

## **Comments from College of Pharmacy Faculty on Taskforce on Curriculum Reform Recommendations**

### **Signature and Thread Courses:**

In general, the UTCOP faculty philosophically support the signature and thread courses. It was thought to be a good mechanism to help students start thinking globally, and faculty liked the idea of bringing faculty together from different disciplines to teach a subject. Thread is important so that students have some focus to approaching their educational requirements as opposed to the current cafeteria approach.

Some concern was expressed regarding implementation logistics.

- Is it possible to accomplish proposed goals for these courses with class sizes over 200 students? It was also mentioned that class sizes this large may discourage faculty from wanting to participate in the signature courses.
- Do TAs have the necessary experience to accomplish the goals of the discussion sessions? Questionable whether the goals can be accomplished using TAs for the breakout sessions
- Where are the available resources for the number of high quality TAs needed for these discussion sessions?
- Are there adequate numbers of high quality TAs with good communications skills to teach and facilitate these sessions? Is this going to compete with needs of academic departments for TAs they need for their courses?
- As an alternative, it was suggested that faculty pairs teach classes not to exceed 40 students, and then have two breakout sessions facilitated by these respective faculty members.
- What are the implications for transfer students. This has potential implications for the College of Pharmacy. The College has restrictive admissions, with a large percentage of applicants completing their prepharmacy requirements at other institutions. Prepharmacy requirements currently take 2+ years to complete, and approximately 1/3 of students admitted into the Pharm.D. program have an undergraduate degree.
- What are the effects of these changes on the college's cooperative program with UT Pan Am and UTEP? These students are recruited out of high school, and sign a contract for admission into the College's Pharm.D. program. They complete their prepharmacy requirements at UT Pan Am or UTEP, and if they fulfill the conditions of the contract, they are admitted into the Pharm.D. program. This program is a priority for the College in helping meet health care needs for underserved border populations, and we would not want to see it adversely affected.

### **University College:**

Although faculty support the need to improve the academic experience for lower division students, implementation concerns were expressed related to the University College. This appears resource intensive, and in a time of limited resources, what will be the

source of these funds? Faculty expressed concern regarding the possible diversion from academic department resources. The following questions and comments were also raised:

- How many of the current challenges with lower division courses are because of the large enrollment compared to available resources, as opposed to the current organizational structure?
- To what extent are current educational goals limited because an unacceptable percentage of incoming freshman are academically unprepared for university education?
- Some concern was expressed that the University College Dean would be of higher status than current college and school Deans. For example, why is the University College Dean on the University P&T Committee? A different review structure may be needed for faculty heavily involved with the University College, but this particular recommendation was questioned.
- Concern was expressed regarding all faculty being members of the University College, rather than those faculty who are interested and elect to be members of the University College. If this is going to work, it must be accomplished by champions for the cause. It was not thought to be reasonable to “force” faculty” to participate if their primary appointment is elsewhere. Concern expressed that if “everyone is responsible for the core requirements, then no one is responsible.”

Again, COP faculty support the goals of the taskforce. Most concerns are focused on implementation issues and concerns about the potential effects on academic departments.