



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

*The Graduate School*

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To: Lee Huntsman  
Provost

From: Marsha Landolt  
Dean

Re: Ten-year review of graduate programs in the School of Pharmacy

*Summary and recommended action:*

At its meeting of November 1, 2001, the Graduate School Council met with members of the School of Pharmacy review committee and representatives from the School of Pharmacy. The School consists of three departments—Medicinal Chemistry, Pharmaceutics, and Pharmacy—each of which offers M.S. and Ph.D. degrees. The School also offers the 2-year prepharmacy and 4-year professional Pharm.D. degrees, although these are outside the purview of the current review. The review committee concluded that the School is “outstanding”—“a thriving center for excellence in research and education that is ranked as a ‘Top-Five’ program nationally.” The committee particularly noted the strengths of the School’s strategic focus and cross-departmental collaboration, but it warned that recent changes in staffing could threaten the School’s standing. The Council echoed these findings and recommended the continuation of all degree programs. I concur with the Council’s recommendations.

The self-study, the report of the review committee, and the School’s response are attached.

*Background*

The School currently consists of 48 full and part-time faculty members and 51 graduate students in its three departments. The faculty in the Departments of Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmaceutics are world-class leaders with particular strengths in the areas of drug disposition and biotransformation. Both departments are positioned to maintain or even improve their stature through their research collaboration in the emerging areas of pharmacogenetics and molecular mechanisms. The Pharmaceutical Outcomes Research and Policy Program (PORPP) in the Department of Pharmacy is off to a strong start and should continue to thrive under its current leadership. Students in all three programs are enthusiastic and justifiably confident of their career opportunities post-graduation.

The review committee identified three primary risks that face the School:

1. The loss of senior Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmaceutics faculty. It is vital that the School attract high quality new faculty replacements that will catalyze its evolution into

the fields of pharmacogenomics and molecular pharmacy. Competition for qualified faculty is intense among top schools that have recently invested in these fields. The committee feared that there is a significant risk of slipping in national ranking if a high-quality mix of senior and junior replacements cannot be attracted to the UW.

2. Loss to the dot.com industry of the senior leadership in PORPP. There is currently an unfavorable balance of younger to older faculty, exacerbated by state funding constraints.
3. Inadequate resources for recruiting faculty replacements. Pharmaceuticals recently failed to recruit a targeted replacement because of an inadequate recruiting package. Uncertainties regarding the availability of faculty replacement lines and recruiting packages in Medicinal Chemistry put the department at significant risk. These programs and the PORPP must be able to compete on relatively equal financial footing with competing institutions.

The committee recommended, therefore, that:

1. The University should return two Medicinal Chemistry faculty positions at the mid-to-senior level as quickly as possible.
2. If the hiring of mid-level faculty remains difficult, the School should hire junior faculty to provide good long-term balance to the faculty distribution and catalyze expertise in pharmacogenetics.
3. The School should fill the senior PORPP faculty line, and plan for careful expansion of the student population.
4. The University should consider a broad pharmacogenetics/genomics and proteomics initiative led by the School.
5. The University should consider creative financing options for the initiatives in pharmacogenomics and proteomics.
6. The School should raise its visibility among U.W. undergraduates so as to enhance prospective graduate student recruiting efforts. One mechanism that could be considered is to design and offer an upper division course on drug disposition and development to students in biochemistry and other related disciplines.
7. The School should continue to restructure and streamline coursework in Medicinal Chemistry.
8. The School should continue to improve the focus and integration of the Biostructure program into the mainstream of the Medicinal Chemistry Department.

The School responded positively to the committee's recommendations and in some instances has already acted on them. It plans to initiate a series of staggered faculty searches in the Department of Medicinal Chemistry in early 2002. It has assembled a working group to consider the establishment and coordination of a School-led pharmacogenomics funding initiative. It is working with the Office of Research to enhance proteomics capabilities at the University, and it has planned additional recruitment trips to departments of chemistry, biochemistry and biology at 4-year institutions in the State. After three failed attempts to fill a mid-level faculty position in Pharmaceuticals, it has successfully recruited a junior faculty member. Budgetary constraints have hindered the School's ability to fill the senior line in the PORPP; however, the School has worked to address the program's needs by, for instance, appointing two professors to the PORPP group through affiliate and joint appointments.

The committee warned that, while the current faculty and research programs are considered "top five," the School and the University should view this as a foundation for building even stronger programs in the future. It concluded that "the major pieces of research excellence and new initiatives seem to be in place for continued evolution to maintain a vigorous and cutting-edge School of Pharmacy in the next century."

c: Richard McCormick, President  
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Christophe Verlinde, Assistant Professor, Biological Structure  
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