty have been

highly productive both in published research and grant funding, which the review committee noted. They are involved in major research related to pain, traumatic brain injury, measurement development, vision impairments, health disparities, and assistive technology. The MOT program is ranked in the top 10 nationally among the 140 entry-level graduate occupational therapy programs.

The review committee was comprised of five faculty, three internal and two from other universities. Felix Billingsley, Professor and Chair of Special Education in the College of Education, was the committee chair; other internal members were Ruth Craven, Professor, Department of Biobehavioral Nursing and Health Systems, Forrest Bennett, Professor, Clinical Training Unit, Center for Human Development and Disability. The external committee members were Ben Atchison, Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy, Western Michigan University, and Kenneth Ottenbacher, Senior Associate Dean of the University of Texas Medical Branch. The review committee met with faculty, students, staff, and administrative faculty during the review site visit on January 29 and 30, 2004.

Graduate School Council Findings

The Graduate School Council supported the review committee's findings that the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine's excellence extends to the Master of Occupational Therapy degree program. The department enjoys outstanding leadership, both in the Chair and the Head of the Occupational Therapy program, and it has attracted high quality faculty and students. The Chair's collaborative approach to management and his high regard, respect and support for the faculty contribute to a positive working and learning environment in the occupational therapy program.

The program recently was accredited for ten years by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education, which noted the program's excellence in the curriculum design and content, and the high quality of faculty and students. The University of Washington's MOT serves as a model among all entry-level graduate occupational therapy programs. According to the review committee, few programs have a full complement of doctorally prepared faculty who – in addition to demonstrating a high degree of scholarly activity and productivity – are clearly committed to creating an excellent teaching-learning environment. External members of the review team acknowledged that the basis for the MOT program's excellence is the faculty's collegial and collaborative approach to their work.

Evaluations of the program by fieldwork supervisors, employers, recent graduates and alumni attest to its high quality. Program graduates possess exceptional clinical skills and a strong knowledge base for entry-level practice in the field. The pass rate of 95-100 percent on the National Board for Certification of Occupational Therapists examination, compared to the national pass rate of 81 percent, is a measure both of the quality of students admitted into the MOT program as well as the quality of the education and training they receive at the UW. The review committee noted the program is positioned to maintain its national ranking and peer recognition as a top entry-level, graduate program in occupational therapy.

MOT program faculty have created a rich student learning environment by drawing upon intra-departmental, interdepartmental, research centers, and community resources. For example, the Experimental Education Unit and Clinical Training Unit within the Center for Human Development and Disabilities expose students to the interdisciplinary team process and early intervention approaches. This is to be commended.

The recruitment efforts and the curriculum reflect the program's commitment to enhancing diversity and creating a culturally sensitive learning environment that will influence their graduates' approach to practice. Diversity within the student body includes students of color from various groups and people with disabilities. The review committee urged greater effort to increase the participation of men (who are underrepresented in the field) and students of color, particularly African-American students.

The lack of institutional resources, particularly space, presents major challenges for maintaining the high quality of the MOT program into the future. Classroom space for instruction and dedicated space for research laboratories and equipment storage are critical needs. Potential faculty research space in the Center for Human Development and Disabilities does not meet building code and needs renovation. The review team called for adequate support staff to free up faculty time for teaching and research. The faculty was commended for building a strong program and maintaining a high level of productivity despite gaps in resources. With projected growth of the MOT program and departmental interest in developing a Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Sciences, the review committee called for focused attention to remedying outstanding resource needs to ensure the program's high quality in the long-term.

Council Recommendations

The Council applauded the outstanding leadership of the department and program, and recognized the high standards of excellence achieved by the occupational therapy program faculty. The Council recommended a change for the program from provisional to continuing status, concurring with the review committee's recommendation that the MOT program be reviewed again in seven years, which would coincide with the department's next accreditation review.

The Council noted the importance to the department of the research space in the Center for Human Development and Disabilities and the negative impact on faculty of losing the facility. The School of Medicine Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education indicated that new building development and expansion of the School of Medicine facilities will provide an opportunity to address the department's space needs in the next five years.

The Council supports the review committee's recommendation that the department consider developing an interdisciplinary Doctor of Philosophy in Rehabilitation Sciences, rather than a clinical doctorate. The department is well positioned to offer the PhD with its location in the School of Medicine and the UW Medical Center, particularly in light of the collaborative relationships already established.

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