The Graduate School – University of Utah

January 30, 2007

The Graduate Council Ad Hoc Committee has completed its review of the Division of Nutrition.

External review committee:

Anne M. Smith, PhD., R.D. (Committee Chair)
Associate Professor
Director, Didactic Program in Dietetics
Department of Human Nutrition
The Ohio State University

Linda Houtkooper PhD., R.D.
Professor and Head
Department of Nutritional Sciences
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
University of Arizona

Christopher Melby, Dr.P.H.
Professor and Head
Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition
Colorado State University

Internal Review Committee:

Laura Shane-McWhorter, PharmD.
Professor
Department of Pharmacotherapy
College of Pharmacy

Monica Vetter, PhD.
Professor
Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy
School of Medicine

Brian Patrick
Professor, Associate Chair
Division of Film Studies
College of Fine Arts
Graduate Council Review  
Division of Nutrition

I. Program Overview

The Division of Nutrition at the University of Utah offers two Master of Science (MS) graduate degree programs the Coordinated Masters Program in Dietetics (CMP) which incorporates academics, practice, and research; and the Nutrition Sciences Masters Program (NS) which incorporates academics and research. The division has no undergraduate degree although it awards a minor in nutrition (18 credit hours). The department is actively exploring future possibilities for a doctoral (PhD) program.

The division's stated mission is the improvement of the health status and lifestyles of an "at risk" society, and the promotion of efficiency and effectiveness of health care systems.

The Division of Nutrition is uniquely poised to meet the nation's growing concern for nutrition and health-related education. The main obstacles in its path are its limited resources, especially too few tenure-track faculty members.

A. Faculty

There are currently 3 tenure-track faculty and 16 full or part-time clinical instructors. One tenure track faculty member is a recent appointment. The division has a strong female representation at both tenured-track and adjunct levels.

The faculty of nutrition has an impressive record of quality instruction; with heavy course loads predominantly at the graduate level; however, with so few tenure-track lines, junior faculty members carry substantial teaching loads as well. SHC (student credit hours) exceed 7000 units per academic year. Faculty shortages have affected student mentoring and extended time to complete degrees.

B. Students

The composition of the graduate student population is diverse, drawn from varied and wide-ranging academic backgrounds, with a minority representation of 20% (6 of 30). All incoming graduate students are required to complete pre-requisites for the program. The number of enrolled majors in the graduate programs has almost doubled from 16 in 2002 to 30 in 2006. There were 13 degrees awarded in 2006. Student evaluation of the program is positive and enthusiastic, and they would welcome mentorship from additional tenure-track faculty. An average of 10 Teaching Assistantships and 5 Research Assistantships are offered yearly.

Former students were disappointed that no Doctoral program was offered in Nutrition and that they were required to pursue further studies out of state.
C. Curriculum and Programs of Study

The Coordinated Masters Program in Dietetics (CMP) is fully accredited, with the core curriculum composed of clinical nutrition, nutrition education, and research methodology. The program’s academic total is 64 semester hours (including 14 hours supervised practice). This program culminates in a Master of Science degree (MS) and builds a foundation for students to write the American Dietetic Association examination to certify as Registered Dietitians.

The Nutrition Sciences Program (NS) is designed for science-based students seeking advanced degrees who want to specialize in nutritional biochemistry or physiology and who may have already been certified as Registered Dietitians as undergraduates. The program requires a minimum of 40 semester hours in approved courses and thesis work, with a variety of electives accepted.

D. Program Effectiveness-OUTCOMES Assessment

Program effectiveness and outcomes assessment is facilitated through yearly quality improvement plans. The division reviews all aspects of its program including recruitment, admissions, student performance, faculty performance, degree completion, and student placement. Program modifications are congruent with division goals.

E. Facilities and Resources.

The Division of Nutrition at the University of Utah has various facilities, laboratories and offices housed in both the Annex and HPER. These include:

- Nutrition Biochemistry Research Facility
- Experimental Foods Laboratory
- Nutrition Physical Assessment Laboratory
- Nutrition Clinic
- Student Assessment Laboratory
- Environmental Chamber

The College of Health has initiated a new building initiative, and is exploring funding for a new more permanent home.

II. Commendations and Recommendations

A. Commendations.

1. The Division of Nutrition was highly praised for the quality of its research and education in nutrition, and commended for rigor in the areas of pure science. It was described as a cohesive unit, rich in esprit de corps, with outstanding collegiality.
2. The program is applauded as one of the model programs of its kind at the national level, with numerous graduates completing accreditation as Registered Dieticians.

3. Students expressed high regard for the faculty, and appreciation for teaching qualities, which included accessibility and unlimited energy.

4. The Division has female representation at both faculty and student levels, and a diverse student population.

5. The Division has promise for growth and development in several directions, including possibilities for a PhD program that may be research based.

B. Recommendations

1. By far the most pressing issue is one of tenure-track faculty lines, which has not been addressed since the last review (1997). Increased tenure lines would allow for broader mentoring, reduce pressure and course loads of both full time and auxiliary faculty, and augment research opportunities for the Division.

2. The Division of Nutrition should explore a merger with the Department of Exercise and Sport Science, as well as possibilities for a joint doctoral program with Exercise and Sport Science, adding a Nutrition / Physiology / Biochemistry option. Either may accomplish many of the same goals, and resolve several issues.
   - Raise student recruitment and retention.
   - Improve ability to conduct clinical research.
   - Increase capacity for expansion of SCH units.
   - Continue to foster the interdisciplinary aspect of division.
   - Expand mentoring to ensure timely degree completions.
   - Increase the number of doctoral students, qualified as TA’s.
   - Attract additional competent and experienced faculty.

