UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF MEDICINE

OFFICE OF FACULTY COUNCIL

October 22, 2013

Dean Catharine Whiteside
Faculty of Medicine, Dean's Office
Medical Sciences Building, Room 2109
1 King's College Circle

Dear Dean Whiteside:

Re: Banting and Best Department of Medical Research

I am writing to confirm formally that the Faculty Council, at its meeting held on October 21, 2013, approved the following recommendation:

1) THAT the Banting and Best Department of Medical Research be closed effective July 1, 2014.

It is understood that you will communicate this approval to the appropriate Faculty and University officials.

Yours sincerely,

Todd Coomber
Faculty Affairs Officer

cc: Dr. Brenda Andrews, Director, Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research

Proposal to Close the Banting and Best Department of Medical Research, Effective July 1, 2014

Statement of Purpose

The Faculty of Medicine proposes to close the Banting and Best Department of Medical Research (BBDMR), effective July 1, 2014.

Background

The Banting and Best Department of Medical Research (BBDMR) was established in 1927 and was conceived as a research-intensive department that would work towards the cure for diabetes and other diseases. Since its inception the BBDMR has had a purely research mandate, originally focused on understanding the basic molecular mechanisms underlying diabetes and related diseases. As a research department, the BBDMR does not administer undergraduate or graduate programs. Its faculty have non-budgetary cross appointments in several other departments [Molecular Genetics, Biochemistry, Medical Biophysics, Computer Science, Institute of Biomaterials & Bioengineering] and teach in those units, helping to fulfill the goal of training scientists who will form part of the next generation of independent investigators.

About 15 years ago, Dr. Jim Friesen, a previous Chair of the BBDMR, recognized the importance of providing an environment that would stimulate interdisciplinary interactions for success in the emerging fields of functional genomics, proteomics and bioinformatics. He and his colleagues aggressively recruited new faculty members to the BBMDR to establish an outstanding core of researchers with expertise in many aspects of systems-level biomedical research. The BBDMR was able to lead Canada in this important research area since its purely research mandate allowed flexibility in the type of scientists that could be recruited to the University, and provided the capacity to build critical mass in an emerging area of interdisciplinary research.

At the same time, the University of Toronto addressed the challenge of integration of technology, expertise, and thought from diverse disciplines through the establishment of the Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research (the Donnelly Centre) in 2006. Like the BBDMR, the Donnelly Centre has a primary research mandate, and aims to stimulate collaborative interactions at the interface of biology, chemistry, engineering and computer science in order to develop and apply new technologies for approaching the most challenging biological problems in the post-genomic era. The Centre now houses 35 Principal Investigators and their teams – the Centre became an EDU-A on July 1 2010, as recommended by an External Review of the BBMDR and the Donnelly Centre in 2009.

The BBDMR is intimately linked to the creation of the Donnelly Centre due to the vision and leadership of Professor Friesen and his colleague, Dr. Cecil Yip. As a result of their efforts, most active researchers in the BBDMR were doing work in areas directly relevant to the Donnelly Centre mandate, and relocated into the Centre in early 2006. The strong links between the Donnelly Centre and the BBDMR were recognized by the previous Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dr. David Naylor, who linked the positions of Chair of BBDMR and Director of the Donnelly Centre.

As noted above, as a research department, the BBDMR does not administer undergraduate or graduate programs. Instead, most faculty appointed to the department hold their primary graduate appointments in other departments, including Molecular Genetics, Biochemistry, Medical Biophysics, Computer Science, and the Institute of Biomaterials & Bioengineering. There are 19 full-time academic faculty with appointments in the BBDMR who are physically located in the Donnelly Centre (see ***Appendix 1***). Their primary appointments will be transferred to the Donnelly Centre once the BBDMR is officially closed as an academic unit (see "Impact" below).

Academic Rationale

The rationale for closing the BBDMR is to focus faculty strengths on the Donnelly Centre which will continue the legacy of the BBDMR as a leader in biomedical research forward by providing faculty members with an updated academic structure and improved research opportunities, while minimizing administrative and occupancy costs through consolidation. The Donnelly Centre also provides the opportunity for faculty members with primary appointments in the BBDMR to develop and participate in new graduate and undergraduate education opportunities, specific to the Centre.

