

# האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

THE ROBERT H. SMITH FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE,  
FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

הפקולטה לחקלאות, מזון וסביבה  
ע"ש רוברט ה. סמית

THE DEAN'S OFFICE

לשכת הדיקן



## Institutes:

Biochemistry,  
Food Science  
and Nutrition

Robert H. Smith  
Institute of Plant  
Sciences and  
Genetics in  
Agriculture

## Departments:

Agricultural  
Economics  
and Management

Animal Sciences

Entomology

Plant Pathology  
and Microbiology

Soil and  
Water Sciences

## Schools:

Nutritional  
Sciences

The Koret School  
of Veterinary  
Medicine

## To the attention of The Council for Higher Education

Subcommittee for Evaluation of Study Programs in Nutritional Sciences

**Re:** Reports of the committee for the evaluation of nutritional Sciences programs: a) Evaluation of nutritional sciences program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, b) Evaluation of nutritional sciences study program in Israel.

To all concerned,

This document responds and makes comments to the two aforementioned reports. It reflects the opinion of the "Parent Unit", namely that of the Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment. The response of the "Department", namely that of the Institute of Biochemistry Food Sciences and Nutrition appears under separate cover.

We would like to thank the committee for a most thorough analysis of the status of the study programs in nutritional sciences, and sincerely hope that the Council for Higher Education will on the most part, implement the conclusions and recommendations of this committee. This is a unique opportunity to provide the means to further establish and promote the science of nutrition and we hope this decision will be taken in favor.

### A. Evaluation of nutritional sciences program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Most comments and recommendations in this report addressed issues of curriculum structure and study emphases. These are all addressed in detail in the response document composed by the unit. Following are several comments to comments:

- Reorganization of the B.Sc. program. We agree that the B.Sc. program should remain unified, however, every effort should be made to increase the number of good courses in clinical nutrition, and more importantly, to establish specialization tracks in sports nutrition (under development) and nutrition in public health. The Hebrew University has the best Schools for Public Health

and Nutrition in Israel, and an initiative to combine the prowess of these two schools is long overdue. This initiative must be undertaken and led by the units, with full support by HUJI and CHE.

- Internship. This, indeed, is a most problematic issue and will be discussed later.
- Faculty. We agree and recommend this to be a primary objective for both CHE and HUJI management. This has special importance due to the next item.
- Organizational Structure. Indeed, The Faculty is focused on the priorities of the entire Faculty. In addition to the Institute of Biochemistry Food Sciences and Nutrition (of which the School of Nutrition is an integral part) there are three other institutes in the Faculty with faculty priorities of their own. Given a reasonable position allotment by the CHE and HUJI management, we could prioritize the School of Nutrition, however with entire annual Faculty new positions ranging between 0 and 2 (!), such prioritization is impractical and the request for a commitment made by the School Management is impossible. This important conclusion of the committee (and request for commitment by the School) is a unique opportunity for both the HUJI and CHE to undertake a commitment to reinforce the organizational structure of the School of Nutrition. This reinforcement is also a responsibility to the enrolling students: the School of Nutrition draws the largest number and the best quality of enrolled students to the Smith Faculty. Furthermore, the level of these students is considerably higher than that of students accepted to other schools of nutrition in Israel. We should endeavor to continue to provide these talented students with the best education in nutrition. The School of Nutrition, within the context of the Institute of Biochemistry, Food Sciences and Nutrition, has excellent reputation and has no real difficulty in attracting excellent candidates to fulfill academic positions (Niv, Braslavski and Troen, to mention some recently recruited faculty). Also, they have no problem recruiting professional teachers of high quality. Hence, the excellence of the School and its Scientists provide outstanding magnets for excellence, providing an administrative decision is taken by HUJI management and CHE to accept this important recommendation.

