



RE: School of Health and Exercise Sciences – Response to the External Panel Recommendations (5-year review)

Dear Dr. Mukherjee-Reed,

As you are aware, the School of Health and Exercise Sciences recently completed a 5-year review process. Following receipt of the external report and recommendations we have constructed a detailed point-by-point response which is provided below. We believe that this response, will in time, need to be presented to Senate. The review process has been extremely valuable and provides the School with an excellent foundation from which to move forward. We were particularly pleased to note the overall positive nature of the review – which is captured by the following comments made by the panel:

*“Overall, we were impressed with the passion and enthusiasm of all stakeholders we met with. It is clear that the School of Health and Exercise Science is viewed as a positive place to work and study and that many positive outcomes have been achieved in teaching, research and community engagement in the relatively short time the School has existed.”*

*“It is clear that the researchers are part of a dynamic group that is well-funded, and productive. There was much evidence that individuals are happy and enthusiastic about their research work and that there has been a period of incredible growth and success.”*

Once you have had the opportunity to review this document, we would be happy to meet in order to discuss and, indeed, progress the recommendations made. The reviewers split their recommendations into 7 separate areas of focus and we have maintained this structure to scaffold our response. Prior to addressing each of the focus areas, we have first provided a brief introduction in order to provide the context within which this review has taken place.

From our perspective, the recommendations fall into two major themes, 1) those that the School has under our own control (e.g. program development, research priorities, and educational leadership) and 2) those which require institutional or faculty level input to resolve. Within our response, those recommendations that require institutional or faculty level input have been highlighted in bold and specifically relate to improved communication between senior level management and faculty, guidance and support in the development of the

relationship with the Vancouver campus, better data capture across all programs, high-level institutional leadership in the overall health domain and the development of a dedicated off-campus facility to support teaching, research and community engagement.

We thank you in advance for taking the time to review this document and look forward to working with you and colleagues across the University as we continue to strive to be an internationally renowned leader in the study of health and exercise science. We believe that the foundations have been set for us to achieve this aspiration and the review process that we have completed has provided clear avenues for future development.

Kind regards,

Dr. Rob Shave

Director of the School of Health and Exercise Sciences

## **Introduction and context:**

Following a period of rapid growth between 2005 and 2018, and the appointment of a new Director at the start of 2018, the School of Health and Exercise Sciences at UBC Okanagan initiated a thorough strategic review of its current activities in order to identify key priorities to help shape the future of the School. Initiated in November 2017 by the incoming Director, and continuing throughout 2018, the review included a comprehensive consultation process with faculty, staff, students, alumni, and external partners - practices and policies were reviewed, data were gathered, we met with relevant stakeholders and conducted appropriate environmental scans. The data collected through this process formed the basis of the self-study document provided to the external review panel. Using the data gathered through the review process and following the valuable feedback received from our expert review panel, the School is now in a position to finalize our strategic plan for the coming 5 years.

## **Review Panel Recommendations and our Responses:**

### **SCHOOL STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, & ADMINISTRATION**

1. Conduct a periodic (yearly), anonymous, evaluation of the meeting and governance structure within the school to provide input for refinement of the governance structure and operations.

*Response: A new governance structure was introduced in 2018, this structure has formalized the School's committees and has facilitated an improvement in the flow of ideas and communications through the School. As part of this new structure, terms of reference for each committee have been established, which include the timeline for formal evaluation and review. Notwithstanding, it is our intention to hold an annual retreat in order to evaluate our ongoing progress, prior to which we will canvass opinion through an anonymous survey on areas that need to be reviewed or refined.*

2. Establish a mechanism for representatives of the graduate and undergraduate liaison committees to seek input from the broader student base.

*Response: The graduate and undergraduate liaison committees have only been functioning since mid 2018. They have fostered much improved communication between the faculty and students and we believe that they are a strong catalyst for ongoing development in the School. We will continue to support the liaison committees through appropriate deployment of administrative support to help embed the workings of these groups throughout the student body to maximize both their scope and reach.*

3. Develop a research consultation structure to parallel those in existence for undergraduate and graduate programs and inform the research representation on the School Leadership team.

