



University of Nevada, Reno

Office of
Executive Vice President & Provost

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 7, 2016

TO: Dean Burkin, Director, Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology Graduate Program
James Kenyon, Sr. Associate Dean, Research, UNSOM
Thomas Schwenk, VPHS, Dean, UNSOM
David Zeh, Vice Provost, Graduate Education / Dean, Graduate School

FROM: Kevin R. Carman, Executive Vice President & Provost
Joseph I. Cline, Vice Provost, Undergraduate Education

SUBJECT: Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology Program Review

We write to set forth the conclusions and our recommendations regarding the Cellular and Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology (CMPP) graduate program external program review in Spring 2016.

We commend the program director for organizing and leading the program review effort in 2015-16. We realize the amount of work involved in gathering information for and preparing the self-study, coordinating a visit schedule, and hosting the visitors during their visit. It is clear that the visit schedule was well thought out and provided the reviewers with a good mix of opportunities to visit with those administrators, faculty, and students regarding the program. The reviewers were impressed with the many strengths of the program. The participating faculty are well-funded, productive, and ranked very highly in their field. Additionally, they remain committed to the program's doctoral students and provide quality training and graduate courses. It is acknowledged that the strength of our graduate programs will be critical in the university's achieving Carnegie R1 status, and the CMPP program will play an important role in achieving that goal.

After reviewing the external reviewers' report and the responses, a closing meeting was held on July 14, 2016, to discuss the outcomes of the review and come to an understanding on the directions the program leadership and participating faculty should take in the coming months. After acknowledging the challenges noted by the reviewers, there was a discussion of the various opportunities for improvement that the program leadership can take in the future to begin to address them.

Office of the Provost
Clark Administration, Room 110
University of Nevada, Reno/0005
Reno, NV 89557-0005
(775) 784-1740 main
(775) 784-6220 fax
<http://www.unr.edu/provost>

We offer the following recommendations for action in the coming months:

- **Curriculum.** While there were no major issues with the curriculum expressed by the reviewers, they did agree with some observations made in the program's self-study regarding some changes that would be beneficial. These changes include streamlining the Systems Physiology course and marketing it to neuroscience majors, condensing the coursework to make a more logical flow of the courses from the Systems Physiology course, and modifying credit requirements. We understand from the closing meeting that work on these has already commenced with a curriculum committee. The program is reminded that David Zeh offered the services of his office to submit any changes that need University Courses & Curricula Committee approval through the Curriculog system. Submitting these changes will also provide the necessary workflow to update the program details contained in the University's catalog.
- **Recruitment.** The external reviewers view a robust recruitment event as essential to recruit to top-tier students, including under-represented students. We have had conversations in several program reviews concerning improvements to recruitment events for graduate students. These conversations generally focus on two ideas that have merit—taking advantage of the GradFIT program and/or working with a collection of similar programs to coordinate a larger recruitment weekend event. In his response, the program director indicates he will work with the Graduate School to plan how the CMPP program could have a role in this year's GradFIT program. We continue to promote the idea of a molecular biosciences or even sciences recruitment weekend and understand from the closing meeting that plans are being made and funding is coming together in order to host such an event in the coming year. Though the first event will likely require a good deal of planning and coordination, we believe that if it is implemented it will become a strong recruitment tool for several graduate programs and well worth the investment.
- **Graduate Stipends.** The issue of the current level of the graduate stipend is a concern that has come up in other reviews. We continue to work on this, including examining the stipend levels at the institutions identified as our aspirational peers as well as looking at stipend levels by discipline. If the program has any information or research it would like us to consider as we work to continue to address this issue, we would be pleased to receive it. As this research is completed, we will keep the colleges informed as to what we are learning and what our plans are to address this issue in the years ahead.
- **T32 Training Grant.** The program director points out that there are two obstacles to the recommendation that we apply for a T32 training grant. First, current T32 training-grant opportunities are focused on diversity, and second, that institutional support will need to be much stronger in order to submit a proposal that has a chance for funding. It would be helpful to begin gathering information on what we will need to demonstrate in terms of support as well as what the components of a successful proposal might be. It would appear that the most feasible method for determining this would be to obtain a copy of a successful training-grant application. Once this copy is obtained, we would appreciate receiving a copy with any insight on what it tells us about what needs to be in place in order to submit a compelling and competitive training-grant application.

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- Professional and Career Advising. Many graduate programs are seeking to do more to support graduate students in this area, and we agree that this is an important area where the university needs to do more. At the closing meeting, it was the consensus that students need prodding to ensure they are progressing satisfactorily and in working with their committees. Additionally, they need to be encouraged to submit applications for graduate fellowships and trained in how to prepare a successful proposal. Unfortunately, we were not able to fund the *Manager, Medical Student Education* position proposal submitted in April. However, we have recently joined the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity, which provides resources for preparing successful proposals. We encourage the CMPP graduate students (and faculty) to make use of this resource.
- Director's Stipend. The level of the director's stipend was questioned by the reviewers. It is our understanding that Stacy Burton has provided direction on renaming and restructuring of the stipends for the three molecular sciences directors, and we assume the paperwork is underway to effect a change.