2014-2015
Cyclical Program Review of Health Sciences

PROGRAMS:
Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences

Final Assessment Report

Submitted by: Paul Jessop, Dean, Faculty of Science; Kathryn Carter, Associate Vice-President, Teaching and Learning (Acting); Deborah MacLatchy, Provost and Vice-President: Academic

Date: February 28, 2016
PART ONE: EXECUTIVE RESPONSE

A) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REVIEW DOCUMENTS
(SELF-STUDY, REVIEWERS’ REPORT, UNIT RESPONSE)

Self-Study

This was the first cyclical review of the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences, a high quality multidisciplinary program which began in 2009. The self-study made note of the following:

- The focus of the program curriculum is preparing students for employment in a range of professional health and medical school degree programs; as such, students take courses not only in Health Sciences but also from a variety of Science departments at Laurier, such as Chemistry, and Biology, Mathematics and Psychology.

- The questions that the Department posed for the review committee focused on goals and directions that it should be looking to in the next five years, namely the tension between growth and consolidation and the development of a potential graduate program. The Department notes that it is working on the creation of a strategic plan that charts its growth and areas of focus over the next five years.

- Admission requirements for the program are higher than both the university average and the standard requirements within the Faculty of Science, allowing the Department to attract high quality students that can meet program standards.

- The Department reviewed its curriculum as part of the preparation for the cyclical review and mapped it to its program learning outcomes; recent curricular changes include the addition of a required English and Philosophy credit to strengthen the writing and critical thinking skills of graduates as well as the requirement to take at least three 400-level HE courses. Several other curricular initiatives intended to ensure students are meeting program learning outcomes are also in progress.

- While the self-study was being written, Health Sciences was in the process of departmentalization, which was completed in 2015. The Department notes that it is now moving from an initial phase of growth and transition to one more focused on consolidation of resources. The Department identifies that continued program growth and development is contingent upon an increase in administrative staff resources.

- The regularization of faculty appointments and cross-appointments has helped to ensure that the program has the necessary depth and breadth of expertise necessary to support its curriculum. All faculty teaching in the program have robust research programs and many are supervising graduate students through cross-appointments with other departments.

- There has been a steady growth in applications, enrollment and demand for the program since it began, with average entrance grades consistently at 85%. Because of the quality of students entering the
program, meeting progression requirements is rarely an issue. At the time of writing, graduation rates were only available for the first cohort of students, but of this group (42 students), 100% completed the program in the anticipated time frame.

- From the data available, upon completion of the HE undergraduate program, the majority of students are going on to graduate school in a variety of professional health-related fields. The Department conducted a satisfaction survey of both current students and alumni as part of the cyclical review process.

The conclusion to the self-study reiterates that the Health Sciences program is a high demand, high quality program that is focused on ensuring its students are prepared for graduate education or employment in a variety of professional health-related fields. The Department regularly reviews and makes adjustments to the program curriculum in order to ensure graduating students are meeting the program learning outcomes and will be successful in their future endeavours, but also notes that certain desired program developments will be contingent upon additional resources. University-wide budgetary restraint has to be recognized. However Health Sciences is a relatively young program with significant opportunity for growth. It aligns perfectly with one of the areas of differentiating strength that were declared in the University’s Strategic Mandate Agreement with the provincial government. As such it has a high priority for receiving additional resources as the University moves forward with its internal program prioritization exercise and introduces a new Responsibility Centre Management budget model.

**Executive Summary of the External Reviewers’ Report**

The Health Sciences program at Laurier is a high quality program that enjoys much student interest. The current design is still a reflection of early development and the first cohort of students just convocated. There has been an extraordinarily strong relationship between science departments in the development of the program and this should be celebrated. The program has a great deal of potential to grow and help with potential resource issues at Laurier.

There are no major concerns. Appropriate discussions have resulted in resolution of a variety of issues (department, space, faculty hires). Students are successful and surveys indicate that they are thoughtful about their education. The administration has been responsive to student feedback.

**List of Recommendations**

1. Grow the program in the context of excellence. Align the growth with faculty and financial resources.

2. Work to maintain the strong relationships within science and consider a broader participation with other Faculties. Resources could be considered in the context of activity-based budgets but there is a caution that this kind of budgeting struggles to support excellence over other things.

