



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

The Graduate School

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To: Phyllis Wise, Provost
Ana Mari Cauce, Executive Vice Provost
Office of the Provost, Box 351237

From: Suzanne Ortega, Vice Provost and Dean
Melissa Austin, Associate Dean for Academic Programs
The Graduate School

RE: Department of Physiology and Biophysics Program Review 10-Year Review

At its meeting of January 26, 2006, the Graduate School Council met with members of the team that reviewed the Department of Physiology and Biophysics, John Slattery (Vice Dean, Research and Graduate Education, School of Medicine), Stanley Froehner (Professor and Chair, Department of Physiology and Biophysics), Fred Rieke (Professor of Physiology and Biophysics), and Stacey Simmons (Graduate Program Manager).

The Department of Physiology and Biophysics was last reviewed in 1995. The M.S. and Ph.D. programs were granted continuing status at that time, with subsequent review in 10 years. The review site visit was conducted on May 3-4, 2005, at which time the review committee met with Department faculty, students, and staff.

The review committee reported that the "PBio" Department has a stellar reputation, both nationally and internationally, based on its contributions to the field of physiology, including neuroscience, cardiovascular physiology, and biophysics. The Department consistently ranks among the top 10 departments nationally, has made seminal research contributions, and its faculty have authored leading textbooks. It has been successful in recruiting outstanding entry-level faculty. Based on a rigorous program, the Department has trained numerous students and postdoctoral fellows who have gone on to independent positions and leadership posts in first-rate academic institutions. The review committee noted that the Department has had exemplary leadership from both current and previous department chairs, and that the high quality faculty are interactive and mutually supportive. The staff of the Department are very skilled and are committed to the success of the department.

The review committee reported that the department suffers from sub-optimal space. Since the committee report was submitted, Dr. Froehner has been successful in obtaining an NIH NCRR grant that will be combined with State funding and the Department's RCR funding for major renovations of the Department's space, including laboratories, faculty offices, and an informal gathering place. These renovations will begin next year. It was also noted that the Keck Imaging Facility is an important resource for both the Department and larger research community. In addition to the NIH Shared Instrumentation Grant already obtained for this facility, it was noted that future needs will require continual upgrades and acquisitions of the latest technology.

The close relationship between the Department's Ph.D. program and the Neurobiology and Behavior (NeuB) Ph.D. program was emphasized, but the review committee noted that the PBio program attracts a different pool of students, and should be maintained by building on its historical strengths. Similarly, the Department has strong ties to the Regional Primate Center, and a search for a new Director of that Center is in progress.

The Review Committee and the Council applauded the Department's efforts to increase student diversity, including using their own operating funds for this purpose. GPSS student focus group results indicated that students are very engaged in the program and view it as having a positive environment. A new system of laboratory rotations has been implemented since the review, and new efforts are in place to track student progress. Additional TA training was recommended, and the Center for Instructional Development and Research (CIDR) offered support in this effort.

For more detailed information on the review of this department, please see the Review Committee's written report, submitted in June, 2005.

The Graduate School recommends that the Department of Physiology and Biophysics M.S. and Ph.D. programs continuing status be reaffirmed, with the next review conducted in the 2014-2015 academic year.

- c: Mark Emmert, President
John Slattery, Vice Dean, Research and Graduate Education, School of Medicine
Stanley C. Froehner, Professor and Chair, Department of Physiology and Biophysics
Fred Rieke, Professor, Department of Physiology and Biophysics
Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School
Adam Grupp, President, Graduate and Professional Student Senate
Members of the Department of Physiology and Biophysics Review Committee
Graduate School Council