

REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE TO THE REGULAR December 2011 SENATE

FOR INFORMATION

Recommendations and Commendations of ACAPLAN following the Undergraduate Program Review: BEHAVIOURAL NEUROSCIENCE

The program's self-study was completed on 1 June 2010 and on 11-12 December 2010, the review team studied the program. The team included one student in the program (Paula Corradini), two Laurentian faculty members (Mazen Saleh, Biology; David Robinson, Economics), and two external consultants, Dr. Dawn Good, a registered psychologist who is currently the Director of Brock University's Centre for Neurosciences and Dr. Roelof "Rudy" Eikelboom, Chair of Wilfrid Laurier's Department of Psychology. Dr. Eikelboom also served as chair of the review committee. The committee reported sometime in early 2011 and the program response was received on 7 May 2011.

1. Overall the Committee concluded that "Over its 29 years, this program has done a great job in producing a small number of high quality students with a very rich knowledge of behavioural neuroscience. Dr. Persinger is to be complimented as both the Coordinator, and sole constant faculty presence in this program, on his dedication and commitment to his students, the program, and Laurentian University." They further noted that "Neuroscience has grown immensely in the years since the program was founded" and that "Laurentian is well positioned to transform this Behavioural Neuroscience program into a modern first class neuroscience program." In order to achieve this goal the principle recommendation was to expand the current program into an interdisciplinary **collaborative** program in Behavioural Neuroscience by involving faculty members from various departments throughout the University. In parallel with this was a need to "Review and update program/course content providing lab space and teaching aid support to permit delivery of current content." Without such changes the reviewers expressed the view that the program was not sustainable in the longer term.
2. There are several reasons that would support the further development of this program. First, Behavioural Neuroscience has become a niche program that has attracted—and retained—high quality students. Second as the report notes, Laurentian is consciously building a rich assortment of programs with a health science focus. Behavioural Neuroscience is an integral part of the health sciences and for that reason alone deserves "to move forward". Third and most importantly, the program is uniquely built on the disciplines of psychology, biology, chemistry, and physics. In February of this year, Senate's new Academic Plan suggested the future of academic programming at Laurentian lay in part in the development of interdisciplinary studies.
3. Given the noted strengths of the program, the collaborative focus recommended by the Review Committee, and that new faculty hires within the University will be quite

limited for the foreseeable future, it is urgent that plans be put in place to sustain this program.

ACAPLAN is of the view that the University should support the development of an interdisciplinary **collaborative** program in Behavioural Neuroscience in accord with the major recommendations brought forward by the review committee.

In preparing its commendations and recommendations, ACAPLAN has changed past practice and, per the new IQAP Policy, has reformatted its comments so that they are clearly targeted to the body that can actually implement any recommendation. While ACAPLAN can only expect a report from the program in 18 months on how it dealt with the recommendations directed to it, ACAPLAN hopes that any other body referenced in this assessment will also report within the same time-frame, in this case, June 2013. After review, ACAPLAN will table the reports it has received at Senate.

Program Coordinator

Student Issues

1. Commendations

- a. The program has been remarkably successful in training a small consistent number of students in both the academic rigours of the field and in encouraging a research spirit that would be the envy of most other schools that offer neuroscience programs.
- b. Students are enthusiastic about the program and felt that they had received a rigorous, challenging, exciting education.
- c. Students in the graduate program support and mentor undergraduates.

Program Issues

1. Commendations

- a. The program is appropriately placed within the Faculty of Science and Engineering.

2. Recommendations

- a. This program will have to change significantly and in ways that vary extensively from its current form; it requires a different more cooperative model.

The Dean of Science and Engineering

1. Recommendations

- a. The current best practices in Health and Safety in a university laboratory setting have to be implemented on an ongoing basis.
- b. Review and update program/course content providing lab space and teaching aid support to permit delivery of current content. Given that the “space dedicated to this program seems to be carved out of scavenged space...not otherwise used”, the Dean should review available space in the Faculty of Science and Engineering to establish whether there is more suitable space for the program.

- c. The Program requires significant changes and expansion of faculty and expertise to reflect the discipline in its current form and take advantage of the interdisciplinary nature of Neuroscience. To expedite a transition to a new model for the Behavioural Neuroscience the Dean should organize a meeting with all individuals who have an interest in Neuroscience, broadly defined, to determine whether there is a community that would move this undergraduate program to the next stage of its development. This Committee could act as a resource for the program and move it into a model that could serve the University for the next 25 years.

The Vice-President Academic and Provost

1. Recommendations

- a. A greater number of faculty members need to be identified who can share some of the teaching load and supervision of undergraduate students' research in this Program. This should first take place for the 4th year courses, and then gradually for the teaching of third and second year courses can be assigned to others without it having a profound effect on the well-being of the students currently in the program.
- b. Establish a permanent administrative and advisory core with offices for the Coordinator or Director with appropriate administrative support, with a working budget.
- c. Increase funding to the Program appropriate for the above activities (e.g., resource funding for Administrative support, teaching assistantship support, materials and equipment for labs (animal and other).

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