*Response: We agree wholeheartedly with this recommendation. Within the School Leadership Group, we already have established a dedicated "Research Lead" and have identified three key*

research areas moving forward (The nascent Centre for Health Behaviour Change, the established Centre for Heart Lung and Vascular Health and the emerging group of neuromuscular scientists - as identified in the self-study document, it should be acknowledged that these groups are at very different stages of development). This year will see the further development of these three areas and focused support (financial and administrative) from the School and office of research services. Furthermore, a schedule for research meetings will be developed that will facilitate better communication within and between the groups and that will enable the effective flow of ideas from the individual to the group and then onto the School's research lead and ultimately the School Leadership Group.

4. Create a School research strategic plan that includes the creation of specific structured opportunities for research engagement that might encourage collaborations.

*Response: As noted in the introduction, we are now in a position to complete the strategic planning process which will be completed prior to the end of 2019. The development of targeted research collaboration across the School, across the Faculty and Institution and also with key external partners has already been identified as a key priority moving forward.*

5. Develop and implement a School wide communication plan with particular focus on enhanced communication with, from and between graduate students and between the Dean and the Director of the School.

*Response: The introduction of the new Governance structure (including the graduate and undergraduate liaison committees) was predicated on enhancing communication throughout the School. However, we acknowledge that it is still relatively early in the lifecycle of this new structure and that as it "beds-in" there will be opportunity to review and refine our processes. The Director and the Dean have discussed ways to improve their communication – although not explicitly stated by the reviewers, we believe that this comment may reflect a disconnect between strategic discussions happening at the level of the Deans' Council and the reality of the challenges that faculty are experiencing day-to-day. **In an attempt to improve this line of communication the Director will canvass the School on a monthly basis (at the School meeting) for specific issues that faculty want raised with the Dean. These will then be shared with the Dean through the bi-weekly Deans' Advisory Group meetings, with the outcome discussed at the following School meeting. In addition, it may be beneficial for notes or minutes from the Deans' Council to be openly shared with faculty across the institution.***

6. Consider more specialized technical support for sophisticated equipment in labs.

*Response: As part of the review process, we identified that the current structure for technical/laboratory support was inappropriate. As such we have re-structured the laboratory coordinator position and are in the process of appointing a dedicated technician who will support both teaching laboratories and research facilities. We do acknowledge that it is unlikely that the School will independently appoint a specialized technician for research; however, if the*

*specific research groupings raise this as a priority, the School will work with them to find an appropriate solution (e.g. co-funding between School and Research funding).*

7. Foster stronger and more supportive relationships with UBC Vancouver.

*Response: The relationship we have with Vancouver, is in our opinion reflective of the general relationship between UBC-Okanagan and UBC-Vancouver. At present, we find it extremely challenging to articulate the nature of our relationship with the School of Kinesiology in Vancouver. Looking forward, and as part of our strategic plan, we intend to initiate discussions with colleagues in Vancouver to explore the potential synergies and gains that can be made through a closer alliance. **Coincident with our School-level discussions, we ask that both the Faculty and Institution help to define the ongoing relationship at a higher level so that we may better align with the Institutional policy, and take advantage of the mechanisms that are put in place to address this important issue. We are aware that this issue has been identified as a priority by the Provost's Office and we welcome the opportunity to assist as and when deemed appropriate.***

#### **STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING.**

8. Obtain rankings data for the School of Health and Exercise Sciences at UBC-Okanagan independent of other Schools and Departments at UBC.

*Response: Throughout the review process, we sought to find appropriate data to benchmark our achievements to date. This highlighted two major problems: a) in the majority of external rankings, the School of Health and Exercise Sciences is combined with the School of Kinesiology in Vancouver - hence it is not possible to independently assess our performance; b) data related to our own performance (e.g. grant capture, publications, student destination statistics) is poorly collated at an Institutional level and those data are not always complete or effectively reported. Accordingly, we are extremely keen to work with the Institution to improve this situation.*

9. Undertake a strategic planning exercise where the School can define itself, and develop key goals (and means for achieving them such as a forward-facing strategic hiring plan) and define the principles to guide decisions.

