Hi Jennifer,

The core MDTP faculty (e.g., departments of Bacteriology and Medical Microbiology & Immunology) met yesterday in their annual meeting and unanimously approved the following motion:

"that the Medical Microbiology & Immunology MS degree, (to be renamed) 'Microbiology and Immunology', serve as the terminal MS degree for MDTP students leaving the Ph.D. program prior to completion, and that the MDTP MS program be administered by the MDTP"

This motion is contingent on formal approval by the MMI faculty at their regular faculty meeting tomorrow, but given the enthusiasm for the motion displayed by all MMI faculty in attendance, we don't anticipate any problem. So the next steps are removing the MMI MS program from suspension and then subsequently renaming that program during the coming year; those steps will be initiated by MMI. Thus, students in the MDTP who do not complete the program with a Ph.D. degree will have the opportunity to be awarded a terminal MS degree, regardless of whether their mentor is a member of a core department or a trainer.

For your information and records, I've attached a copy of our previous formal response to the ten year review committee; this response was submitted earlier this year. The only recommendation not accepted at that time was the request for a formal default MS degree for students leaving the Ph.D. program. As noted above, we have now corrected that perceived deficiency. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks for your help, and for the extended deadline,

John
MDTP FORMAL RESPONSE TO THE TEN YEAR REVIEW COMMITTEE’S RECOMMENDATIONS:

We would like to thank the Review Committee for their efforts in the comprehensive review of the Microbiology Doctoral Training Program and its achievements. We especially appreciate the enthusiastic and supportive overview of our program, below, and the recommendation that the program continue on to the next ten year review.

“By all measures, MDTP is one of the University’s outstanding graduate programs. It enjoys a strong reputation, ranking in the top ten of Microbiology graduate programs in the U.S. Participating faculty have excellent records of scholarship and extramural support. MDTP recruits highly qualified students and has a record of recruiting under-represented minority students that is exemplary and stronger than most graduate programs on campus. The program is well-organized, and core department faculty, outside trainers, and students have significant roles in making decisions. Students and faculty expressed a high level of satisfaction with the program.”

Despite the accolades above, we have taken to heart the Committee’s recommendations for improvement to the Program. Our subsequent actions and planned changes are summarized here.

• **Recommendation**: That the two core department faculties meet jointly rather than independently to discuss significant changes in program policy

• **Response**: This has already been instituted, with a joint faculty meeting held most recently on September 26, 2013. Several issues were discussed, agreed to and voted on (all without any dissenting votes) during this meeting. The core departments plan on future annual joint meetings, or more frequently if significant program issues arise.

• **Recommendation**: That a required orientation session for new faculty trainers be held at the beginning of each academic year.

• **Response**: This has now been instituted; new faculty trainers now are required to attend the student orientation sessions in order to more fully grasp the infrastructure and requirements of the program.

• **Recommendation**: That the advising committee for first year graduate students be provided with better training regarding program guidelines, that they convey the breadth of available courses, and describe more clearly how deficiencies in entrance requirements can be resolved.

• **Response**: This is being implemented so that the advisors convey consistent and program-appropriate information to incoming students.

• **Recommendation**: Consideration of alternative sets of admission prerequisites to encourage students with non-traditional backgrounds (bioinformatics, computer science) to apply.

• **Response**: This was one of the issues discussed in the September joint core faculty meeting. It was generally agreed that some accommodation be made and this will be considered by the
MDTP Curriculum Committee in concert with the Admissions Committee so that recommendations can be made for a future discussion by the joint faculty.

- **Recommendation:** A formal review of the curriculum with consideration of a mechanism for outside trainers to nominate courses they feel are critical for training students for inclusion in the program’s course requirements.

- **Response:** The program already includes courses taught in trainer departments and nominated by trainers for inclusion. The MDTP will continue to solicit ideas for new courses that may serve as an appropriate component of the MDTP curriculum. The core courses in MDTP either come from Bacteriology or Medical Microbiology & Immunology, but they may be cross listed with other departments if a trainer participates in teaching the course.

