Two Year Progress Report of Optometry & Vision Science

Introduction

The Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) and the University of Waterloo assessed the Doctor of Optometry (OD) program through consideration of a written self-study and site visit in November 2009. There are eight ACOE standards:

- Standard I. Mission, Goals and Objectives
- Standard II. Curriculum
- Standard III. Research and Scholarly Activity
- Standard IV. Governance, Regional Accreditation, Administration and Finances
- Standard V. Faculty
- Standard VI. Students
- Standard VII. Facilities, Equipment and Resources
- Standard VIII. Clinic Management and Patient Care Policies

From that review, the program maintained its “accredited” status with the next full evaluation and site visit scheduled to occur in November 2017. Annual ACOE reports are submitted each May. ACOE evaluation reports include both “recommendations”—items that have the potential to jeopardize accreditation if corrective action is not taken—and “suggestions”—items that would enhance the potential for excellence in the program. The evaluation report included no recommendations and nine suggestions. The latter items and the School’s response to them will be addressed in this two year progress report in one of the next three sections.

Completed activity regarding evaluation report suggestions:

The program should consider increasing its use of outcome measures for assessment and program improvement

- In addition to continuing to monitor graduation rates and optometric licensure examination success rates of Waterloo Doctor of Optometry students, the School developed an on-line exit survey for graduating Optometry students
- The class of 2011 was the first to be surveyed (33 of 90 students participated);
- these results were shared with School administrators and the Curriculum Heads of Biomedical Sciences, Vision Sciences and Clinical Sciences
- The class of 2012 are currently being surveyed

The program should continue to investigate possible implementation of a promotional system that would recognize clinical faculty, i.e., clinical lecturers, for exemplary performance and program contributions

- After three years of work within the Schools of Optometry and Pharmacy, the Faculty Relations Committee, and a Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo (FAUW)
Task Force that included representation from Optometry and Pharmacy, a process was brought forward for approval to the University Senate

- UW Policies 76 (Faculty Appointments) and 77 (Tenure and Promotion of Faculty Members) were revised (April 2011) to create the clinical professoriate ranks, and describe the tenure and promotion considerations for clinical assistant professors, clinical associate professors and clinical professors
- UW Senate approved (June 2011) a process for clinical lecturers with continuing appointments to apply for the rank within the clinical professoriate without risk of losing their current Waterloo faculty position
- Clinical lecturers recently hired who have not yet had the chance to earn a continuing appointment were subsequently afforded the same opportunity, once they obtain a continuing appointment
- Of the 12 full-time clinical lecturers in Optometry & Vision Science: Seven are currently under review in the transitional tenure and promotion process,
  - Two will apply at a future date, and
  - Three have chosen not to challenge the transitional tenure and promotion process

The program should consider increasing the exchange between faculty and administration regarding clear delineation of [individual] short-term goals

- Consistent with evolving University practice regarding faculty performance evaluation, the following changes have been implemented within the School:
  - School administrators, in consultation with several School faculty members, added a “Personal Statement” section to the annual activity report. In this section, faculty members can include contextual information relevant to their performance during the evaluation year and plans for the future
  - Faculty members voted to increase the membership of the Faculty Performance Evaluation Committee (FPEC) in Optometry & Vision Science to include two members-at-large (MAL). The FPEC is advisory to the School Director and includes the following four faculty members:
    - Associate Director, Academics and Research
    - Associate Director, Clinical Programs
    - Two elected School MAL with tenure or continuing appointments (one clinical stream and one non clinical stream
    - The annual faculty performance evaluation comments for faculty members are now written by the School Director, in consultation with all members of the FPEC (formally, not all committee members contributed to the Director’s comments); these comments include recommendations for future activity

The program should continue with its plans for clinic renovation

- Draft architectural plans have been commissioned to assist fund-raising and further planning efforts
Senior School administrators and the School’s Associate Director of Development and Alumni Affairs attend professional national and association meetings (normally, three per year) and meet individually with potential and realized alumni and corporate partners. To-date, fund-raising efforts have raised $1.1 million toward the $8 million dollar project.

The program should consider collecting more comprehensive materials relating to credentials of its clinical faculty

- The newly appointed Interim Associate Director, Clinical Programs and Interim Clinic Director (February 2012) are re-evaluating the current “credentialing” system for regular and adjunct faculty members with activity in our teaching clinics.
- Advice from other ACOE-accredited Schools and Colleges of Optometry has been sought regarding their credentialing processes.

The program should continue the planned transition into Electronic Health Records
An electronic medical record (EMR) was developed by P&P Data Systems, in consultation with clinic administrators, the clinic committee and the School’s informatics specialist

- The test EMR was implemented at the Kitchener Health Sciences Campus Optometry Clinic in 2010.
- Evaluation of the limited EMR implementation revealed the interface was not user friendly to students and supervising optometrists; this problem was exacerbated by the limited experience users obtained with the software.
- Requests for improvements have not been addressed by the vendor in a timely fashion.
- Use of the EMR at the Kitchener site was suspended for the Winter 2012 term until the enhanced version of the EMR has been provided by the vendor and tested by our informatics specialist (the updated version is expected during the Spring 2012 term).
- The vendor has been told that without timely enhancements, the School will begin work with a new vendor.

