

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

November 15, 2010

To: Kim A. Wilcox, Provost Michigan State University

From: Faculty of the Department of Neurology & Ophthalmology

Re: Proposed reorganization of the basic biomedical science departments

Cc: (the deans of COM, CHM, CNS, CVM, **university governance committees**)

Provost Wilcox,

The reorganization of the biomedical sciences is a major pending issue and was discussed at the recent Department of Neurology & Ophthalmology faculty meeting. The faculty reviewed your memo of August 25th, 2010, in which the objectives and parameters for a proposed reorganization of the college reporting structure for the four biomedical science departments (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Pharmacology & Toxicology, Physiology and Microbiology and Molecular Genetics) were laid out.

We understand the rationale underlying the proposed reorganization. We have been made aware that the current vision for the reorganization of the biomedical science departments would change the college reporting structure so that Physiology & Pharmacology/Toxicology would report solely to the College of Human Medicine (CHM), while Biochemistry & Molecular Biology and Microbiology and Molecular Genetics would report to the College of Natural Science (CNS); all faculty within these departments would have their primary appointments assigned to CHM or CNS. The College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) and College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) would have no faculty members with primary appointments in the biomedical science departments, but would continue to support these departments and expect teaching responsibilities to continue.

Why should the members of the Department of Neurology & Ophthalmology care or take a position on the issue of basic biomedical science reorganization? We have significant concerns that the originally proposed approach to reorganization of biomedical sciences will have a net negative impact on COM, which is our lead college and will be our only reporting college in the near future. In addition, the reorganization of biomedical sciences has potential direct impact on our department since we have several faculty members jointly appointed in these biomedical science departments, as well as faculty with sole appointment in these departments that are major contributors to our medical school, residency curriculum and research activities. We are also sensitive that the realignment of college reporting structure, in general, was one of the reasons given for the impending separation of our department and the CHM (with the creation of a CHM neurology academic unit with overlapping and potentially competing academic mission).

There is an apparent perception that Michigan State University clinicians in East Lansing are not interested and do not care about interactions with basic/biomedical scientists. We feel that silence on this issue from clinical departments in East Lansing will only reinforce this erroneous opinion. As one of the most research intense/productive clinical departments at Michigan State University, we recognize the unique value of connections with our colleagues and collaborators in the biomedical science departments. We are



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deeply concerned that an administrative disconnection between these biomedical science departments from our lead college, and from our department in turn, will create further obstacles to productive interactions between basic scientists and clinicians.

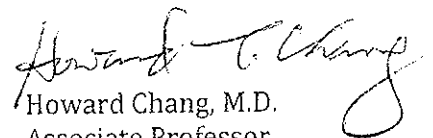
A modified biomedical science realignment plan (attached) has been developed by the Departments of Pharmacology & Toxicology and Physiology. We believe this modified realignment plan will provide the desired cleaner lines of reporting/accountability while mitigating most of the significant problems that would arise from the proposal to have the biomedical science departments report only through CHM and CNS. We endorse and support the modified biomedical science realignment plan provided by the Departments of Pharmacology & Toxicology and Physiology.

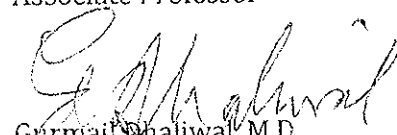
Sincerely,

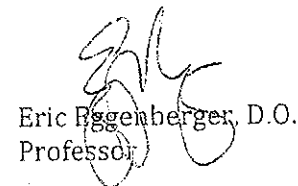

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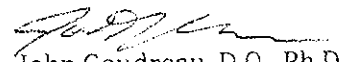

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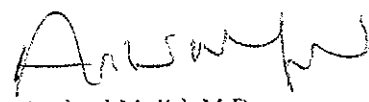

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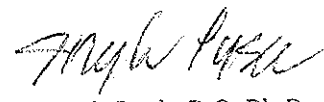

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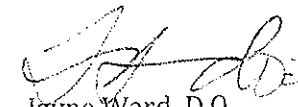

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After significant discussion and deliberation, faculty from the PHM and PSL are submitting a plan for the realignment of the biomedical science departments. This plan developed by the faculty, termed the "modified plan" captures those aspects of the Provost's plan that the faculty felt strengthened MSU. Likewise, for those aspects of the Provost's plan that might benefit from modification, we provide recommendations.

The faculty's modified plan proposes the following:

1. To simplify and strengthen reporting lines, the chairperson of each basic health science department will report to one dean (one college) and will be appointed in one college.
2. In order to capitalize on the existing trusted relationships, the current "lead college" for each department would become the designated reporting college (e.g., PHM/COM; PSL/CHM, MMG/CVM and BMB/CNS)
3. CHM, COM, CVM and CNS each assume primary responsibility for one of the four basic health science departments.
4. Faculty appointments/lines, regardless of the reporting college remain unchanged.

