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**To:** David Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

**From:** Nancy S. Jecker Ph.D., Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Bioethics & Humanities

**Re:** Response to the Department of Bioethics & Humanities Program Review Report

I am writing on behalf of the Department of Bioethics & Humanities (BH) in response to the Program Review Report for the site visit that occurred on May 8-9, 2017. We appreciate the reviewers' careful consideration and suggestions and are pleased that our academic programs were found to be academically rigorous, contributing not only to the School of Medicine but also to the broader UW community. In what follows, we outline our response and plans for action in three areas the report identified as high-priority opportunities for improvement: funding, diversity, and cohesion.

We were pleased that the report found our academic programs to be robust, highly successful, and serving a wide range of constituencies. We were also pleased that our secondary academic programs, which include the Bioethics Research Integrity Program (BRI), the Ethics Theme in the undergraduate medical curriculum, the Graduate Certificate in Palliative Care, and the Summer Seminar in Healthcare Ethics, were recognized as major contributions to the School of Medicine and the broader UW community.

### **Funding**

**The report emphasizes that BH is not receiving funding commensurate with the service we provide.**

We could not agree more with the committee's assessment that we are underfunded. In fact, the problem is worse than the committee understood. The department's funding model is quite complex, which understandably led to a few misunderstandings by the committee. We will address them in this section. Contrary to the committee report and consistent with SOM practice, both the MA and the BH Minor programs are tuition-based, and revenue generated from them do not flow directly to BH according to student credit hours and enrollment, as is the practice for many upper campus departments under ABB. Increasing student admissions, as recommended in the report, would not increase revenue; instead it would require substantially more faculty time – time that is not compensated sufficiently by BH or other sources. Likewise, although the Palliative Care Certificate helps to support one WOT faculty member's salary, it does not generate revenue for BH. Clinical revenue for ethics consultation does support the department through recapture on tenure lines, and expansion of clinical services to other UW Medicine hospitals continues to be a priority.

A major factor driving the critical need for funding was the recent closure of our NIH-funded Center of Excellence (CEER) in Ethical, Legal and Social Implications (ELSI) Research, which accounted for 40-50% of our annual operating budget spanning a 10-year period. Other major factors contributing to the current funding shortfall are inadequate funding for WOT faculty and for primary and secondary academic programs. We are striving to fill gaps by increasing the number of grant submissions, increasing

tenure-line recapture, and launching a new revenue-generating continuing education program in fall 2018. We are also exploring ways to enlist our staff's talents to support the grant writing process, given the significant need for new grant funding. We have interviewed other basic science departments, gathered comparison data, sought advice on creative approaches to increasing revenue, and conducted a strategic planning retreat. Chair Dudzinski has begun problem-solving with Associate Dean, John Slattery and SOM Chairs and exploring collaborations on funded projects such as the Precision Medicine Initiative.

Notwithstanding these efforts, additional fiscal support from SOM and upper campus will be necessary to implement the report recommendations. We are working to identify and quantify mismatches between BH contributions and remuneration. These data will be the basis for targeted requests to UW leadership for financial support that better aligns with faculty and staff effort. For example, financial support for our Biomedical Research Integrity Series (which is required training for all NIH-funded trainees on campus) is underfunded and has remained unchanged since 2012. Funding for this program is considerably less than other academic institutions with comparable annual research funding. We will seek additional funding to better cover the actual costs of running the series, including personnel costs.

### **Diversity**

**The report notes insufficient racial and ethnic diversity among faculty and students and among graduate and undergraduate course offerings. It also notes insufficient attention to racial and ethnic diversity in the public presentation of our academic programs.**

We agree that greater diversity among faculty, students and staff is a top priority, as is enhancing the diversity of our curriculum. We track diversity among registered undergraduate BH minors annually. Between 2015 and 2017, the majority of students graduating with a BH Minor (52%) identified as White; 29% Asian; and 18% comprised Hispanic, multiracial, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and international students. Eighty-five percent of students responding to our annual BH Minor survey in the last three years say the department is exceeding expectations with regard to promoting diversity and in making programs attractive to students of diverse backgrounds and career aspirations. We are encouraged by these findings and are also taking steps to further improve diversity. In 2016, we finalized a BH Department diversity statement and created a diversity task force. The task force will lead a departmental syllabus review to ensure that diverse voices and perspectives are reflected in all courses; it will also coordinate a series of department workshops examining curriculum and teaching strategies that promote diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Future plans for improving diversity include revising the Ethics in Medicine website to provide robust instruction on diversity and the insidious impact of racial bias. A number of faculty and the Chair are engaged in diversity training in order to improve recruitment and retention of BH faculty, staff, and students from minority and marginalized groups. We will also seek advice from Center for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (CEDI) and other university resources in preparation for a faculty search to commence in the coming year. Finally, as the committee pointed out, recruiting underrepresented faculty and students requires financial resources. Additional funding from the SOM and/or UW will be needed to strengthen recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty and students.

We are redoubling efforts to increase racial and ethnic diversity through curricular and recruitment improvements. We also embrace an expansive view of diversity. For many years, our faculty's scholarship and teaching has explored themes of equity and social justice related to marginalized and underrepresented groups, including racial minorities. We take great pride in this work. We are committed to doing more than diversifying demographic representation among BH employees and students. Our Department's Diversity Statement expresses an explicit commitment to including underrepresented voices and refers to diversity of "race, color, creed, religion, national origin, ethnicity,

language, citizenship, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, gender-identity or expression, disability, socio-economic background, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran, or other protected veterans.”

### **Cohesion**

#### **The report identifies tensions between tenure-track and without tenure (WOT) faculty and between faculty and staff.**

We agree that more can be done to enhance community within the Department, especially in light of major departmental transitions including the appointment of a new Chair, as well as staff changes and financial difficulties. We endorse the reviewers’ finding that faculty are spread thin, with many collaborators outside the department, making departmental cohesion challenging. The extramural funding climate has worsened due to the closure of CEER, the retirement of former Chair Wylie Burke, a more competitive environment for NIH grants, and significant budget cuts affecting all departments in the SOM. We believe the current funding climate for WOT faculty contributes to tensions between WOT and tenure-track faculty. Through our strategic planning process, we have begun taking steps to build more cohesion among faculty and staff. Contrary to the committee’s report, tenured faculty are well aware of the funding plight faced by WOT colleagues. The entire department is committed to working together to tackle funding challenges and to build solidarity and support for one another.

In closing, we appreciate the review committee’s report and its constructive suggestions for improving our academic programs. We have and will continue to benefit from your review and recommendations. We are in the midst of a strategic planning process to explore these issues in depth. In October, all faculty and staff participated in a full day retreat to discuss the program review findings, identify shared values, and flesh out our vision for near-term and long-term action items. We will hold additional retreats to engage faculty and staff in this process. All of us share a commitment to delivering excellence throughout our academic programs.