Final Assessment Report Academic Review

Community Health Sciences

A. Introduction

The review of the Department of Community Health Sciences was conducted during the spring and summer of 2010. The Department's Self Study was considered and approved by the Governance Committee of Senate on March 10th. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Bill Montelpare (Lakehead University) and Carol Rodgers (University of Saskatchewan) and an internal reviewer, Joffre Mercier (Biological Sciences). The site visit occurred on May 3 – 5 and the Reviewers' Report was received on June 22nd. The Department's response was provided on August 12th and a decanal response, from Dean John Corlett, also on August 12th.

The academic programs offered by the Department of Community Health Sciences, which were examined as part of the review include:

Bachelor of Arts (Child Health - Honours)

Bachelor of Arts (Community Health - Pass)

Bachelor of Public Health (Honours)

Bachelor of Science (Health Sciences - Honours)

Bachelor of Science (Biomedical - Honours)

Pharmacy Technician/ Community Health

Dental Hygiene/ Community Health

It should be noted that the review commenced under the terms and conditions of Section III: 20 of the Faculty Handbook which pertained in 2009-10 and concluded under the revised terms, which were approved by Senate on May 16, 2010.

B. Strengths of the Program

The review process provided clear evidence that Community Health Sciences is a strong and vibrant academic department. It offers distinctive programs which are unique in Ontario and Canada. The department has attracted and retained excellent students. As the reviewers noted:

There was strong evidence of a department with faculty that cares about their students, who take time with students to learn about them as people as well as to support their learning. Students also recognized the high quality and expertise of the faculty and appreciated the range of research interests to which they were exposed throughout their program.

As an interdisciplinary unit, Community Health Sciences has an interesting mix of faculty from the traditional disciplines. While this has created some tensions, the department has managed hybridity extremely well and has developed as a research-intensive unit while also maintaining a commitment to undergraduate teaching. Its engagement with students is exemplary and it is pursing interesting new initiatives in the area of experiential learning.

It is, in a nut shell, a "hidden gem" which suffers only from a lack of marketing and greater recognition.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers identified a number of areas which they felt warranted attention. Although they did not provide formal, structured recommendations, they did comment on the following:

1. Curriculum Development Under this heading, the reviewers address the matter of additional appointments and note that "the last new position that was not a replacement happened five years ago." Dean Corlett, in his response, suggests that the department "emphasizes repeatedly the resource issue as the way to respond to the challenges raised by the reviewers" and that such an attitude is "typical of all these reviews." The Dean also writes that "there is little likelihood that an infusion of new resources in the

foreseeable future is a viable solution to any undergraduate program challenges that the reviewers identified."

What are those challenges? In their report, the reviewers "noted comments about a disjointed curriculum, a lack of clear direction or the feeling that the direction was changing but that the expertise may not be available to support the change in direction." However, they provided no suggestions or proposals as to greater cohesiveness or a clearer route.

The Academic Review Committee (ARC) recommends that the department undertake a major curriculum review within the next two years to address the issues identified by the reviewers (including a disjointed curriculum and a lack of clear direction).

2. **Enrolment** The reviewers suggested that the programs offered by the department "should definitely be marketed more aggressively." In particular, they identify the Child Health and Public Health programs as candidates for enhanced program promotion (and higher enrolment). Dean Corlett agrees, saying the "big picture here is potentially bright and advantageous." These are, essentially, matters which lie outside the purview of the department. However, that does not mean that they cannot be addressed.

ARC recommends that:

- a) the issue of program promotion be the subject of consultation between the department and the Vice-Provost and Associate VP (Student Services); and
- b) the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, in consultation with the Vice-Provost and AVP Student Services, develop a strategic enrolment plan that will guide recruitment/retention efforts in the near future.
- 3. **Preparation of Students** The reviewers note that "not all required courses are offered regularly', which means that students are required to "extend their tenure at Brock." While there is a tendency to see this as simply a resource issue, that is not necessarily the case. Dean Corlett suggests that members of the department "consider whether or not there are ways of bringing their own research expertise to more students.' These matters are best addressed through the curriculum review mentioned above.

- 4. **Laboratory Experiences and Seminars** The reviewers noted "general agreement" that more laboratory experiences and seminars would be desirable. These are clearly resource-related issues but should not be ignored on that basis. However, they are probably best addressed as part of the strategic enrolment plan recommend above.
- 5. **Experiential Learning** The reviewers commented on the fact that experiential learning opportunities were "highly valued" by students and clearly appropriate for the programs offered by the department. They noted that "there are several opportunities for work experiences that also provide direct professional experiential learning opportunities for students."

ARC recommends that the Department actively explore opportunities for expanded experiential learning (e.g., practicum experiences at the new hospital).

6. **Governance Issues** In their report, the reviewers state that:

Discussions with several of the faculty members gave us the impression that there was not extensive communication of research ideas (or curriculum matters) between faculty members whose interests lie primarily in medical science, on the one hand, and faculty members whose interests lie primarily in social science and/or humanities, on the other.