- **Recommendation:** Re-evaluation of the rule requiring that two thesis committee members, other than the adviser, be members of the two core departments, possibly by expanding the list of faculty who would fulfill this requirement to include some outside trainers who have demonstrated commitment to MDTP and experience in training multiple MDTP students.

- **Response:** The joint faculty discussed this idea, but they firmly believe that core departmental control of its program and student committees is an integral part of the rigor and success of the MDTP. The rules were formally modified, however, to be more accommodating and alleviate the necessity for three core faculty being present on student committees in certain cases: a motion was introduced that a thesis committee should have a minimum of 2 members from the core departments, one of which may be the advisor. The motion passed with no dissenting votes.

- **Recommendation:** A concern identified by the committee is the lack of a path to an M.S. degree for students who fail the preliminary examination or otherwise need to leave the program. Students in this situation generally must seek to obtain a masters degree from the home department of their adviser, which may have rules inconsistent with the training provided by MDTP. Therefore, we urge the Steering Committee to establish appropriate guidelines for a terminal M.S. degree and petition the Graduate School for permission to award such a degree.

- **Response:** This was discussed in the joint core faculty meeting. However, the joint core faculty consensus was that existing departmental M.S. programs, either within core departments or within trainer departments, should assume this role under the direction or at the request of the faculty mentors involved. The MDTP does not wish to establish an M.S. track.

- **Recommendation:** A more rigorous mechanism for insuring that student committees meet annually would be desirable. As noted, the program coordinator reminds students and advisers of the requirement when the meetings are overdue. This somewhat gentle reminder generally achieves the desired effect, but the Steering Committee may wish to consider the possibility of imposing sanctions, such as a registration hold, or more direct intervention by the Program Chair with the adviser.

- **Response:** This has been instituted such that the Program Coordinator will implement more rigorous oversight, with sanctions such as registration hold or admonishment from the Program Director being implemented at the appropriate time.
• **Recommendation:** The rationale and mechanisms for deciding which courses receive teaching assistants via the MDTP teaching practicum is not well understood by all program faculty. Better communication with faculty trainers on this issue would be appropriate, particularly as the availability of teaching assistants has been reduced by changes in the professional development program.

• **Response:** Teaching practicum assignments are made by the core faculty chairs in consultation with the Program Coordinator and Program Director. The joint faculty did not wish to change this arrangement since such assignments are made on the basis of practical needs of the core departments and of the students involved.

In summary, the MDTP joint core faculty and Steering Committee leadership have discussed all the concerns of the Review Committee and have made changes in most instances that functionally address those concerns. We plan on reviewing, on a regular basis, all components of our graduate program so that we maintain a first rate and top ranked graduate program in the field of Microbiology.

Respectfully submitted,

Professor John M. Mansfield  
Director, MDTP

Professor Richard Gourse  
Chair, Department of Bacteriology

Professor Rod Welch  
Chair, Medical Microbiology and Immunology
July 7, 2014

Professor John Mansfield  
Director, Microbiology Doctoral Training Program  
4470 Microbial Sciences Building  
1550 Linden Drive  
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Professor Mansfield:

As you know, an important part of the university’s ongoing review process is the vetting of graduate programs by the Graduate Faculty Executive Committee (GFEC) of the Graduate School. When the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the School of Medicine and Public Health assembled a review committee to conduct a decadal assessment of the Microbiology Doctoral Training Program (MDTP), a member of the GFEC was asked to join the committee and was given the responsibility of attending to graduate training issues of particular interest to the Graduate School. That individual was Kenneth Systema who led a discussion of the review at the GFEC meeting on May 2, 2014. In this letter, I summarize the committee’s response.

The GFEC response to the report was generally favorable, recognizing the outstanding reputation of the MDTP as reflected in various national rankings. The breadth of the faculty and students involved in this program is a strength. The MDTP recruits highly qualified students who are very satisfied with their experiences and training. In addition, the MDTP has had exemplary success in recruiting underrepresented minority students. Furthermore, the program is well-organized, and core department faculty, outside trainers, and students have significant roles in making decisions.

