



February 23, 2024

INTERIM DEAN'S RESPONSE

External Review | Department of Medicine

On behalf of the Temerty Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, I would first like to thank the reviewers, Dr. Anita Palepu and Dr. Seth Landefeld, for a fulsome and rigorous review of the Department of Medicine (DoM) in October 2023. On behalf of Temerty Medicine, I would also like to thank Dr. Gillian Hawker, Chair of DoM, the administrative staff, and all those who contributed to the preparation of the informative and well-written self-study report. I also wish to thank the numerous staff, trainees, and faculty members who met with the external reviewers and provided invaluable input.

I am grateful to the reviewers for recognizing that DoM is an *“exceptional academic department...comparable to top tier universities.”* They noted that the DoM is a large, fully-diversified department with internationally prominent faculty and programs in research, training, and patient care, and an organizational structure that works remarkably well to weave together faculty in 20 divisions across 6 hospital-based departments, with efficient use of quite limited resources for the DoM itself. The reviewers commented on Dr. Hawker’s visionary leadership in setting the Department’s North Star on mutual respect, compassion, integrity, inclusion, and wellbeing, while committing her effort and Department resources to the development of outstanding faculty. *“The current faculty have worked tirelessly for the academic mission, which is particularly powerful given that such output occurred during a devastating pandemic and societal upheaval.”*

After considering Dr. Hawker’s response of the Chair and consultation with her, I comment below on the specific concerns for the DoM’s future raised by the reviewers, together with their recommendations. The concerns include: financial and space constraints faced by the DoM and the potential impacts of these on clinician scientist faculty and trainees; the strain on clinician teachers as a result of the perfect storm of pandemic, transition to competency by design, and ongoing staffing shortages within clinical sites; the need to ensure effective management of the planned expansion to distributed medical education sites; and, challenges in fully harnessing the advantages of the TAHSN research network. I will also address the perception among some DoM members – of which both Dr. Hawker and the reviewers made specific mention – that the DoM is insufficiently supported by Temerty Medicine.

Finances and Space

With regard to the DoM’s financial and space constraints, and the perception that the DoM is insufficiently supported financially by Temerty Medicine, the Dean’s Office is committed to a review of the budget process across the Faculty and its academic units and programs, with a focus on increased transparency, establishment of criteria and priorities for funding, enhanced accountability, and the standardization of financial processes across departments, programs, and units. It will be essential to ensure that DoM faculty and leaders have access to accurate and timely financial information to ensure that they are aware of the significant financial and space resources currently in place. Temerty’s Finance Committee, which includes members from several departments (including DoM), will support the above initiatives; it is expected to provide reassuring information about the level and nature of support provided to the Department by Temerty Medicine.

A review of current space allocation and needs assessment for all departments and programs will also be undertaken and a newly constituted Temerty Space Planning Committee, with an appropriate mandate and membership, will be constituted in the next months. This will ensure transparency and consistency in determining current and future space needs and allocation.

Research

I share the reviewers and Dr. Hawker’s concerns about the challenges faced by the Department’s Clinician Scientists, particularly those who are early and mid-career, and will work with Office of the Vice Dean, Research &

Health Science Education to develop more fulsome internal grant review processes for all departments with the expectation that this will better support improved funding outcomes. I will continue to work with the University's Vice President, Research & Innovation, our TAHSN colleagues, and the network's research institutes, to build upon the approaches to inter-institutional collaboration that were initiated and refined during the pandemic. Specifically for Clinician Scientist trainees, there are opportunities to work synergistically with Dr. Nicola Jones, Director of Temerty's Integrated Physician Scientist Training Program, to identify sources of funding and to share innovative education and mentorship opportunities.

Clinician Teachers

With regard to support for Clinician Teachers, a Task Force to be led by Dr. Lynn Wilson, Vice Dean, Clinical & Faculty Affairs, and Dr. Alison Freeland, Vice President of Education & Academic Affairs at Trillium Health Partners and Associate Dean, Mississauga Campus, is being struck to identify increased supports for our Faculty's clinician teachers across all our campuses, including new faculty joining our distributed medical education sites, and to make recommendations on implementing these. Foci for the Task Force will include technological supports and centralization of resources to reduce workload for faculty and departments related to appointments and promotions processes; consultation with the chair of the Temerty Decanal Promotions Committee, Dr. Upton Allen, and the University's Vice Provost, Faculty & Academic Life regarding consolidating and operationalizing ongoing work by the Decanal Promotions Committee and its chair to measure impact beyond bibliometric measures; and, continued support for our faculty and departments through accessible and competency-based faculty development and continuing professional development resources, as well as targeted leadership programs, offered through our education offices and educationally-focused EDUs.

The Value Proposition

With regard to the important question raised by both the reviewers and Dr. Hawker as to how we can better ensure that our faculty members have a positive view of the value proposition of an academic appointment at Temerty Medicine, I recognize that this to some extent arises from the financial and personal strains that physicians – and other health care professionals – across Ontario and the rest of Canada have faced in the past five years. Additionally, the emergence of new schools of medicine in the Greater Toronto Area will contribute to a more competitive “marketplace” for faculty and learners. Given the very real financial constraints that universities and hospitals are facing, it is only through collaboration with our departments and TAHSN partners that we can ensure robust investment and support for our faculty to access funding from scientific agencies, philanthropy, and commercialization opportunities and continue to offer the premier biomedical research environment in Canada. Similarly, it is our shared investment in EDUs such as the Temerty Centre for AI Research & Education in Medicine (T-CAIREM), the Wilson Centre, the Centre for Faculty Development, and the Centre for Advancing Collaborative Healthcare & Education that we can offer our researchers, clinical teachers, and learners academic environments grounded in cutting-edge research and practice and opportunities for lifelong learning and career supports. Finally, we must continue to demonstrate to government and the public, as we seek their ongoing investment, the impact of Temerty Medicine and its faculty, staff, and learners through effective education, communications, and advocacy.

Temerty Medicine greatly appreciates the insightful and comprehensive report provided by the reviewers, which has helped to shape the search process for the next Chair presently underway. It serves as a valuable guide for future strategic directions and program enhancements in DoM. I agree with the reviewers' finding that the Department of Medicine is outstanding in its achievements and has benefited immensely from Dr. Hawker's leadership during her tenure as Chair. I congratulate Dr. Hawker on her excellent longstanding and visionary guidance and the members of the Department for further advancing *“UofT DoM as a global leader in research, education and training.”*

Sincerely,

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