This is first and foremost an issue related to the governance of the department. Attention needs to be paid to the structures and processes by which the department governs itself, how decisions are made and policies advanced. Community Health Sciences has matured as a department over the years but its internal mechanisms may not have developed appropriately. This issue also relates to matters of curriculum and departmental "insularity" (as suggested by the reviewers). Can resources be shared with other units? How can course duplication be mitigated? If, as suggested, the department is "multi-disciplinary" rather than "inter-disciplinary", then the need for more integration and collaboration exists.

ARC recommends that the Department undertake an immediate review of its governance structures and processes

7. **Learning Outcomes** One explicit recommendation by the reviewers is that "the development of specific learner outcomes on a course [wide] and program [wide] basis be addressed." This is an area of concern which is far from unique to this department. However, there is no doubt that greater work needs to be done.

ARC recommends that Community Health Sciences, in consultation with the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Educational Technologies, undertake a review of departmental learning outcomes and degree-level expectations.

D. Recommendations to be Implemented

The IQAP requires that ARC "set out and prioritize the recommendations that are selected for implementation." Using the specific ARC proposals enunciated above, the following priorities are proposed:

First Priority:

Experiential Learning Opportunities (5. Above) Learning Outcomes (7. Above) Curriculum Review (1. Above) Governance Review (6. Above)

Second Priority

Consultation on Program Promotion (2.a above) Strategic Enrolment Plan (2.b above)

E. Recommendations that Will Not be Implemented

The only significant suggestion made by the reviewers and rejected by the Department was the proposal that the name of the Department be changed from "Community Health" to "Public Health." In its response to the reviewers' report, the Department argues:

First, it was felt by others that the name "Department of Public Health" would confuse people between our department and Niagara Public Health. Second, it would leave out a significant number of the faculty, especially the BSc stream. Public Health is also perceived of as limiting among members whose expertise and research is in the social sciences and humanities. Some members of the BSc stream indicated a more appropriate name would be the Department of Health Sciences, but the BA/BPH side would be "left out" of this name change. Third, Public Health was perceived of as severely reducing the scope of the department

from a series of academic programs which encourage critical and independent thought within a research environment to a technical-type training program to produce people for public health. Graduates from this department go in many directions including research, health professions such as medicine, optometry, dentistry, and nursing as well as law, business, health policy, etc. The label Public Health could even deter students using this program as a spring board for medicine and other professions. Thus, a name change is not a current goal of our department and could precipitate the 'fracture' within the department that is identified by reviewers (see below).

ARC concurs with the Department's position.

F. Implementation Plan

The IQAP requires that this report include an implementation plan which will identify:

- a) who is responsible for approving the recommendations set out above;
- b) who will be responsible for providing any needed resources;
- c) who will be responsible for acting on the recommendations; and
- d) the timeline for all of the above.

These are set out as follows:

The Academic Review Committee (ARC) recommends that the department undertake a major curriculum review within the next two years to address the issues identified by the reviewers (including a disjointed curriculum and a lack of clear direction).

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with Senate. The Department Chair (Professor Terry Wade) and Interim Dean Joanne MacLean are jointly responsible for providing any needed resources and implementing the recommendation. It is expected that the review will be completed, and report submitted to ARC, by the end of the 2011-12 academic year.

ARC recommends that:

a) the issue of promotion be the subject of consultation between the department and the Vice-Provost and Associate VP (Student Services)

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with the Provost and VP, Academic. The Department Chair (Professor Terry Wade) and the Vice-Provost and

Associate VP (student Services) – Kim Meade- are jointly responsible for providing any needed resources and implementing the recommendation. It is expected that this consultation will be completed by the end of the current academic year.

ARC recommends that:

b) the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences, in consultation with the Vice-Provost and AVP Student Services, develop a strategic enrolment plan that will guide recruitment/retention efforts in the near future.

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with Senate. The Department Chair (Professor Terry Wade) and Interim Dean Joanne MacLean are jointly responsible for providing any needed resources and implementing the recommendation. It is expected that the plan will be completed by the end of the 2011-12 academic year.

ARC recommends that the Department actively explore opportunities for expanded experiential learning (e.g., practicum experiences at the new hospital).

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with Senate. The Department Chair (Professor Terry Wade) and Interim Dean Joanne MacLean are jointly responsible for providing any needed resources and implementing the recommendation. It is expected that the plan will be completed by the end of the current academic year.

ARC recommends that the Department undertake an immediate review of its governance structures and processes

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with Senate. The Department Chair (Professor Terry Wade) is responsible for providing any needed resources and implementing the recommendation. It is expected that the review will be completed by the end of the current academic year.

ARC recommends that Community Health Sciences, in consultation with the Centre or Teaching, Learning and Educational Technologies, undertake a review of departmental learning outcomes and degree-level expectations.

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with Senate. The Department Chair (Professor Terry Wade) and the Director of CTLET (Professor Barry Joe) are jointly responsible for providing any needed resources and implementing the recommendation. It is expected that the review will be completed by the end of the 2011-12 academic year.

April 5, 2011 /pb