September 20, 2017

To: Jerris Hedges, Dean of JABSOM

From: Michael Bruno, Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Vice Chancellor for Research

Krystyna Aune, Dean of Graduate Education

Subject: JABSOM Graduate Program Review Response

Thank you for your September 5, 2017 response to the 2017 program review report. We thoroughly believe that these masters and doctoral programs in JABSOM are important to the university, the state, and the Pacific Rim. In the program review report, the review team noted several areas of concern across programs. These included enrollment, student services support, program assessment, graduate student funding, recruitment, curriculum matters, and the lack of a MD/PhD program.

In your response to the report, you summarize the program-wide issues and progress on the completion of the recommendations. In terms of low enrollment, the recommendation of the review team was to treat the MS and PhD programs as combined. Though the response indicates this is a Mānoa definition, this is actually a UH system matter. Nonetheless, the fact remains that several of the programs are relatively small and declining in enrollment and number of graduates, with the exception of Tropical Medicine. Steps should be systematically undertaken to address this by all programs.

In particular, a recommendation was made to explore a shared curriculum in biostatistics, bioinformatics, and ethics as a means to consolidate similar courses and related requirements for all graduate students. This strategy to provide more consistency with regard to content and delivery, as well as to potentially increase enrollment in these courses across programs, is admirable.

We are pleased with the plan for major modifications to the Biomedical Sciences MS program. A new track in Quantitative Health Sciences is being proposed to be offered parallel to the longstanding Clinical Research track. This new track is proposed to fill a critical need in the field as well as to potentially attract more students to pursue the MS degree. The clinical research track is also being revised to attract more graduate students. The Biomedical Sciences program remains the smallest across JABSOM graduate programs, so the viability of this as a stand-alone program remains to be seen and we are hopeful these proposed changes will have a positive impact.
effect. Whether the PhD in Biomedical Sciences is revised and resumed remains a critical issue to be addressed.

The reorganization of CMB and DRB requires further analysis and discussion with and among the programs. There was mention in the report of possible greater integration of all of the graduate programs. We understand discussion amongst the programs on this topic has been occurring throughout the past year. We encourage more open discussions on this topic and as they relate to sources of, and the nature of increased efficiency, shared services, and cost-savings or other reasons for a reorganization. These should be clearly outlined for the programs as conversations continue.

To add to the number of and diversity of the applicants and admits, more systematic recruitment efforts should be undertaken. The progress report does not offer details about the recruitment strategy. Strategic webpage design and content are important for graduate recruitment, as is use of social media and a communication strategy. Beyond the important recruitment efforts that could occur from within the undergraduate and particularly Honors’ program students, what is the targeted plan for mainland and international student recruitment? We concur with the review team’s recommendation to outline career options including on program webpages and recruitment materials (i.e., what alumni are doing with their graduate degrees). Promotional videos for each of the programs could also be developed.

There was a recommendation to consider an integration of student services across the graduate programs. The report included mixed levels of concern about not having someone to help students at the program level with student-related business and other administrative functions. We would encourage continued discussion of how student services could be integrated to better support students and the graduate programs. This possibility should be discussed as part of and separately from that of a potential reorganization.

The speaker series regarding career options described in the response to the program review report would seem to be useful for all of the JABSOM graduate programs, not just TM. Career options and preparation for a diverse array of work outside of traditional career paths is a valuable discussion for all graduate programs at Mānoa. The potential for more online courses with delivery in a hybrid format is also encouraging. This is an avenue of opportunity to extend the reach of these degree programs and graduate certificates to more potential students. We look forward to hearing more about potential plans with the TM GCERT as a starting point.

Finally, we applaud and encourage the efforts to secure outside funds to support graduate students. We hope that strategies to secure additional resources are used across programs. The issue of increased student support services was not explicitly addressed. Access to the library after hours? The shuttle service question continues to be mentioned by unhappy students. Is there any further conversation about or exploration about options? We look forward to continued collaborations in the effort to continually evolve and improve these important programs. The one-year report should describe the progress and outcomes of the program modifications, funding strategy, and recruitment efforts. That report will be due August 1, 2018.