What are the similarities between the Provost's plan and the modified plan?

1. The chair of each of the four basic health science departments reports directly to one dean.

How is the modified plan different from that proposed by the Provost?

1. CHM, COM, CVM and NS retain primary responsibility for one biomedical department.
2. Existing faculty appointments in the four colleges remain unchanged. As faculty retire or leave MSU, their position reverts back to the college of their appointment, allowing for continued involvement of all colleges in the future development of the University.
3. By being appointed in one college (as opposed to the present partial joint appointments), the chair now has only one *boss¹*, which will make for a *cleaner reporting line*, prevent a chair *playing off one dean against the other*, and reduce confusion as to *what is expected of the Chair* relative to responsibilities, as performance is evaluated only by the dean responsible for the department. (¹Italicized words/phrases were used in the memo from the Provost on 8/25/10.)

Why is the modified plan more advantageous to MSU than the Provost's plan within the context of research, teaching and governance?

Provost's Plan: COM and CVM would have no biomedical science departments within their respective colleges. The primary role of the 4 departments will be to provide students and clinical colleagues up-to-date basic science knowledge required for effective practice of modern medicine. COM and CVM governance may have reduced basic science input. Governance of CHM and CNS will be impacted with loss of engagement by basic science disciplines not under their governance.

The potential negative ramifications for the future of biomedical sciences research and teaching and academic governance under the Provost's plan are multifaceted and include:

- During the recent site visit for COM accreditation, it became clear to many members of the graduate studies committee that COM may have accreditation issues with the American Osteopathic Association during its next cycle if it does not have a basic science department in place. Keeping a basic science department in place at COM will remove that issue.
- Relying on the good graces of this Dean and subsequent Deans of CNS for expertise in Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Microbiology and Molecular Genetics may come across as an insubstantial commitment at a time when every medical college is dealing with how to develop curricula that more fully reflect the transformation in modern biology.
- There will be little incentive for COM and CVM to invest in the hiring of strong research intensive faculty in the biomedical science departments since: (a) these faculty will not be appointed in these colleges, and (b) although COM and CVM will be given a portion of the indirect research costs, neither of these college will receive academic recognition for the research accomplishments of faculty appointed in a different college.
- The burden of hiring biomedical science department faculty would rest solely on CNS and CHM, and both of these colleges would have the primary responsibility for providing funding for substantial start-up costs. The negative outcome could be hiring fewer biomedical science department faculty.
- With the current, expanding focus by CHM in Grand Rapids, its primary emphasis will be to invest in faculty positions and infrastructure in Grand Rapids. This could result in a divestment in basic and clinical science faculty in East Lansing. This portends a major threat to the East Lansing-based biomedical science departments.
- With no basic science department faculty in CVM and COM, both of these colleges may have minimal incentive to commit already scarce resources for research facilities, research infrastructure, research support facilities, and other services essential for East Lansing campus faculty to be competitive for NIH and NSF funding.
- COM and CVM will have little if any input on the hiring of new basic science department faculty as senior faculty retire, especially within the context of instructional needs of COM and CVM.
- The proposed linear reporting will create barriers in curriculum development across colleges.
- The governance of all four colleges will suffer from having a more restricted profile of faculty appointed on college committees.

Faculty Modified Plan:

- Each college maintains a vested interest and investment in each of four basic health science departments at two levels. First, each college will have primary responsibility for one basic science department. Second, the four colleges will have faculty in as many as four biomedical departments. A likely outcome is greater attention of a given College to their one basic science department and therefore a greater opportunity to increase the quality and success of each department.

- Each college will directly benefit from their investments in faculty recruitment by having those faculty appointed in their college(s), irrespective of the department in which the faculty member resides. There would also be benefit at the department level, as recruitment of strong basic science faculty and superb teachers strengthen the entire MSU research enterprise.
- With each College having primary responsibility for one basic science department, there would be greater incentive for the four colleges to work together to insure teaching, research, and service needs are met in a balanced manner across all of the departments and colleges when hiring new faculty.
- Issues concerning space within each biomedical sciences department would be handled directly by its Dean. For space issues impacting multiple departments, these would be negotiated between the respective Deans and the VPRGS.
- This “modified plan” will lead to sustained interest and investment in the basic sciences as the most substantial means to ensure commitment is by maintaining faculty lines.
- Accreditation teams will be better able to look at tangible evidence of commitment of CHM, COM, and CVM to their respective mission as each of the colleges will have vested interests in both basic science and clinical disciplines.