One other comment:

- ***“The committee’s impression is that there is a shortage of qualified PhD level trained individuals in Israel to adequately staff the faculty of the three institutions currently offering BSc, MSc and PhD degrees”***: We absolutely agree with this. This should serve to provide an additional argument against opening of further Schools of nutrition in Israel. Also, it should be noted, and apparently the committee was unaware of this, that research programs in nutrition (not B.Sc.) are also conducted in Beer Sheba and the Technion.

Most other issues were addressed in the comments that appear in the document submitted by the School of Nutrition. We agree with these responses and we do not have further remarks to add in this context.

#### B. Evaluation of nutritional sciences study program in Israel.

- *“Israel appears to face a scarcity of individuals trained at the doctoral level in Nutritional Sciences to support the current academic institutions that grant BSc, MSc and PhD degrees in Nutritional Sciences...”* This impression is correct, hence the CHE should not approve opening of additional schools of nutrition in Israel, but should rather dedicate efforts to support and substantiate the present schools.
- *“However, it is not clear to the EC that there are sufficient numbers of qualified people to complete this task in a reasonable period of time and an adequate number of new people currently being trained to continue the work into the future”* This is inaccurate. The issue is not one of lack of students in training or adequate labs to train them, but rather in the lack of position funding. Training of qualified new personnel to teach in academic institutions should be increased in the Institute of Biochemistry, Food Sciences and Nutrition of the HUJI by a) CHE specifically granting the Institute dedicated positions and by establishing a fellowship fund to support graduate student recruitment.
- *“Additionally, there appears to be an inadequate number of dietetic internship opportunities available to students immediately after completing the BSc degree to support the current number of graduates in Nutritional Sciences. This situation appears to result in a high attrition rate during the period between completing the BSc degree and beginning their dietetic internship program”* This is an accurate assessment of the situation, and it is a pity the committee did not interview Ministry of Health Officials who control the internship in dietetics. Of course, little consideration was taken of the impact on internships following the opening new schools of nutrition in Ariel and Tel Hai, and will again be ignored when considering the opening of the new school for nutrition in the Peres College in Rehovot (How the CHE can consider opening another school of nutrition in Rehovot is beyond our understanding).
- *“...the limited opportunities available for students to pursue doctoral level studies, and from the EC’s perspective, particularly in the areas of Nutritional Sciences with a clinical focus, such as Public Health or Medicine...”* This limitation is true and a combined program in nutritional sciences and public health should become a number one priority for both schools (nutrition and public health). The success of such a venture, however, is severely handicapped by current resources and the extensive length of time it takes to approve graduate study programs.
- Immediate 2-year recommendations.
  - Strategic planning will only have merit if the plans are put to action.
  - Item c: this should apply only for institutes with an established and

quality-proven research programs. We do not think that dedication of resources to establish new research centers outside those of recognized universities to be a sound policy.

- Item d: this will not solve the problem, as in its source – it is not generated by the academic institutes but by a governmental agency. Internships will still be delayed while costing the students an unwarranted fourth year of tuition.
- Item 2: we agree.
- Item 3: impractical and shows ignorance of the level of student high-school knowledge when entering the University. Enrolled students have a significant knowledge gap that renders regular university courses way above their initial capacity. On the other hand, development of advanced programs is underway (see above and below).
- Item 4: agree; however, to reiterate - the success of such ventures is severely handicapped by current resources and the extensive length of time it takes to approve graduate study programs.
- Item 5: we endeavor to strive towards this.
- Item 6 general: We are working towards this.
- Item 6a: impractical given the number of available positions.
- Items 6b&c: we agree.
- Item 8: True for entire HUJI teaching philosophy.
- Recommendations for CHE.
  - Item 1: should apply to HUJI only; see above
  - Item 2: one of the most important recommendations of this report! Ratification of a School of Nutrition at the Peres College should be put on immediate hold.
  - Item 3: it would be better to provide positions locally than to send our best students for the benefit of institutes overseas.
  - Item 4: this is practiced. The real issue is to provide positions for returnees. Every position ad in nutrition routinely receives scores of applicants.
  - Item 9: To commensurate with the CHE's commitment to fulfill obligations and recommendations.



Ronnie Friedman, Dean