



MEMORANDUM

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To: Karsten Liber, Director, Toxicology Centre

From: Jim Basinger

Date: January 2, 2014

Re: External Review, Toxicology Centre

Thank you for your response on behalf of the Toxicology Centre to the report of the External Review of the centre. The expert panel of external reviewers conducted their site visit on November 29-30, 2012, and submitted their final report on December 20, 2012. I am pleased to now have your response of November 13, 2013, indicating that you embrace the findings and recommendations articulated within the report.

The reviewers have acknowledged the outstanding research and training programs carried out within the Toxicology Centre, recognizing the centre as regionally, even nationally “unique and highly effective”, with an international reach. The high level of collegiality, the quality of the infrastructure, the impact of the scientific output, the sense of community that exists among the student body, all speak to a vibrant intellectual environment. The challenges that the Toxicology Centre will face in maintaining a significant infrastructure were identified as a future concern, and you have emphasized this concern in your response.

There is clear alignment with the priorities of the UofS, as the reviewers have pointed out. In addition, the recent establishment of the Global Institute for Water Security (GIWS), under the leadership of Canada Excellence Research Chair Dr. Howard Wheeler, presents an opportunity for expansion of collaborative programming to the benefit of the centre. Both the Toxicology Centre and GIWS contribute directly to the profile of the UofS signature areas of *One Health: Solutions at the Animal-Human-Environment Interface* and *Water Security: Stewardship of the World's Freshwater Resources*.

I am pleased to see that you are already taking action on some of the reviewers' recommendations. The dedication and quality of both undergraduate and graduate students were recognized. Improvements to the undergraduate program could include practical experience and a greater interaction with the outstanding faculty associated within the centre, and I know that you are taking this to heart. I also see that you are creating a new student space within the centre. While an increase in the size of both the undergraduate and graduate program is desirable, I can appreciate the concern that you not exceed the capacity of the facilities and faculty to deliver a superlative student experience. Both you and the reviewers cautiously refer to a desire to expand the scope of the research and training programs, particularly in the area of biomedical toxicology. I know that you have probed into this already, and consider this an area of priority and opportunity.

The reviewers have recognized leadership as a key strength of the Toxicology Centre – particularly you in your role as Director. They correctly identify succession planning as a necessity, although we all hope that you and your colleagues will continue to serve the centre for many years to come. The best time to plan for succession of leadership is when the leadership is strong, and that time is the present.

As the reviewers and you acknowledge, the role of the Advisory Board has become unclear in recent years. I know that you are planning on reengaging with the Advisory Board. In your response you also suggest that, in addition, there may be need for a new governance body, which you call a “Stakeholder Engagement Committee”. In looking at your thoughts for the role of this committee, I wonder if a new and invigorated Advisory Board would better serve the Toxicology Centre in this function.

The External Review of the Toxicology Centre has reaffirmed the relevance and importance of the centre to the university, and to Canada. I extend my thanks to you and to your colleagues for contributions to the review process, and for your commitment to the success of the centre.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jim Basinger", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jim Basinger