



Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

ORU 5-year Review PICN

November 23, 2015

Academic Senate review of the 5-year Organized Research Unit (ORU) review of the Program in International and Community Nutrition (PICN) has been requested. Graduate Council response is requested due to the reference to graduate teaching in the review.

Graduate Council

November 23, 2015 1:16 PM

Response continued on next page.

UC DAVIS: ACADEMIC SENATE
GRADUATE COUNCIL
ACADEMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

November 23, 2015

To: Academic Chair Knoesen
Re: Graduate Council Comments on the ORU 5-year Review PICN

In response to your request for comment, the Graduate Council, partially based on the deliberations of its subcommittee on Academic Planning and Development, concurs with the ad hoc review committee's recommendation that the ORU Program in International and Community Nutrition (PICN) should be continued. This recommendation stems largely from past successes of the program and the opportunities for addressing the many needs in international and community nutrition. Based on the review committee's report, the program has trained more than 80 doctoral students over its 15 years of operation. Unfortunately, however, the ad hoc committee report provides little information on whether the current downward trends in graduate student involvement are likely to be reversed. Several statements, including those from participating students, indicate graduate student involvement has lessened, to the point where no new Ph.D. students are being brought into the program for this academic year. This is said to be due to the departure or near retirement of several of the key faculty and scientists, including the program director.

The ad hoc committee report emphasizes the many opportunities for PICN collaborations, including the potential to work more closely with the new World Food Center, the School of Veterinary Medicine, and notably the campus' strengths in agriculture. The recommended hiring of new faculty and a new director, following the retirement of the current director, would be a critical step in reinvigorating the program and facilitating such collaborations.

Although graduate student involvement appears to have decreased in recent years, the research productivity has remained high, which might indicate a change in the objectives of the PICN. The ad hoc committee report did not include a section pertaining to teaching. This gives the impression that the various items related to teaching (as listed within the Scope & Criteria for Review) were not emphasized within the review materials provided by the PICN. Graduate Council strongly urges that any plans for continuing the PICN should include as a central objective the focus on graduate student training and other forms of graduate student involvement.

Sincerely,



Kyaw Tha Paw U, Chair
Graduate Council

Planning & Budget

November 19, 2015 4:00 PM

CPB discussed the 5-year review of the Program in International and Community Nutrition ORU. The PICN operates completed within the Department of Nutrition. CPB agrees that the work is valued and the senior faculty are extremely visible and highly respected. CPB members had the following concerns:

- Why an ORU designation is necessary given that the PIN operates within a single department.
- It appears that potentially participating faculty from outside the department cannot run grants through the PICN. If this is the case, the ORU designation would not seem to make sense.
- The ad hoc review does not make a compelling case for continuing the PICN as an ORU as it currently operates. Based on the ad hoc review it would seem like ORU status could end but PICN could continue, probably unchanged.

The ad hoc committee suggests some radical changes that do suggest good potential for growth, like moving the ORU out of the Department of Nutrition, and/or formally integrating it with other similar research groups on campus.

As a campus strategy, perhaps PICN would have more opportunity for growth if it were folded into these other efforts, giving it a broader collaboration base, giving it the needed administrative support, and moving it out of the Department of Nutrition. There does seem to be opportunities here for impact by the Office of Research in fostering collaboration in an area the campus wants to lead.

Research

November 23, 2015 2:58 PM

COR reviewed and discussed the 5-year review for the Program in International and Community Nutrition (PICN) ORU. The 5-year review of PICN states that it is favorable towards a strong program and provides unanimous approval from the ad hoc review committee for continuance.

However, many COR members agree that this report suggests that there is quite a lot of cause for concern and that the immediate future of the unit could be in trouble. The report is supported in a letter from CAES Dean Dillard. Of note are the “stellar international reputation” and the large number of doctoral students that have received support. Reviewers note that the program is poised to work well with the 2020 initiative and the new World Food Center. Some COR members agree that PICN should maintain its independence and not become more tightly allied with the World Food Center or other groups on campus. PICN needs to be able to continue to maintaining its stellar work unhindered.

The report addresses the concern that faculty numbers should be built up, specifically “What is now a premier program in global nutrition research could disappear in the near future without a faculty renewal plan.” The issue of better integration among units would also benefit from increased staffing. The review also suggests that a new director will be needed soon. There was also a sense from students that there are insufficient faculty and not enough student financial support. It was very concerning that there was temporary discontinuance of the graduate student admissions. In light of all of these concerns, it was moderately disappointing that Dr. Dillard’s response was only to suggest that renewed staffing might be achieved if the three requested FTEs in Nutrition are approved. It isn’t clear what will happen if these FTEs are not approved, as of course many requests for FTEs cannot be approved. The report states that support staff are inadequate for the budget as well.

Overall it will be important that Dr. Dillard and the PICN leadership watch carefully to make sure there is ongoing internal energy to keep this organization excellent. The review committee actually suggested that Department of Public Health Sciences might make a better home for this unit, although many COR members tend not to agree. This ORU plays a crucial role in building the overall vision/reputation of UC Davis and COR supports continuing to strengthen the program.