

# Report and Recommendations on COM's Involvement in Undergraduate Education

Strategic Curriculum Oversight Committee

November 20, 2015

The Strategic Curriculum Oversight Committee met with Rick Morin, Dean of the College of Medicine, on Wednesday November 11, 2016 to discuss rumored plans for increased undergraduate curricular offerings from the College of Medicine. Dean Morin was sent questions in advance to help him prepare for the meeting.

Dean Morin stated that the College of Medicine (COM) does in fact want to increase its curricular offerings, but the primary thrust will be at the graduate level, not undergraduate. He noted several planned certificates of graduate study, master and doctoral degree programs. This planned growth of graduate programs is consistent with the University's strategic plans. He also noted that the opportunity for undergraduate students to engage in research is seldom highlighted in recruitment materials and events. COM can provide such opportunities through its graduate and research programs, especially because UVM is one of the few universities in the nation with an academic health center on campus. Growing and highlighting undergraduate research opportunities can enhance UVM's ability to attract excellent undergraduate students.

Dean Morin pointed out that COM has for some time played a significant role in undergraduate programs. Examples include Microbiology and Molecular Genetics (major and two minors), Pharmacology minor, Biochemistry major, and the soon-to-be-launched Biomedical Engineering major. These are all high quality programs that serve the students well and advance the reputation of the University. With the exception of the Pharmacology minor, these programs involve a partnership with one or more undergraduate teaching units where there is some overlap in subject expertise. These collaborations are known to be productive and mutually beneficial, and they serve the University's educational mission well.

COM has put forward a proposal for a new undergraduate minor in *Behavioral Change Health Studies* that is not a collaboration with other academic units. The impetus for this academic minor is the University's initiative to fight substance abuse, and it is associated with the new residential program *Wellness Environment* (WE). The minor and the WE residential program could become a draw for prospective students and their parents. The proposed minor in *Behavioral Change Health Studies* is currently under review by the Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. It was discussed at some length and the following points were raised:

- It was agreed there is no *a priori* reason why COM should not be allowed offer the minor in Behavioral Change Health Studies. The College of Medicine has excellent teaching faculty who have expertise in the topic area.

- COM's activities in this area are consistent with the entrepreneurial aims of Incentive-based Budgeting, however, it should be noted that there is an imbalance that results from COM's ability to access undergraduate students as a revenue stream, while the other academic units are not able to access medical students.
- The minor aspires to enroll as many as 700 students. It was not clear that such high enrollments would be feasible due to the limits of classroom capacities, etc, but high enrollments could draw students away from other courses and minors on campus.
- COM does not enroll undergraduate students, so COM faculty and review committees are not experienced in the development of academic programs for undergraduate students or the processes for their review and approval. Consequently, in the absence of partnership with an undergraduate unit, new undergraduate programs proposed by COM may not be optimally designed (e.g. underdeveloped course syllabi; lack of developmental sequence and scaffolding to achieve identified learning outcomes) and the process of building the undergraduate course schedule may be cumbersome. In such cases the Center for Teaching and Learning can provide some resources, guidance and advice.

## Summary

In summary, the Committee found COM's strategic plans for expanding curricular offerings mainly at the graduate level to be reasonable and consistent with its Tenets of Educational Stewardship. COM is not constituted to offer baccalaureate degree programs, but there is no reason why COM should not be allowed offer new undergraduate courses, minors undergraduate certificate programs, etc. that are reviewed and approved under the established governance processes.

## Recommendations

1. The academic units should monitor the Curricular Affairs Committee's postings of new program proposals in order to be aware and to anticipate potential shifts in enrollments.
2. COM is encouraged to explore collaborations with appropriate undergraduate units when planning new undergraduate program proposals. Especially in the case it chooses not to partner with an undergraduate unit, COM is encouraged to seek advice and guidance from the Center for Teaching and Learning regarding course and curricular design.
3. COM is encouraged to identify a point person on undergraduate education. This person should have expertise in building undergraduate schedules of courses, room assignment processes, the undergraduate academic calendar, standard meeting patterns, course approvals, program approvals, etc. This person would also serve as a troubleshooter and point of contact for COM faculty members.