*Response: As noted above, we are now in a position to complete the strategic planning process and will produce our strategic plan prior to the end of 2019.*

10. Conduct an environmental scan with consideration for the practical implications in terms of student capacity and interest and faculty and staff complement for the proposed development of a limited enrollment stream in Clinical Exercise Physiology and the associated streams in Health Behaviour and Kinesiology/Applied Health prior to further operationalize the proposal.

*Response: This recommendation has been central to the undergraduate review process we have gone through the last 12 months. As we work towards Senate approval of the new courses that will constitute the revised streams, we will be providing the relevant data on student interest, faculty and staff complement and resource implications as noted by the review team.*

11. Develop a comprehensive international strategy for academic programs and research to guide decisions on partnerships, investments and collaborations

*Response: Our international activities and aspirations (research, teaching and external engagement) will be a significant component of our strategic plan. As the Provost is aware we have made significant steps towards the development of a strategic partnership with the University of Exeter in relation to both research and student exchange. **We also recognize that the Institution as a whole is reviewing the international strategy and we are extremely keen to assist with and align with the new strategy as it is developed.***

12. Develop a research strategic plan that includes the creation of specific structured opportunities for research engagement that might encourage collaborations.

*Response: As noted above in response 3, we have identified three specific areas on which to focus our research strategy moving forward. As these groupings are at different stages of development, their needs and requirements also differ. The School is wholly committed to supporting these groups and will work with them (through consultation with the Research Lead and School Leadership Group) to identify specific resource requirements. We agree with the reviewers that collaboration needs to be fostered; however, it cannot be forced and needs to be encouraged to specifically advance our overall research standing and should not be seen as an outcome in its own right. To this end, and in line with our developing strategic plan, where resources are available from the School, Faculty or Institution, it will be purposely tailored to support research engagement and collaboration that builds overall capacity and facilitates greater grant capture, and or higher quality research outputs.*

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

13. For future reviews, consider a more structured self-study and reviewer template, and the provision of key strategic documents and data.

*Response: We agree with the reviewers that a greater degree of structure to the whole review process would be helpful. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Faculty and Institution to help develop a standardized approach to the review process as at present there appears to be little consistency across units.*

14. Develop learning outcomes and competencies to guide both academic planning and policy and the review of academic programs.

*Response: Once again this recommendation has been central to the undergraduate review process we have gone through the last 12 months. As we work towards Senate approval of the new courses that will constitute the revised streams, we will be providing the relevant learning outcomes and competencies noted by the review panel. In line with this, we are already working closely with the library to identify gaps in the progression of learning outcomes and relevant competencies and will actively address these in the revised curriculum.*

15. Implement a framework of regular goal setting and strategic planning in order to measure and evaluate progress, as well as to situate the goals and objectives of the program and the campus with respect to relevant Canadian and global comparator institutions.

*Response: As noted previously, this review has formed part of our overall strategic planning process which started early in 2018. Within the strategic plan that is being developed, we will identify overall aspirations and short-term priorities to help focus our efforts and move the School forward. We will also be holding an annual review to enable us to reflect on our progress and review and refine our annual priorities to maintain momentum towards our overall aspirations. This approach, alongside the work highlighted in response 8 in relation to benchmarking data, will enable us to deliver on this helpful recommendation.*

## **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

16. For the current curriculum: develop and implement a robust system of tracking student success data, enhance opportunities for skills acquisition and mastery and experiential and work integrated learning, conduct yearly review of student satisfaction and coordination of curriculum delivery linked to learning outcomes, review the level 3 and 4 course offerings with an aim to reduce the offering of low enrollment, niche courses.

