

Wednesday, September 05, 2012

Tel-Hai College
Department of Nutritional Sciences
Re-Evaluation Report

We thank the members of the external committee for the review of the Department of Nutritional Sciences at Tel-Hai College. It has been our pleasure to discuss with them the strengths and weaknesses of our Department. Based on the committee's comments we will undertake the following measures of improvement of our program

1. Mission, Goals and Aims

Recommendation

Immediate (0-2 years):

1.1 Focusing on developing systems that will support students completing their BSc degrees in 3 years, unless structural modifications are made to the BSc program of study, see to recommendations under the subheading of **The Study Program;**

1.2 Forming a faculty committee to review and potentially modify faculty expectations in terms of teaching relative to research responsibilities with the intent of ensuring that adequate time is allocated to quality teaching and that the faculty is appropriately recognized for such efforts.

The Faculty Council, which is comprised of the chairs of the departments and the study programs in the faculty and convenes regularly throughout the year, will also function as the proposed committee for considering the desired relationship between teaching and research. The special collective agreement recently signed between the college and the senior academic faculty members enables a significant reduction for full-time faculty

members of up to 4 yearly hours (equivalent to a 1/3-time position) in teaching duties for the sake of research.

Tel-Hai College does encourage its faculty members to engage in research and sees this as a primary means to ensure constant updating of course content and exposure of students to current research issues and methods. At the same time, the faculty members will now be able to devote more time to each course that they continue to teach and, when necessary, to improve the quality of their teaching with the assistance of the Center for Excellence in Teaching.

It is also important to note that the promotion of lecturers in all colleges, including ours, is contingent upon proven success in teaching, research, and contribution to the college and the community. These criteria, which guide the work of the promotion committees, are determined by the Council for Higher Education, and not the college.

2. The Study Program

Recommendations

Immediate (0-2 years):

2.1 Forming a faculty committee to review and revise the curriculum to reinforce the basic nutrition therapy content and build on this basic material with more complex concepts and case scenarios. Consider replacing some of the basic science course required during the first two years with additional nutrition related courses;

- **The department chairpersons of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology (the Faculty Council) have begun discussing the scope of the core science subjects. As a result, it has been decided to reduce the scope of organic chemistry studies for students of nutritional sciences, from 7 credits to 5 credits. In addition, organic chemistry will be taught as a course specially designed for students of our department. These discussions will continue, with the aim of examining the scope of**

the physics and calculus courses, as well. Moreover, the course in botany, which was one of the courses taught across all departments of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology, will be replaced in the 2012-2013 academic year with a specially designed course, *Botany for Nutritionists*, and will be taught in a smaller scope of 2 credits rather than 3 credits. In addition, the course *General Microbiology*, which was taught in the second year of study, has been moved to the first year, in a format of 2 credits rather than 3.

The reduction in scope of basic science studies will now enable us to add an additional required course for second-year students, *Molecular Nutrition*, and to expand the number of electives. The Departmental Teaching Committee, which is comprised of the chairperson of the department, Dr. Jamal Mahajna, Dr. Karen Jackson (outgoing department chair), Dr. Pauli Belinki (chairperson of the Department of Food Sciences), as well as with the dean of the Faculty of Sciences and Technology and other department chairpersons, is holding discussions on this issue, and particularly the scope of the basic science courses.

2.2 Increasing Tel Hai's relationship with the local hospitals and clinics to support student exposure to the clinical aspects of health and disease as elective courses prior to entering their internship;

- We wholeheartedly agree with this recommendation and will work towards its implementation. In the *Nutrition in the Community* course, we recently introduced a pilot program – Students Accompanying Patients – in which a third-year student accompanies a patient during hospitalization and after discharge, providing nutritional support to the patient and family members, supervised by a licensed dietician. The pilot will begin in the upcoming year and depending on its results, we will consider creating an elective course for the project in the 2013-2014 academic year.

