



Interdepartmental Correspondence

October 2, 2001

Marsha Landolt
Dean and Vice Provost
The Graduate School
Box 351240

Re. Reply to the Report of the Review Committee for the Graduate Programs of the School of Pharmacy (Medicinal Chemistry, Pharmaceutics, and Pharmaceutical Outcomes Research)

Dear Marsha:

First, the School would like to thank the members of the review committee and the staff from the Graduate School for their time and effort in arranging and carrying out the review of our programs. Our faculty, staff and students all felt good about the process, and that the review provided useful information and important recommendations to improve our graduate programs.

The report was circulated to all faculty and staff and was discussed at our Faculty Retreat on September 21, 2001. Comments to the recommendations were received and are summarized below for each program. We agree with the general committee assessment that the programs are of high quality and well-positioned to use their strengths to enhance the School's stature in the post-genomic era, despite meager state resources. The faculty, staff and students were encouraged by the positive tenor of the review, and look forward to working with the University administration to make the improvements suggested to insure continued success in our graduate training and research missions. As noted in the review, success in these areas also enhances our professional educational program (Pharm.D.), particularly in areas of drug interactions, genomics/proteomics and outcomes research that affect pharmaceutical care and health policies.

Again, we thank all involved in the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sid".

Sid Nelson, Ph.D.
Professor of Medicinal Chemistry
and Dean of School of Pharmacy

Response to Recommendations

Department of Medicinal Chemistry

Recommendation 1 was to replace two senior level faculty positions that will soon be lost to retirements at mid-to-senior levels with appropriate recruiting packages.

A major challenge facing the Medicinal Chemistry Department over the course of the next few years, that was highlighted and reinforced by the external review group, is the need to replace at least two senior faculty members who have specific teaching and research expertise in the areas of organic chemistry and mechanistic drug metabolism. The upcoming faculty retirements of Professors Trager and Wendel Nelson will leave a void in the core research and teaching competencies that shaped the initial development of Medicinal Chemistry Department. Therefore, our goal, endorsed by the external review committee, is to recruit a mid-senior level person in the areas of mechanistic drug metabolism or chemical toxicology to provide continued leadership in an area in which the Department has enjoyed an international reputation for at least two decades. Dr. Trager has indicated that he will go to a 40% position in January 2002 and most likely retire completely by the end of 2002, or as soon as his remaining graduate students complete their doctoral theses. Therefore, in early 2002, we will initiate the first of a likely series of staggered faculty searches.

Recommendation 4 was to consider a pharmacogenomics and proteomics effort led by the School of Pharmacy at the UW.

An SOP working group, consisting of Dr. Rettie (Medicinal Chemistry), Dr. Thummel (Pharmaceutics), Dr. Slattery (Pharmaceutics/Fred Hutchinson Center) and Dr. David Veenstra (Pharmacy), has been assembled to consider how best to coordinate and establish an SOP pharmacogenomics funding initiative that can connect to other similarly focused UW research groups. Since the review, it is notable that Dr. Rodney Ho (Pharmaceutics) has obtained an individual RO1 grant to support his research on the pharmacogenetics of drug transporters and Dr. Thummel (Pharmaceutics) has submitted a proposal to NIH dealing with the pharmacogenetics of drug metabolizing enzymes. A UIF proposal will be considered if that program remains viable in the face of additional state budget cuts that are likely to come.

Recommendation 5(a) suggested creative financing of genomics and proteomics initiatives through the endowment campaign. We strongly support this suggestion, and the UW Office of Research is now working with us in a consortium effort to enhance proteomics capabilities at the University.

Recommendation 5(b) suggested enhancements to graduate student recruiting efforts by informational trips targeted to biochemistry, chemistry and biology departments on and off campus. Through involvement of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry in the multidisciplinary Biological Structure and Design Program, the department has attracted students from chemistry and biochemistry at the UW. Some of these students are officially part of the Department of Medicinal Chemistry graduate program, while others are in graduate programs in chemistry and biochemistry while their major research advisor is in the Department of Medicinal Chemistry. Credit for those student's training is an issue that is hard to resolve with multidisciplinary programs. Off campus visits are already planned this year to some departments of chemistry, biochemistry, and biology at 4-year institutions in the State. These trips will include graduate students who come from some of these institutions. In the past, we were more aggressive with this approach, but limited operations budgets have restricted the scope of these recruitment trips.

Recommendation 6 to continue to restructure and streamline coursework in Medicinal Chemistry is underway.

Department of Pharmaceutics

Recommendation 2 was to consider hiring faculty at the junior level if hiring at the mid-level proved difficult in the pharmacogenetics area After attempts (even with additional support from the Provost's office) to hire three different candidates for a mid-level faculty position failed, recruitment of a junior level faculty member is now in progress. In order to make an attractive offer to a candidate of the highest quality, it appears likely that assistance will be needed.

Department of Pharmacy PORP Program

Recommendation 3 was to fill the senior PORPP faculty line vacated by Dr. Stergachis, and plan for careful expansion of the graduate student population through more structural recruiting.

First, we totally agree that this position should be filled, but budgetary constraints in the School of Pharmacy have not allowed the Department to accomplish this. Recognizing the budget constraints of the School of Pharmacy, we undertook an effort to shore-up senior mentorship by appointing two professors to our PORPP faculty group through affiliate and joint appointments. As a consequence of these appointments, Professor Donald Patrick of the Department of Health Services and Affiliate Professor Pete Fullerton, Associate Vice President of Pharmacy Services at Regence Blue Shield have now committed to working more closely with our junior faculty and graduate students on a range of research and teaching activities. Professor Patrick has co-taught two courses in our department and is interested in serving on graduate student committees. Affiliate Professor Fullerton has provided a research laboratory (health plan utilization and cost data) for junior faculty and graduate students and will continue to expand research opportunities for PORPP faculty at Regence Blue Shield. We will continue to count on affiliate and jointly appointed faculty in the near term to provide senior leadership, all the while recognizing the acute need for another senior member of the PORP program within our own Department.

Secondly, in response to the suggestion to improve and expand recruitment efforts, we recently hired (with soft money) a research assistant professor (Beth Devine, Pharm D., MBA) who will have part-time responsibility for evaluating and retooling the PORPP graduate program recruitment process. Dr. Devine has just arrived and will take on this responsibility for the 2002-2003 recruitment year. One of the target groups for graduate studies in Pharmaceutical Outcomes Research and Policy are Pharm.D. graduates from Schools of Pharmacy in the U.S. Competing with prevailing entry-level pharmacy wages (upwards of \$80,000) has challenged our ability to recruit these students. With respect to increasing the quantity of graduate students in the program, the PORPP faculty have undertaken a series of thoughtful discussions on the benefits and risks of expansion. We are limited by available funding for graduate students. The Department of Pharmacy has 2.0 FTE teaching assistant appointments to make each academic year. In addition, the graduate school has kindly provided one RAship for an entering student each year. Faculty grant and contracts provide additional RA support for students. Presently, the availability of TA and RA funds matches the demand from our graduate students. If we were to expand the number of applicants accepted into the program, our ability to fund these students would be taxed. If we were able to replace the senior level faculty position vacated by Dr. Stergachis, that would provide another funded researcher who could support additional students.