*Response: The reviewers highlight many different areas in this recommendation. **We fully agree that tracking student success and, indeed, their career destination following graduation is something that needs to be improved and that we are committed to working with colleagues outside of the School to address (see response 8).** Improving skill competencies and experiential learning is something that we have identified as a priority and is very much driving the development of our new curriculum – this will be evident in the new curriculum that will be presented to Senate in due course. **Robust student satisfaction data would be extremely useful in our ongoing quality assurance processes, and we believe that this is being addressed at an Institutional level.** With the roll-out of the new streams, we will reduce the number of “niche” courses and focus extensively on the alignment of the curriculum with the specific course requirements and learning outcomes.*

17. For the proposed curriculum: ensure that there is wide involvement of staff with pedagogical expertise in the development and implementation team for any new curriculum, develop scaffolded and progressive learning outcomes for all proposed curriculum, reconsider the proposed plan for disarticulation of anatomy and physiology offerings, carefully consider

the operational and philosophical implications for the development of a limited enrollment CEP stream.

*Response: We are grateful for these comments, throughout the review process we have ensured that there has been wide consultation with all faculty members at all stages of the development of the new curriculum. In relation to the limited enrollment in the CEP stream, it is likely for both the CEP and Behaviour Change stream that these will be rolled out on a limited basis at first. However, the long-term goal is to accommodate 40-50 students in each of these streams so we do not share the operational or philosophical concerns of an overly limited enrollment expressed by the reviewers.*

18. Overall: That a formal process for collecting student evaluations of teaching as well as other types of teaching evaluation be established and that the School develop a formal process to identify courses and instructors that are scoring well above or well below expectations be established. If the scores are deemed valid, then those scoring highly should be celebrated and low scores should be studied

***Response: As per response number 16 above, we fully concur with the reviewers' recommendation and will support the institution as it reviews the overall process for teaching evaluations and look forward to using the new system within our overall quality assurance processes.***

## **GRADUATE PROGRAM**

19. Create procedures and guidelines that clearly determine the graduate student funding formula, including the process for the allocation of teaching assistantships for domestic and international MSc and PhD students including both those who are externally funded and those who are not. These procedures and guidelines should be clear and transparent and communicated widely prior to admission in the programs.

*Response: The School leadership group has been working on this very issue for the last year and have developed a clear algorithm for the disbursement of funding under our own jurisdiction (included in the self-study document). With specific reference to the allocation of teaching assistantships (TAs) the decisions are based on the pedagogical need of each of the courses being supported, and the specific allocation follows the guidelines noted in the TA collective agreement (e.g. external funding and prior experience).*

20. Develop and offer graduate level courses beyond what is currently in the course offerings; while we do not want to specify the manner in which these are delivered, we do suggest that some of these be delivered by Professors within the School, but others can be arranged by relationships with UBC Vancouver or other Faculties within UBCO.

*Response: The graduate committee has already initiated a review of the MSc course provision. It is our intention that MSc courses offered in the School will closely align with our research*



*expertise and will enable effective marketing of this program as a “Research-Intensive Masters Degree”. We also want to note that students can already take advantage of courses offered through Vancouver on a case-by-case basis.*

21. Include options for courses related to both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and analyses for graduate students.

*Response: As part of the review of our MSc provision the research methods and statistical courses will be evaluated and re-focused as deemed appropriate by the graduate committee.*

22. Consider the possibility of including some required courses at the doctoral level.

*Response: In 2018, the School was successful in “Grand-Fathering” the Vancouver PhD program across to Okanagan. As such, our doctoral program is fully aligned with that of Vancouver and cannot introduce required courses. Irrespective, we believe that a flexible doctorate program in which the students and supervisory committees can sculpt a program that meets the requirements of the student (including elective coursework) is a progressive approach to research training and one that we value highly.*

23. Develop, communicate and implement equitable and consistent procedures for the comprehensive exams and ensure that concerns of conflict of interest are proactively addressed in those procedures.

