MEMORANDUM

November 30, 2012

TO: Rebecca Warner
   Senior Vice Provost, Academic Affairs

FROM: James R. Coakley
   Chair, Graduate Council

SUBJECT: Graduate Council Recommendations for the Physics Graduate Program Review

The Graduate Council accepts the Graduate Program Review of the Department of Physics. The Review Committee was reluctant to make an overall program recommendation, so the Council is adding the following recommendations to the Graduate Program Review.

Overall Recommendation: Significantly restructure.

Related to Recommendation A (hiring plan): The Review Committee noted that there appear to be two distinct areas of emphasis – Physics research and Education research. They suggest that the Physics department should obtain funding profiles in their primary areas of research (condensed matter physics, optics and computation physics), as well as the availability of federal funding for the education of physics majors dedicated to secondary school teaching, and use these projections of research funding to inform decisions regarding hiring of new faculty and admission of graduate students. The development of these projections is also related to recommendation D (find a method to ensure full summer support for students).

The Graduate Council expressed concern that students who write an education-oriented thesis may not have adequate oversight of the educational perspective. The Council recommends that Physics partner with the Science and Math Education (SME) program within the College of Education to consider joint appointments of faculty and add education pedagogy to the Physics degree program. They Physics department should consider requiring that all students who write an education-oriented thesis have a College of Education faculty member on their committee.

Furthermore, if there continues to be an education focus within the Physics degree programs, the pedagogy needs to include instruction in development and delivery of on-line courses.

Related to Recommendations B (create an informative and inspiring official mission statement) and I (consider seriously an open search for the next chair): The Council recommends creation of a vision and mission for the Physics department, and then restructuring the graduate programs within the department to align with this vision and mission. This should include developing a timeline for a change of leadership within the department, and should also inform the hiring of any new faculty into the department. As part of this restructuring, the Council agrees with Recommendation C to discontinue offering of the Professional Science Masters (PSM) degree.
Related to Recommendation M (develop a vigorous but sustainable recruiting plan), the Council agrees with the need to develop a recruiting plan consistent with the recommendation of the Review Committee on page two of the report.

“Some components of this plan might include: forming a standing recruiting committee with chair serving for several consecutive years; seeking resources and assistance from the graduate school and international office; developing pipelines domestically and internationally; sending research-active and new faculty on recruiting seminars or interview trips; sending top grad students to revisit their alma maters. The program should formulate a plan for assessing which of these (or other) choices are the most effective.”

In addition, the Council recommends that the department consult with INTO OSU to determine the potential for develop a Graduate Pathway to recruit international students.

The Council agrees with the remaining recommendations of the review without further elaboration.