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May 27, 2009

To: Phyllis Wise, Provost  
Douglas J. Wadden, Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Planning

From: Gerald Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean  
James S. Antony, Associate Dean and Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

RE: Review of the Public Health Genetics PhD

This memo outlines the Graduate School's recommendations on the five-year review of the PhD Program in Public Health Genetics (PHG). The degree is offered by the graduate faculty of the Interdisciplinary Public Health Genetics Group, affiliated with the Institute for Public Health Genetics in the School of Public Health. Detailed comments on the program can be found in the documents referred to below. The review included the following milestones and documentation:

- Public Health Genetics PhD self-study (October, 2008; updated December, 2008)
- Charge meeting between review committee and administrators (December 12, 2008)
- Site visit (January 8-9, 2009)
- Review committee report (January 23, 2009)
- Graduate & Professional Student Senate (GPSS) Report (January 26, 2009)
- Public Health Genetics PhD response to the report (February 13, 2009)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (May 7, 2009)

The review committee consisted of:

Sandra Bajjalieh, Professor, UW Pharmacology  
Kathleen Woodward, Professor and Director, UW Simpson Center for the Humanities  
Muin J. Khoury, Director, Office of Public Health Genomics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on May 7, 2009. After discussion, Council recommended continuing status for the program, with the next review in the 2018-2019 academic year. The Council noted that this excellent program is "urgently needed" to provide interdisciplinary education for future

public health professionals in genetic epidemiology, pharmacogenomics, clinical aspects of genomics, bioethics, law, public policy, and health economics, so that graduates can effectively apply genomics to public health and address the resulting scientific and policy questions from a variety of perspectives. The PHG program is regarded as “truly unique”, with no peer either nationally or internationally, has superb and internationally known faculty, and is advantaged by UW’s interdisciplinary environment that yields a rich course offering. Program graduates are of high caliber and are diverse in their interests. The program is exploring external funding for training grants to improve its diversity and international student representation. Specific comments regarding the Ph.D. program include the following:

### **Program Strengths**

- The caliber and engagement of faculty is laudable and noteworthy. The true interdisciplinarity of the program is evident on multiple levels, including the requirement that all students must have two mentors from different disciplines.
- There is a well thought-out curriculum.
- The program attracts diverse students with a high degree of self-sufficiency.

### **Challenges and Risks**

- The GPSS report commented that some PHG students have experienced logistical barriers to taking advantage of Genome Sciences offerings (barriers such as limited access to Genome Sciences courses or concurrently scheduled seminars in the two programs). Students also reflected on the tension between depth and breadth of knowledge: the demand for breadth (six core competencies) makes it difficult to become an expert in any one component before undertaking the more focused dissertation project.
- The interdisciplinary context of this program requires that the director closely coordinate with participating faculty and the leadership in their home units to assure clear expectations of all parties.

### **Areas of Concurrence**

- This is a truly interdisciplinary program that is uniquely positioned to lead the world in public health genetics.
- The program needs to address the issue of recruitment in terms of maintaining a diverse student cohort of consistent size.

### **Council Recommendations**

- The committee recommends that the program be reviewed again in 10 years and should be commended for its leadership and success both within UW and internationally.
- There should be increased recruitment efforts to balance class size and improve international student representation.
- In terms of promotion, tenure, and salary support, PHG should continue to assure clear articulation of expectations regarding faculty contributions to the program. This currently occurs through regular discussions between PHG and the leadership in appointing units as well as through the annual “memo of understanding” for each PHG faculty member outlining contributions to the program.

We concur with the Council's comments and recommendations. The striking quality and success of the Interdisciplinary Public Health Genetics Program should make it a model for other interdisciplinary programs across campus.

cc: Frederick A. Connell, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, School of Public Health and  
Community Medicine  
Scott Davis, Chair, Department of Epidemiology  
John T. Slattery, Vice Dean for Research and Graduate Education, School of Medicine  
Gregory A. Hicks, Interim Dean, School of Law  
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