Planned activity regarding evaluation report suggestions:

The program should consider including faculty activities related to research and service in its goals and objectives

- To date, the School’s Curriculum Heads of Biomedical Sciences, Vision Sciences and Clinical Sciences, in consultation with faculty members, have developed educational objectives for the Doctor of Optometry program that address seven abilities deemed necessary in effective optometrists:
  - Optometric proficiency
  - Scholarship and education
  - Interpersonal skill and communication
  - Collaboration
• Health advocacy
• Management
• Professionalism

• A next step will include broadening the program’s goals and objectives to include relevant School activities that occur in addition to and in support of educational activities

The program could benefit from additional patient care experiences for students prior to the fourth year

• Doctor of Optometry students gain clinical experience in third (approximately 200 hours) and fourth year (approximately 1,200 hours)
• The current curriculum renewal process includes the goal of introducing clinical experience earlier in the program; the current plans support this goal being met

The program should consider publishing more extensive outcome measures of performance

• The School’s web-site includes links to the optometric licensure organizations for Canada (Canadian Examiners in Optometry [CEO]) and the United States (National Board of Examiners in Optometry [NBOE]) where aggregate institutional data are published
• The School’s Administrative Council is currently considering whether to incorporate the following additions to the School’s web-site:
  ▪ Aggregate Waterloo success rates for the two national licensure examinations taken by Doctor of Optometry graduates (i.e., CEO and NBEO)
  ▪ Executive summary of exit survey of graduating Optometry students

Suggestions no longer considered appropriate:

• All ACOE suggestions were appropriate and have or will be addressed

New ideas or initiatives not included in the 2009 report:

Curriculum Renewal

• Three Curriculum Heads of Biomedical Sciences, Vision Sciences and Clinical Sciences were appointed in 2010 and are leading a significant curriculum renewal of the Doctor of Optometry program that includes goals to introduce clinical experience earlier, eliminate redundant or non-contemporary curriculum, and improve sequencing
• A database of current course content has been completed
• Program educational objectives have been developed
• Progress in the past year has been slowed by changes in curriculum head positions

Optometrist Scope of Practice

• Since April 2011, Ontario optometrists, who have completed approved training, may manage eye disease with certain therapeutic pharmaceutical agents (TPA). This change has had several implications:
- Optometrists in the teaching clinic must demonstrate regulator-specified proof of TPA training to the clinic administration in order to prescribe TPAs
- Enhanced on-call service policies have been developed to manage the increased scope of practice
- Increased access to after-hours care requires development (this issue is being addressed by two pilot projects during the Spring 2012 term in which after-hours patient calls are being triaged by an optometrist and Saturday hours at the Kitchener clinic have been introduced)

School Orientation Week

In past years, first-year Optometry students participated in orientation activities, largely administered by second-year Optometry students; there was recognition by faculty member and students that School administered events were needed to address:
- certain gaps in the student-administered activities for first-year Optometry students
- advanced orientation events for second- and third-year Optometry students

The School, led by its Undergraduate Studies Committee, developed and administered the inaugural Waterloo OD Orientation Week (September 6 to 9, 2011) for years one through three; activities included:
- Program and educational expectations for each year
- Identification photos and locker assignments for first-year students
- School tours and introduction to course instructors for first-year students
- Experience in the pre-clinic and on-site teaching clinic (as patients or examiners, depending on student year)
- Library and EMR tutorials
- Student, faculty and staff social events (e.g., lunches, wine and cheese)
- Orientation to School research activity
- Student-led orientation social events for first-year students

The School Orientation Week will occur again in September 2012 with enhancements like an opportunity to complete standard first aid and CPR training (a milestone in the Doctor of Optometry program)

Other relevant issues:

Regular Faculty Census
Faculty Total (current): 30
- Professors: 11
- Associate Professors: 4
- Assistant Professors: 1
- Clinical Associate Professors: 1
- Clinical Lecturers: 14 (1 @ 0.6 FTE; 1 @ 0.5 FTE)
Faculty Changes Since 2009 Report

- Departures (e.g., retirement, resignation, tenure denial):
  - 2 professors
  - 1 assistant professor
  - 1 clinical lecturer (0.6 FTE)

- Hires:
  - 1 clinical associate professor
  - 3 clinical lecturers (1 @ 0.6 FTE)

School Name

In recent years, there had been discussion of how to better represent the varied activities within the School with its name. An indication of graduate program and research activity had not been described by the original School’s name – School of Optometry. Initially, the School's graduate program was very small (e.g., in the 1980s, the graduate student complement typically involved less than six students at one time). Since then, the graduate program has grown substantially. Currently, there are over 50 optometry graduate students in MSc or PhD programs.

Before a faculty vote was taken, discussions were held at Optometry faculty meetings and input from staff and students (both undergraduate and graduate) were considered. In June 2011, Optometry faculty members supported changing the School’s name to “School of Optometry and Vision Science”. The name change was subsequently approved in the Fall at Science Faculty Council and University Senate. The School name change became official when it was reported at Waterloo’s February 2012 Board of Governor’s meeting.

Competing Resource Demands

There were significant administrative changes at the School of Optometry & Vision Science in 2011 that resulted in an interim School and clinic administration. A University-appointed review of School operations was commissioned to help identify key issues and priorities as well as desired skills for the next Director; these perspectives were collected from the School’s faculty, staff and students. The internal/external University search for a School Director began in July 2011. Teaching, scholarship and service activities continue at the School, although some time has been needed to help facilitate numerous administrative transitions.

The School’s International Optometric Bridging Program (IOBP) offers bridging education to internationally trained optometrists who seek to challenge national licensure examinations and practice Optometry in Canada. IOBP began in 2004 and has attracted increasing scrutiny from optometric regulators and associations in Canada as concerns about supply and demand of optometrists in urban centres and quality of IOBP training have increased. Addressing these concerns and facilitating a University review of IOBP have consumed significant faculty and staff time at the School, Faculty and University levels.