

January 11, 2012

To: Dean of the Graduate School

From: Nancy Maizels, PhD, Director of the Molecular Medicine Training Program

Response to Molecular Medicine Graduate Certificate Training Program Review

We are very grateful to the review committee, Dr. Patrick Stayton (Professor of Bioengineering, UW) and Dr. John Nilson (Professor and Director, School of Molecular Biosciences, WSU) for their thoughtful and very positive review of the Molecular Medicine Graduate Certificate Training Program.

The key points identified by the review allow us to respond with clarity to the important questions identified in the review guidelines:

1 and 2) Is the program doing what it should be doing? Is the program doing it well?

The review committee highlighted:

- the effective and committed leadership and executive committee
- the program's success in obtaining and leveraging funding, from HHMI and NIH
- the positive impact of interdisciplinary training, and its critical role in continued excellence of the UW
- the strong interdepartmental support for the MMTP
- the enthusiasm of trainees and training faculty

3) How can the program do things better?

The review committee made several excellent suggestions, which we will implement in the very near future:

- a greater role for students in driving the program, e.g.
 - inclusion of student representatives on the Executive Committee
 - leadership of some program initiatives by student trainees
- formalizing and personalizing acceptance into the program
- more structured advising and monitoring of students
- formalizing the Capstone presentations, to require participation by all students and advisors of presenters, and instituting mechanisms for feedback

4) How should the University assist the program?

The University has provided support for administrative infrastructure of the Molecular Medicine Certificate Program. Continuation of that institutional support is necessary to sustain the Certificate Program.

One concern raised by the reviewers was how the Certificate Program would be affected by the termination of HHMI funding in 2014. Funding from HHMI has been used for a modest contribution to student support (approximately one quarter of support per student, typically in year 3 or 4 when a student would otherwise be supported by the advisor's research funds), new course initiatives, and programmatic activities. Essential administrative infrastructure has depended on institutional support, not HHMI support.

Thus, sustainability the Certificate Program will not be affected by the end of the HHMI funding. We will be able to continue offering the Graduate Certificate in its current form at the present level of institutional support.

5) Future directions: should we establish an interdisciplinary PhD Program in Molecular Medicine?

The review committee agreed that the MMTP has created the framework for a flagship PhD program in an emerging, exciting, and highly fundable area. This PhD program would recruit excellent trainees, provide links between existing PhD programs and the MSTP program, offer highly qualified faculty opportunities to serve as PhD mentors, and provide new collaborative opportunities between clinical and basic scientists.

We have initiated discussions with departments interested in partnering to launch an interdisciplinary Molecular Medicine PhD program. These discussions have led to excellent suggestions regarding curriculum, training faculty, and mechanisms that might fund an effective and sustainable PhD program. We anticipate discussions with the various units will be concluded by the end of the 2011-2012 academic year, and that the formal PhD proposal process, if pursued, would be initiated during the 2012-2013 academic year, with the goal of admitting the first class, of 4-6 students, in Fall, 2014. We would plan to continue offering the Graduate Certificate Program, regardless of the outcome of these discussions.

Once in place, a UW Molecular Medicine PhD program would be extremely well-positioned to compete for external funding. Molecular Medicine has been able to leverage a fairly modest institutional commitment into more than \$1.7 million of HHMI and NIH funding thus far, evidence of fundability of this training area. Our NIH NIGMS Molecular Medicine Training Grant runs from 2011-2016. With a PhD program in place prior to submission of a renewal application (2015), we would be able to make a compelling argument for NIH support for at least six trainees per year.