3. The Division of Nutrition should continue to work in alliance with the College of Health, on the new building initiative, exploring funding for a new building in order to resolve facility issues.

4. The Division should continue the Research Facilitation Team to promote interdisciplinary connections within the college of health, and encourage and support efforts to apply for, and obtain extramural funding.

5. The Division should maintain and expand levels of student support through scholarships and research assistantships (RA’s).

6. The Division should make efforts to increase the viability and revitalize the clinic area by improved staffing and resource allocation.
Submitted by the Ad Hoc Review Committee of the Graduate Council
Richard Wacko (Chair), Ballet
Steve Kruegar, Meteorology
Sally Planalp, Communication
Memorandum of Understanding
Division of Nutrition

This memorandum of understanding is a summary of decisions reached at a wrap-up meeting on 7 June 2007, concluding the Graduate Council Review of the Division of Nutrition. A. Lorris Betz, Senior Vice President for Health Sciences; James E. Graves, Dean of the College of Health; E. Wayne Askew, Division Director of the Division of Nutrition; David S. Chapman, Dean of the Graduate School; and Frederick Rhodewalt, Associate Dean of the Graduate School were present.

The discussion centered on but was not limited to the recommendations contained in the Graduate Council review completed on 26 March 2007, which addressed the following issues:

At the wrap-up meeting, the working group agreed to endorse the following actions:

Recommendation 1: By far the most pressing issue is one of tenure-track faculty lines, which has not been addressed since the last review (1997). Increased tenure lines would allow for broader mentoring, reduce pressure and course loads of both full time and auxiliary faculty, and augment research opportunities for the Division.

The Dean of the College of Health reports that the college is not in a position to provide another FTE to the Division of Nutrition. He states that his analysis of faculty teaching needs across departments within the college indicates that the Division of Nutrition is adequately staffed relative to other departments and divisions. In contrast, the Division of Nutrition faculty is inadequately staffed in terms of research and research mentoring needs. The Chair, Dean, and Senior Vice President for Health Sciences are exploring other models of funding including soliciting endowed support, seeking increased state support, and internal reallocation of funds within the Division to address this need. There is also a tentative agreement with the Department of Exercise and Sport Science to hire an interdisciplinary Ph.D. (nutrition and exercise) as well as a possible joint appointment with the School of Medicine in a research area related to nutrition. The Dean of the College of Health will provide annual reports to the Graduate School on progress in the College’s efforts to address faculty staffing issues in the Division of Nutrition.

Recommendation 2: The Division should explore a merger with the Department of Exercise and Sport Science, as well as possibilities for a joint doctoral program with Exercise and Sport Science, adding a Nutrition / Physiology / Biochemistry option. Either may accomplish many of the same goals, and resolve several issues, including: raising student recruitment and retention; improving ability to conduct clinical research; increasing capacity for expansion of SCH units; continuing to foster the interdisciplinary aspect of the division; expanding mentoring to ensure timely degree completions; increasing the number of doctoral students qualified as TA’s; and attracting additional competent and experienced faculty.
Memorandum of Understanding
Division of Nutrition
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The possibility of a merger between the Division of Nutrition and the Department of Exercise and Sport Science was discussed by the two units. Such a merger was not favored by the Division of Nutrition because it fears the loss of its identity as a nationally visible program in nutrition. It is noted that a sport nutrition emphasis now exists and is consistent with the directive to foster interdisciplinary connections. In addition, discussions are ongoing concerning the creation of a joint doctoral degree in nutrition and sport science. This joint agreement will provide the opportunity for nutrition students to earn a doctorate in their field at the University. All agreements will be finalized by the end of the fall semester, 2007 and reported to the Graduate School. The College is also exploring the creation of an interdisciplinary doctorate in health. The Division of Nutrition would be a participant in such a degree program.

Recommendation 3: The Division of Nutrition should continue to work in alliance with the College of Health, on a new building initiative, exploring funding for a new building in order to resolve facility issues.

The Dean has made fundraising for a new building a major item in the College’s capital campaign.

Recommendation 4: The Division of should continue participation in the Research Facilitation Team to promote interdisciplinary connections within the College of Health, and encourage and support efforts to apply for, and obtain extramural funding.

The College is continuing this initiative and the Division of Nutrition will continue its participation.

Recommendation 5: The Division should maintain and expand levels of student support through scholarships and research assistantships (RA’s).

The Division has added four scholarships in the past year and has increased the number of RAs and TAs in the graduate program.

Recommendation 6: The Division should make efforts to increase the viability and revitalize the clinic area by improved staffing and resource allocation.

The Division maintains a nutrition clinic by which they provide client services and training opportunities for their students. The Division has employed a number of strategies to make the clinic economically viable but have not been successful. The Chair will explore aligning the nutrition clinic with the PEAK clinic operated by the Department of Exercise and Sport Science. For example, the nutrition clinic might receive referrals via the PEAK Clinic’s Wellness Program. The Chair will also explore potential collaborative relationships between the nutrition clinic and athletic departments on campus in order to increase usage and revenues for the clinic.

This memorandum of understanding is to be followed by annual letters of progress from the Chair of the Department to the Dean of the Graduate School. Letters will be submitted each year until all of the actions in the preceding paragraphs have been completed.

A. Lorris Betz
E. Wayne Askew
James Graves
Fred Rhodewalt

David S. Chapman
Associate VP for Graduate Studies
Dean, Graduate School
# Department Review by Academic Year

## College of Health: Division of Nutrition

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