3. Celebrate the program success and make it more visible.
Unit Response

The Unit Response was authored by the Chair of the Department of Health Sciences, with input from faculty members in the Department. Overall, the Department’s response to the External Reviewers’ Report was very positive, concurring with all of the recommendations that the reviewers made. In response to the first recommendation, the Department emphasized the creation of a five year Strategic Plan focusing on program growth and the maintenance of the program’s strong reputation. The response to the second recommendation focused on the continuation of the relationships that the Department has built with other academic units at the university, and the development of new relationships with community partners and other related programs across the country. In response the final recommendation, the Department identified current and planned efforts to both brand and differentiate the Health Sciences program and to engage Health Sciences students as peer ambassadors for prospective students.

B) IDENTIFICATION OF PROGRAM STRENGTHS

The many strengths of this program have been identified in both the Self Study and the External Reviewers’ Report. From the Dean’s perspective the program’s strength lies in the strength of the large pool of applicants, the high quality and dedication of its faculty members, and its alignment with University priorities that have been articulated in the Strategic Academic Plan and the Strategic Research Plan. It is a broad program that provides students with a solid base of “hard science” relevant to the health professions and also deals with important social and policy issues. It prepares students for entry into a broad range of health professions rather than billing itself as “pre-med”. The program enjoys a high level of support from the senior university administration.

C) OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

The strength of the applicant pool for Health Sciences provides an opportunity to grow the size of its student body without compromising student quality. That, in turn, will provide an opportunity to increase the size of the faculty complement, broaden the range of elective courses and broaden the scope of health sciences research at Laurier. A search is currently under way for a Canada Research Chair in Health Systems, Program and Policy Evaluation.

The program currently has connections with the Science and Health Policy cluster within the Balsillie School of International Affairs (a partnership among Laurier, the University of Waterloo, and the Centre for International Governance Innovation), and there is a great opportunity to strengthen these connections. This would not only enhance the level of research carried out by Health Sciences faculty; it would provide more opportunities for undergraduate research projects and graduate studies opportunities for Health Sciences BSc graduates. The position description for the new Canada Research Chair was written with this in mind.

The Health Studies programs (BA and BASc) at Laurier’s Brantford campus currently operates quite separately from the Health Sciences program. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to improve both programs by identifying the elements that they have in common, develop shared courses, and encourage better interaction between the two groups of students.
D) PRIORITIZATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The three principal recommendations are all high priority. The first one, advocating growth in the context of excellence, is the highest priority. Substantial growth without a sacrifice in student quality should be possible because of the program’s high demand among applicants. Increased student numbers will mean increased revenue and, especially as the University moves to a Responsibility Centre Management budget model, this will mean more resources for additional faculty positions.

The third recommendation, to celebrate the program success and make it more visible, is the next highest priority because it links directly to student recruiting and is essential to success in growing the program. The unit response outlines a number of steps that are being undertaken to enhance recruiting and raise the program’s profile.

Finally, the second recommendation, dealing with relationships with other Departments and Faculties, is also very important. This is an area where we feel we are already doing a good job, but there is always room for improvement. Health Sciences relies heavily on the Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics Departments for teaching basic science courses to its students. There is also very good cooperation between Health Sciences and Kinesiology and Physical Education in the delivery of anatomy and physiology courses. As mentioned above, there is room for improvement in the cooperation between Health Sciences and the Health Studies program at Brantford.

E) PERSONNEL ISSUES (CONFIDENTIAL AND IF APPLICABLE)

Not applicable.
## PART TWO: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation to be Implemented</th>
<th>Responsibility for Implementation</th>
<th>Anticipated Completion Date</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Grow the program in the context of excellence. Align the growth with faculty and financial resources.</td>
<td>Department Chair \nDean of Science</td>
<td>Ongoing; two- and five-year goals should be put in place</td>
<td>Growth will have to be planned so that student numbers and resources grow together at a manageable pace.</td>
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<td>Department Chair</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3. Celebrate the program success and make it more visible.</td>
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<td>Ongoing; two- and five-year goals should be put in place</td>
<td>Work with Recruitment &amp; Admissions, CPAM, Development, etc., to align with University communication.</td>
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