At the same time, the GFEC membership did express some concerns. Given that time has elapsed since the self-study and review, we realize that the program may have already begun to address some of the concerns identified in the review; however, the GFEC raised the following substantive concern and would like to receive an update from you on progress and future plans.

The review committee expressed a serious concern with “…the lack of a path to an M.S. degree for students who fail the preliminary examination or otherwise need to leave the program. Students in this situation generally must seek to obtain a master’s degree from the home department of their adviser, which may have rules inconsistent with the training provided by MDTP.” The GFEC members also had serious concerns about the lack of a well-defined path to a terminal M.S. degree, and noted that this may be the only doctoral degree on campus with this particular issue. Thus, the GFEC requests that this issue be resolved. Recognizing that the current master’s degree set-up is problematic, three options were discussed at GFEC (other viable solutions might also be identified by the program). Here are the options discussed at the GFEC meeting:

- Submit a governance request to rename the Master of Science in Medical Microbiology and Immunology (MMI) to “Microbiology”, and provide to those students stepping out of the Microbiology Ph.D. a clear path to achieving an equivalent master’s degree credential.
- Submit a governance request to rename the Bacteriology M.S. program “Microbiology”, and to

Graduate School  
Bascom Hall  University of Wisconsin–Madison  500 Lincoln Drive  Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1380

Dean’s Office  Graduate Admissions & Academic Services, Diversity Resources  Accounting  Human Resources  Professional Development & Engagement
608/262-1044  608/262-2433, Fax: 608/265-9505  608/262-5835  608/262-5802  608/262-1044, Fax: 608/262-5134  608/262-5134
discontinue the Medical Microbiology and Immunology M.S. program, which is currently in a state of suspended admissions and low enrollment and approaching the end of its deadline to decide whether to discontinue or revise itself.

- Provide infrastructure so that the Bacteriology M.S. and the MMI M.S. are able to accommodate those students with either a coursework or thesis degree who are leaving the MDTP program after completion of the required coursework (regardless of the home of the trainer).
- Create a new Microbiology M.S. degree (not favored by GFEC, given the existing M.S. degrees in Bacteriology and MMI).

The review additionally revealed that the program would likely benefit from joint departmental meetings, orientation for new faculty trainers, a program-level expectation that students have annual advising meetings, and a formal review of MDTP courses and the MDTP curriculum as a whole.

As the GFEC’s concerns have impacts for partnering units and reflect those articulated by the review committee, it recommends that a response to the above concerns be coordinated in consultation with colleagues in the Department of Medical Microbiology & Immunology and the Department of Bacteriology as well as the appropriate associate deans in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the School of Medicine and Public Health, and the Graduate School. Additionally, for further details on the governance processes listed above, you may consult with the Director of Academic Planning and Institutional Research in the Provost’s Office as well as the Assistant Dean of Academic Planning and Assessment in the Graduate School. We request that you report back to the GFEC in writing no later than the December 2014 GFEC meeting regarding your efforts to address the above recommendations.

In closing, I want to emphasize the extremely positive tone of the GFEC discussion in the review of MDTP and the committee’s very high regard of your graduate program. Over the past decade, you and your faculty have continued to work together to sustain the quality of graduate education and the competitiveness of your graduate students on the job market. We greatly appreciate your commitment to graduate education and scholarship. Congratulations on your efforts to maintain a first-rate graduate program.

Sincerely yours,

Martin Cadwallader
Vice Chancellor for Research
and Dean of the Graduate School

xc: Kathryn VandenBosch, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
Richard Straub, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
Robert Golden, School of Medicine and Public Health
Richard Moss, School of Medicine and Public Health
Richard Gourse, Chair, Department of Bacteriology
Rod Welch, Chair, Medical Microbiology and Immunology
Sarah Pfatteicher, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
Laura Toll, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences
Tracy Cabot, School of Medicine and Public Health
Donna Paulnock, Graduate School
Steve Ackerman, Graduate School
Jocelyn Milner, Provost’s Office
Kelly Haslam, Graduate School