

School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education: Academic Program Review Report Executive Summary

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REVIEW TEAM

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INTRODUCTION

The external review of the School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education took place over the course of two days (February 3-4, 2020). During this time, the reviewers met with the individuals named below and this report provides a summary of reviewer's perceptions, observations and recommendations for moving forward. The report begins with an executive summary of the strengths and weaknesses of, as well as, opportunities for the School. Detailed accounts of the perceptions and observations related to quality of academic programming, people within the School and resources that reiterate the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities follow. The final section of the report is dedicated to five main recommendations the reviewers believe will strengthen the School both within and beyond the institution.

Summary of Individuals met during the Review ☐ Department Director, Dr. John Meldrum ☐ Dean, Faculty of Education, Dr. Ralf St. Clair ☐ Associate Vice-President Academic Planning, Dr. Susan Lewis ☐ Acting Associate Vice-President Research, Dr. Michael Masson ☐ Undergraduate Leads – Dr. Vivienne Temple, Dr. Tim Hopper and Dr. Lynne Stuart-Hill ☐ Undergraduate Academic Advisor, Dr. Brad Temple and Co-op Coordinator Alyssa Hindle ☐ Graduate Advisor, Dr. PJ Naylor ☐ Lab coordinators – Greg Mulligan, Melissa Clarke, Holly Murray, Veronica Planella ☐ Faculty Members – Dr. Sandra Gibbons, Dr. Sam Liu, Dr. Ryan Rhodes, Dr. Kristin Lane, Dr. Lara Lauzon; due to his availability, Dr. Paul Whituni met with one committee member on February 6th ☐ Dean of Graduate Studies – Dr. David Capson ☐ Undergraduate and graduate student representatives

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strengths

The review identified a number of strengths of the program. First, the consistent message throughout the review is that the School is “punching above its weight” with the resources provided. Second, everyone we met with was very impressed with the presence and support of the Director, Dr. John Meldrum for his commitment to the School, particularly through recent programmatic transitions. Third,

there is strong demand for the undergraduate programs, even after doubling the incoming cohort for the Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology. Fourth, program retention is very high which speaks to the quality of the program and student satisfaction. Fifth, at the graduate level, student numbers are also meeting expectations across the MSc, MA and MEd programs and the School is very close, if not at, the institutional target of 80% undergraduate students and 20% graduate students. Sixth, the curriculum changes are moving the undergraduate programs in a positive direction. For example, the curriculum redesign for the RHED degree has a number of highlights including the ability for students to successfully enter into a number of quality professions upon graduation, the ability for RHED students to complete a teachable subject area in Physical and Health Education (PHE) and students outside the program to complete the courses required for a PHE teachable area and then apply to the PDPP program in education. Similarly, the ongoing revisions of the Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology seem to be responding to the changes in the professionalization of Kinesiology however, it does not appear that the changes to this program are complete and below are some recommendations as this program is in transition. Finally, students across both undergraduate programs have a number of high-quality experiential learning opportunities both through lab-based courses and co-op which allows them to practice and apply what they are learning in and beyond the classroom/lab environment.

Weaknesses

As mentioned at the start of this report the most common perception of the School from those outside was that the School is accomplishing a lot with the resources they have. Although this may be considered a strength, the reviewers believe that academic programming and productivity levels are at-risk if the School continues to be resourced at its current level. In particular, the reviewers believe that under-resourcing falls primarily within the area of human resources as well as lab space. A number of specific details and recommendations to reduce this risk are provided throughout the report and highlighted in the final recommendations section.

Second, the level of graduate student funding is very low in comparison to other institutions and provinces, which the reviewers believe will negatively impact recruitment, student experience and student progression. It appears that a number of graduate students take on teaching assignments, at times multiple assignments, as sessional instructors as part of their graduate funding. There are concerns that this may be negatively impacting the graduate student in terms of progression. In addition, although gaining teaching experience can be an asset, having a large number of sessional instructors that change frequently over time can negatively impact the continuity, leadership and intellectual challenge provided to the undergraduate students.

Third, related to the graduate program, a weakness is that faculty are not provided any workload recognition for supervising graduate students. This has a number of negative implications. Given that the institution has the desire to grow in terms of research productivity this will have to change. It was also noted that a number of faculty are close to retirement, have administrative responsibilities or are on leave which again will impact the ability to sustain the current level of graduate student recruitment and research productivity.

Fourth, despite the overall curriculum being strong there are specific gaps that need to be addressed moving forward in the areas of social determinants of health, Indigenous health, cultural competence and safety. A few small changes which are suggested below could ensure provision of content in these identified areas and will strengthen the program moving forward.

Fifth, it was difficult to determine the vision and mission of the School as an independent entity within the faculty. The reviewers questioned how well the School fits within the faculty from both a physical and philosophical perspective. For example, the EETS are quite high for the School in comparison to other units within the faculty and operations also appeared to be quite different. Therefore, there is work to be done to clarify the School's vision and identity as a unit on its own, within the faculty and within the larger institution.

Opportunities

There are a number of opportunities for the School both currently and/or in the near future. First, within the institution there appear to be initiatives to enhance diversity of faculty members. During the review the School reported that recent hires were preferential with regards to increasing diversity and that this would continue to be the plan moving forward. The reviewers support the continued commitment to increasing the diversity of faculty within the School. Similarly, there is significant support within and beyond the institution for the diversification of students and efforts have begun to identify supportive pathways for Indigenous students (as outlined in the draft report by Dr. Paul Whitinui "Advancing Lifelong Health and Wellness for Indigenous Peoples and their Communities"). Given the recent Calls to Action arising from the Truth and Reconciliation report, which are acknowledged in the institutional priorities to Foster Respect and Reconciliation and the Faculty commitment to Indigenous Resurgence, this is a crucial time to decrease the barriers for Indigenous students to access and succeed at the post-secondary level. A School-wide commitment to supporting the Indigenous BSc cohort could lead to important and meaningful changes in the curriculum related to social determinants of health, Indigenous health and wellness, and equity, diversity and inclusion that will benefit all students.

The School is entering into a new era with revised (or soon be revised) programs and so it is a prime time to solidify a strong marketing and communication plan to help stakeholders (students, staff and faculty) to strengthen their identity with a vision, mission and strategic priorities. Equally, this work can help strengthen recognition of the School within and beyond the institution. Moreover, the School has a very strong health and physical education curriculum in comparison to many institutions across Canada and therefore the School is positioned to attract talented students from across the country if marketed appropriately. In terms of retention of such students the School should consider working with the Faculty to develop an agreement where a certain percentage of seats within the PDPP are held for those coming through the program as this can be quite attractive to students, both in terms of recruitment and retention.

An important opportunity occurring at an institutional level that could increase the contribution and recognition of the School within the institution is increased involvement with the Health Sciences Initiative. The reviewers believe that a number of current and potentially new hires could make important contributions to this initiative. It was unclear whether the School has developed any strategic research priorities. Therefore, it is important for the School to develop research priorities, some of which align directly with the Health Sciences Initiative to increase cross-campus collaboration and contributions to the larger institution.