



September 25, 2012

Professor Cheryl Regehr
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs
Simcoe Hall, University of Toronto

Dear Cheryl,

I am writing to give a one-year follow up report with respect to the fall 2010 external review of the Department of Biology at UTM, to be reported to AP&P at its October 2012 meeting. I will be present at that meeting to answer any questions committee members might have.

In your request for the follow-up report, you asked me to comment specifically on the external reviewers concerns with respect to curriculum and teaching laboratories.

Concerns raised with respect to curriculum reflected the Department's lack of a strategic academic plan and curricular review that could properly inform assessment of whether or not learning objectives and degree level expectations were being met. The Department has since developed a strategic academic plan as part of the division wide academic planning exercise presently nearing its conclusion at UTM, and in the process undertook an extensive curricular review.

As a result of this review, they now have a database of all curriculum content and teaching methods, including data on course learning outcomes, program learning outcomes, assessment methods, transferable skill development, biology skill development, biology content knowledge, and assessment of student learning gains. The database will be updated annually. Having undertaken this review, they are confident that they are meeting program and degree learning objectives. Their curriculum mapping has confirmed that they offer a wide array of experiential learning opportunities, including laboratories, field trips, and research opportunity courses in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year.

The reviewers expressed concern about the Department's outdated and inadequate teaching laboratories and lack of student access to laboratory courses. We shared those concerns. In June 2011, the University and the Government of Ontario announced a significant funding package for the revitalization of UTM teaching laboratories. Renovation of Biology teaching lab space has involved a first phase, renovation of Biology labs on the 4th floor of the Davis Building, scheduled for the summer of 2012. The second and third phases, renovation of teaching lab space on the second floor, will occur in 2014 and 2015. I am very pleased to report that the 4th floor renovation was completed on time and that classes are now being held in modern lab space, well-designed, well-equipped, and accessible to students, faculty and staff with disabilities. These laboratories have been very well received, and enable the department to offer existing lab-based courses to more students, and to add new lab components to courses, as they have done for BIO 312 this year. Furthermore, the new equipment purchased will ensure that students learn up-to-date methodology.

Sincerely,



Professor Amy Mullin
Vice-Principal Academic and Dean
University of Toronto Mississauga

cc: Bernard Katz, Acting Vice-Dean Graduate, UTM
Lynn Snowden, Assistant Dean, UTM
Melissa Berger, Program and Planning Officer, UTM
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