Impact

On academic matters the BBDMR has had a fairly standard organizational structure consistent with its small size and focused research mandate. As noted above, the BBDMR does not administer undergraduate or graduate programs so closure of the Department would have no impact on students who are currently enrolled in other graduate departments. Instead, the BBDMR faculty members and their students would continue to contribute to the research mandate of the former BBDMR within an expanded group, when the faculty appointments shift to the Donnelly Centre. Retired BBDMR faculty who have been awarded Emeritus status will retain that status.

Administrative staff reorganization occurred several years ago when Dr. Andrews assumed the positions of Chair of the BBDMR and Director of the Donnelly Centre. Redundant positions were eliminated (one Chair's assistant; one business officer; one financial assistant). All current departmental staff will continue in their positions in the Donnelly Centre once closure of the BBMDR occurs.

Financial Implications

After the EDU-A approval for the Donnelly Centre was received in July 2010 the financial budgets of the BBDMR and Donnelly Centre were merged. As a result, all financial transactions have been processed solely under the Donnelly Centre hierarchy since the start of fiscal 2012. All operating funds, endowed funding (with approval and support from Advancement), research chairs and research grants were merged into one hierarchy. Thus, the financial implications of the closure of the BBDMR have already been addressed. The first merged operating budget was released by the Faculty of Medicine to the Donnelly Centre in fiscal 2013.

As noted above, endowed funding and student awards were moved into the Donnelly Centre budget; however, two foundations which provide fellowship funding, The Banting Research Foundation and The Charles H. Best Foundation will require further clarification on the change

in departmental structure if this proposal is accepted. In addition to this, work is being undertaken with Advancement to request approval to expand the scope of the Jennifer Dorrington Award to make all Donnelly Centre graduate students eligible for the award. At present, only students working with a BBDMR professor can apply.

Although some issues with endowed funds remain to be addressed, the administrative and financial aspects of the BBDMR closure will not negatively impact faculty members, students or other stakeholders, and the major tasks associated with financial merger have already been completed

Consultation

The historical contribution of the BBDMR is something to be acknowledged and honoured; as such the Director of the Donnelly Centre and Chair of BBMDR has consulted widely on this proposal. This proposal was initially discussed with Dean Whiteside, who provided the approval to consult more widely and take this proposal forward. Two Department External Reviews (1995, 2002) described the Best Institute as "no longer suitable for modern biomedical research" due to a decaying infrastructure, an inadequate physical plant and poor organization that impeded interactions. In the 2009 External Review of the BBDMR and the Donnelly Centre the review committee (Dr. Philip Hieter and Dr. Jasper Rine) wrote "we strongly recommend that vigorous efforts be made toward the establishment of an EDU-A as the academic unit that provides visibility and authority to the combined activities of the TDCCBR and the BBDMR as soon as possible". Dr. Whiteside strongly endorsed the recommendation of the external review committee and asked the Dr. Andrews takes steps establish the Donnelly Centre as an EDU-A (done in 2010) and to close the BBMDR. The external review involved particularly broad consultation and included reports from faculty members, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows. Meetings with the external reviewers included these groups of stakeholders as well as Chairs of cognate departments, leaders of hospital research institutes and others. The proposal to move faculty appointments from BBDMR to the Donnelly Centre has also been discussed at faculty meetings in 2011, 2012 and 2013 and has been widely supported.

Appendix 1

List of Full-time BBDMR Faculty

As of August 2013

Faculty Name	Title	Primary	Secondary	Cross-Appointment	Notes
Brenda Andrews	Director, Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Gary Bader	Associate Professor	BBDMR		Comp Science, Molecular Genetics	
Ben Blencowe	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Charlie Boone	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Michael Brudno	Associate Professor	Computer Science	BBDMR		
Amy Caudy	Assistant Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Andrew Emili	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Andrew Fraser	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Jack Greenblatt	University Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Timothy Hughes	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Philip Kim	Assistant Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics, Computer	
Henry Krause	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Al Edwards	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics, Medical Biophysics, Chemical Engineering	Seconded 80% to SGC
Jason Moffat	Professor	BBDMR	Molecular Genetics		
Quaid Morris	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics, Computer Science, Electrical and Computer Engineering	
Frederick Roth	Professor	BBDMR	Lunenfeld-Tanenbaum Research Institute	Molecular Genetics, Computer Science	
William Ryu	Associate Professor	BBDMR	Physics	IBBME	
Sachdev Sidhu	Professor	BBDMR		Molecular Genetics	
Zhaolei Zhang	Professor	BBDMR	Molecular Genetics	Computer Science	