*Response: As per response 22 above, with the transition to the new PhD program, we are required to follow the guidelines set by the Vancouver program. The graduate committee is currently finalizing guideline documentation for students and faculty for both the comprehensive examination process and the dissertation proposal. Accordingly, all students enrolling on the PhD program will follow these guidelines. We do however recognize that these guidelines may differ from those of the new/or historical IGS program that houses some of our students. This discrepancy will resolve as all new students will be enrolled on the dedicated PhD program.*

24. Share effective mentoring models being used within existing research laboratories with other members of the School.

*Response: Through the development of lab seminars, informal networking opportunities and the initiation of the graduate liaison committee, we will endeavor to share models of best practice of mentoring and student support between individual laboratories and research groups.*

25. Create a space which will enable graduate students to more easily access clinically based populations.

***Response: We are grateful that the review team highlighted this recommendation. Many of our researchers and graduate students are engaged in projects that require collaboration***

***with clinical colleagues or the recruitment of clinical populations. At present, this is a challenge and something that we have identified as a strategic priority moving forward. We have started initial discussions with the Dean and, indeed, the wider community over the development of an external “clinically-focused” facility that would facilitate research, student learning and community engagement in relation to behaviour change and exercise programming for both low-risk and high-risk populations (See review documentation). We believe that such a facility would set us apart in the Canadian system and has the potential to elevate our programs to the highest level. We look forward to working with all stakeholder (Senior Institutional Management, the Development Office, The Faculty of Health and Social Development and external partners) to realize this aspiration over the next 5 years.***

26. Create and implement University wide policies and procedures for postdoctoral trainees.

***Response: As a School we recognize that, at present, postdoctoral trainees (PDTs) are not well supported and we are working to improve this through integration of PDTs into relevant aspects of our graduate and faculty support systems. However, we would be grateful for the Institution to take a lead on developing PDT specific policies and procedures so that collectively we are better able to support and also attract these vital members of the research collective.***

27. Increase the clarity of roles and responsibilities for both the College of Graduate Studies and the School of Health and Exercise Sciences with respect to graduate students, supervisors and graduate programs.

***Response: With the recent transition to our own independent PhD program, it is inevitable that there is some confusion regarding roles and responsibilities of COGS vs. The School. However, as students are enrolled into the new system, we believe that this problem will dissipate. Notwithstanding, we will closely monitor the situation in collaboration with the graduate liaison committee to preempt and address any problems.***

## **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY ACTIVITY**

28. Support the emerging focus on larger collaborative research grants, but recommend that they not be led in a “top down” approach” and not require the participation of all members of a cluster or all clusters.

***Response: Through significant effort from researchers in the School, we have a growing reputation in the field of health and exercise science. Initially through our own internal review process, and now based on this recommendation, we have identified the need to increase the number of larger collaborative team grants as a strategic priority to ensure the progression and recognition of our researchers and further enhance the reputation of our school. We fully agree with the reviewers, that this needs to be an organic process and not driven by School Leadership. Rather, the School Leadership (as per response 3 above) will work with the research groupings to support the identification and development of larger collaborative team grants***

*which are predicated on legitimate research interests and expertise in the School. To this end, each of the research groupings have identified and defined their priorities going forward and have informed the School Leadership of the resources required to meet their objectives. This process is helping to inform our strategic research plan and focus efforts toward achievable and mutually important goals.*

29. Provide funds to incentivize and facilitate stronger connections between the UBC Okanagan and UBC-Vancouver, and in particular to support the travel of researchers and students between the 2 locations for research purposes.

***Response: The School Director has already been in discussions with his equivalent in the School of Kinesiology in relation to the support of travel between campuses and has agreed to provide funding to support this initiative. However, as per response 7, we would welcome input from the Faculty and Institution on how the School might support or engage with higher-level initiatives to improve the relationship between the two campuses.***

30. Support the proposal for the establishment of the UBC-O Health and Exercise Centre and recommend the further development of the proposal to include a business plan (including market survey and operational cost analysis).