- **This recommendation may also be implemented through the master's degree program in nutritional sciences, which is pending CHE approval.**

2.3 Expanding the scope of elective courses in the area of public health policy or education/teaching, sports nutrition, nutrition through the life cycle;

- **The scope of basic science courses will be reduced, thereby enabling students to increase the number of elective courses they take. Our aim is to increase their scope up to 16 credits rather than 10 as today. In the 2012-2013 academic year, two new elective courses will be offered: *Selected Chapters in Nutrition for Cancer prevention* and *Facilitation of Body Image Groups*. We will continue in this direction of adding elective courses in the 2013-2014 academic year, as well.**

2.4 Increasing access and learning opportunities across the health disciplines within the institution;

- **Tel-Hai College recently received approval to open a program in premedical studies within the Department of Biotechnology. Different courses in that program will be offered as electives to students of the Department of Nutritional Sciences. In addition, relevant courses from the Department of Psychology will also be offered as electives to students of our department.**

2.5 Developing a cross disciplinary course in ethics, professionalism and health systems for all the health sciences programs;

- **We will consider requiring students of Nutritional Sciences to take the course, *Ethics in the Medical Profession*, which will be taught by Prof. Eran Dolev in the premedical program of the Department of Biotechnology.**

2.6 The CHE and MOH should discuss together the possibility of formally incorporating the dietetic internship program into the BSc program to ensure an efficient and seamless transition from didactic to practical experience and timely completion of the requirements to become a dietitian; please see the General Report for further details.

- **We have raised this suggestion in different forums. Recently a committee that includes representatives of the CHE and different Nutritional Sciences Departments has begun to work on developing a proposal to be submitted to the CHE, based on transforming the study program in nutritional sciences to a four-year program in which the fourth year will include internship as well as additional courses in different aspects of dietetics.**

3. Faculty

Recommendation

Intermediate (2-4 years):

3.1 Adding a clinical nutritionist to the faculty to share teaching responsibilities and initiate clinical research projects that provide experiential opportunities for students.

- **The Department of Nutritional Sciences is interested in hiring Dr. Einav Schneidman, a clinical dietitian who recently returned to Israel after a post-doctorate period in the US. Dr. Schneidman is interested in working at MIGAL on research topics related to obesity and metabolic diseases.**
- **In the 2012-2013 academic year, the scope of employment of Professor Moriya Golan will be increased to full-time.**

4. Students

Recommendation

Immediate (0-2 years):

4.1 Formally harnessing the student and alumni enthusiasm for the program to build a stronger alumni base that could provide additional training opportunities for Tel Hai graduates.

- **The Graduate Division of Tel-Hai College recently completed the construction of a database of the alumni of the different programs and we have begun a routine of monthly contact with the alumni of our department. We recently sent a second newsletter to graduates that includes a list of job opportunities in their field of study, articles, and new developments at the college, new courses and study programs, as well as other items that are relevant to them. In the future we plan to organize a meeting of the alumni of both faculties, relevant seminars and lectures, all in collaboration with the department chairpersons and the deans.**

4.2 Carefully track the quality of the admitted students and adjust admission rates on the basis of applicant qualifications rather than a targeted goal for number of students admitted per year.

- **Despite the strong demand, we make an effort to limit the number of students we admit. The number of students accepted in recent years has been about 100, in keeping with the guidelines of the CHE Planning and Budgeting Committee. In the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 academic years the figures were higher (130 a year). Moreover, this year we raised the department's admissions criteria and requirements in an effort to preserve a program of excellence and ensure a higher rate of success among those accepted.**

4.3 Retroactively assess student graduation rates, cumulative grade averages and similar outcome measures relative to student admission data and, if necessary, modify admission criteria.

- **The Department of Nutritional Sciences has begun examining the criteria of the students admitted and monitoring their achievements in the different years of study, with the aim of identifying the admissions criteria and the other factors that predict success. The criteria for admission and for progressing from one year of study to the next will be modified as necessary according to the conclusions of our study.**



5. Research

Recommendation

Immediate (0-2 years):

5.1 Supporting research in the areas of clinical and applied nutrition research and providing opportunities for students to become involved in these types of research projects.

- **The master's degree program in Nutritional Sciences – with a research (thesis) track and a non-thesis track – is awaiting approval by the CHE and is expected to open during the upcoming academic year. As a result, the volume of research conducted by faculty members in the field of nutrition will increase substantially and we will be able to include bachelor's degree students in the effort. Moreover, we have increased the number of students in the department who conduct research projects to 12 students in 2012-2013, and intend to increase the number of credits awarded for this elective course to 6 credits. We will consider the possibility of further expansion of the project over the next few years.**
- **In addition, some of the researchers in the department engage in clinical experiments on the subject of nutrition in collaboration with local hospitals. We are now considering ways to include students in the different experiments.**



6. Teaching and Learning Outcomes

Recommendations

Immediate (0-2 years):

6.1 Requiring all faculty to submit updated course syllabi and additional course material using a revised format developed in collaboration with the Center for Excellence in Teaching, to include learning objectives for each lecture and instituting a system so these syllabi are kept updated on an annual basis;

- **The department's Teaching Committee will closely monitor the syllabi of the different courses and instruct the lecturers to prepare them in a uniform format, describing the subjects of the lectures more precisely and including updated literature.**
- **The Center for Excellence in Teaching will organize a daylong seminar for the lecturers of the department during the 2012-2013 academic year in order to discuss this subject.**

6.2 Instituting a system whereby the vice-president/department and/or a head/faculty committee collaboratively review updated course syllabi and other available course related material, with the intent of identifying potential areas of overlap and gaps, and providing additional opportunities for the students to take nutrition related elective courses and/or experiential learning;

- **When the detailed syllabi have been prepared, the Teaching Committee will examine this issue and meet with the relevant lecturers in order to coordinate the material taught in parallel courses. In addition, the chairperson of the department will continue the dialogue with the students in order to identify overlapping subject material taught in different courses, in order to prevent this. For example, in 2012-2013, the same lecturer will teach**

the courses *General Microbiology* and *Microbiology and Food Sanitation*, preparing detailed syllabi without any overlap of subject matter.

Intermediate (2-4 years):

6.3 Continuing to innovate and assess effective teaching methods

- **We will continue the dialogue with the Center for Excellence in Teaching in order to provide counseling, guidance in writing exams, and effective engagement with the students by providing assistance to the department lecturers in the different aspects of teaching. In cooperation with the Center for Excellence, we intend to hold a workshop to discuss innovative methods and the use of instruction techniques. We will also examine the possibility of the center's supervision of some of the lecturers in the classroom or videotaping lessons in order to adopt means and methods to make the teaching in the department more effective.**

6.4 Infusing the curriculum with up-to-date approaches for the application of nutrition principles, which has already begun with the addition of evidence based dietetics practice, oral health assessment, the nutrition care process and International Nutrition and Dietetics Terminology (INDT).

- **The Department of Nutritional Sciences will continue to impart the principles of the nutrition care process. In the future we will consider adding oral health assessment to the curriculum.**
- **With respect to exposure to new professional language and concepts and the International Nutrition and Dietetics Terminology (INDT), the lecturers in the department are supervised by Professor Riva Tugar Dakar, who has extended her relationship with the college.**



Long Term (4-6 years):

6.5 Considering development of two alternate curricula for the 3rd year, with an emphasis on dietetics or training for advanced research degrees; please see the General Report for further details.

- **This idea will be raised in the Department Council and if it is approved, we will examine the different ways to implement it based on examination of similar programs in other departments of nutrition.**

7. Infrastructure

None

8. Quality assessment

Recommendation

Immediate (0-2 years):

8.1 Developing a formal system to provide regular feedback to the faculty with regard to their teaching responsibilities and if areas of improvement are identified, providing resources to remedy the situation and enhance student learning.

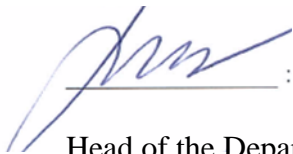
- **The lecturers and management of the department receive feedback from students. Based on this feedback, we will consider recommending that certain lecturers use the services of the Center for Excellence in Teaching in order to cultivate and improve the quality of instruction in specific aspects indicated by the students.**
- **During the 2012-2013 academic year, the Center for Excellence in Teaching plans to provide workshops aimed at improving the teaching in the college. In a meeting with the director of this program at the college, it was decided that the first workshop will be held with lecturers in the Department of Nutritional Sciences. The lecturers will choose specific issues that require**

improvement and development and the Center for Excellence will prepare a personal or department-wide intervention program according to these needs and requirements.

Our ultimate goal is to have a unique program at the Department of Nutritional Sciences at Tel-Hai College. We fully appreciate and recognize the fact that the Self Evaluation Process as well as the committee's evaluation have been beneficial process to the improvement process of our program and will help us to achieve our goals.

Sincerely Yours,

Dr. Jamal Mahajna



Head of the Department of Nutritional Sciences
Tel-Hai College.