***Response: Once again, we are grateful to the review committee for this recommendation. As noted in response 25, the development of such a Centre would set us apart in the Canadian system and has the potential to elevate all of our programs to the highest level. We will work with all stakeholders to realize this aspiration, specifically the Deans Office, the Development Office, and Campus Planning in order to develop an appropriate business plan that helps us move this from being simply an idea into reality.***

31. Provide the faculty members in the Educational Leadership Stream with ample opportunity and venues to contribute to the discussions about the future of the School and the curriculum, in particular, increase communication and clarity with respect to expectations for these faculty members for scholarly and service work.

*Response: The primary vehicles for discussion and consultation regarding the School and the curriculum are the respective committees all of which have representation from Educational Leadership (EL) colleagues. Furthermore, new documents and proposals are shared with the whole School for consultation and comment prior to endorsement/ratification at the School meetings. As such, we believe that EL faculty are enabled to effectively contribute to the ongoing developments within the School. Notwithstanding, we recognize the need to bring the EL faculty stream together periodically through the year to help support initiatives and better align individual EL activity with School priorities. To this end, an EL working group is being formed to ensure that the EL faculty have a specific route to request support and improve communication. Furthermore, this group has been tasked with identifying the key EL activities for the School strategic plan. **Beyond the School, we also respectfully request that the wider***

***institution continues work on clarifying the expectations related to educational leadership as our EL colleagues would welcome further guidance and support.***

32. Encouragement for EL stream faculty members to engage in a breadth of scholarly activities as defined in the Academic Guidelines section of the appendix of the selfstudy.

*Response: Please see response 31*

33. Support educational leadership scholarly activities by providing access to discretionary funds and the establishment of an EL community of practice for enhancement of these important activities.

*Response: We concur that the development of an EL community of practice would be helpful, and we will actively pursue this idea in the coming year. In relation to specific funding to support EL activities, given the limited budget within the School, this will only be possible if those EL activities align with the strategic priorities. Accordingly, as we develop the strategic plan, careful consideration of how to simultaneously support EL faculty whilst focusing such efforts on School imperatives (e.g. quality assurance, competency/practical based learning and professionalization of the health and exercise sectors) will be required.*

## **RESOURCES**

34. Consider developing space or an agreement for the use of such space that would support courses and practice in exercise testing and prescription. Such a space could be also used for other undergraduate experiences.

***Response: We agree with the reviewers that such a space is urgently required, especially in relation to the development of the new streams within the undergraduate program. If we are successful in the development of a dedicated UBC-O Health and Exercise Centre this facility would meet this need. However, irrespective of the potential UBC-O Health and Exercise Centre, we will need to work with the Faculty and Campus Planning to ensure appropriate space is available to deliver the proposed programs. This resource requirement will be included in the overall proposal that will accompany any documentation prepared for Senate approval.***

35. Further development and advancement of a strategic plan for enhanced relationships with Interior Health and with the Kelowna community, including the operation of a community based clinical exercise rehabilitation and wellness program in downtown Kelowna.

***Response: While the School acknowledges its role in the development of a meaningful relationship with Interior Health, Kelowna General Hospital and other community partners in the health and exercise domain, and the need for us to strategically plan to enhance these relationships, it is important to note that the School is a small part of a much larger health related ecosystem. Accordingly, we believe that there is a pressing need (as noted by the***

*review panel) for the Institution as a whole to develop a strategic plan related to health programs in the region. The School is eager to work with all partners to improve the current situation; however as an Institution we need to be able to collectively (e.g. School of Health and Exercise, Sciences, School of Nursing, School of Social Work, Faculty of Health and Social Development, Faculty of Medicine, Southern Medical Program) articulate our plans for health-related research in the region and to then broker effective relationships with Interior Health, Kelowna General Hospital, Physician Groups, and other allied health professionals. Our reviewers suggest “that assignment of responsibility for developing such external engagement should be given to a specific individual at a sufficiently high level of administration to have influence within such discussions and negotiations” and as a School we wholeheartedly concur with this recommendation.*