

**COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY**

Date: 11 February 2008

To: Eamonn Callan, Chair  
XL Senate of the Academic Council

From: Philip Lavori, Chair, Committee on Graduate Studies

Re: Recommendation to Renew the Interdisciplinary Program in Biophysics

The Interdisciplinary Program in Biophysics, which started in 1962, includes both the School of Humanities and Sciences and the School of Medicine. Professor William Weis, Director of the Interdisciplinary Program in Biophysics, met with the Committee on Graduate Studies on 24 January 2008. Weis has led the IDP since 1999 and will shortly turn the program over to Vijay Pande (Associate Professor, Chemistry).

Biophysics is unique in its incorporation of the physical sciences with the biological/biomedical area that is offered in the other BioSciences home programs. An integral part of the larger BioSciences program, the IDP in Biophysics has benefited from its coordinated admissions and recruiting processes. The IDP works closely with all of these departments at admissions time to ensure that applicants are matched with the best fit – even if it is not Biophysics.

The IDP is dependent on training grants from the National Institute of Health, which fund its students. This is the major determinant of the size of the program; the current NIH grant only allows for eight students (who must be US citizens) a year. Foreign students may apply for the program, but can only be admitted if they receive SGF funding (one or two available each year). In spite of the limits placed on the program by the NIH grant, Biophysics has been successful in recruiting under-represented minority students. Approximately 12-15% of the Biophysics students over the last 15 years have been under-represented minorities.

The IDP's curriculum has a great amount of flexibility to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of the students who enroll in the program. Limited in its own ability to develop courses, the IDP depends on faculty efforts to create new courses within their home departments.

C-GS agreed with the comments made by both the Biophysics director and the H&S review that there could be more done in the area of faculty advising, and in alleviating the situation of the overworked program administrator, who also supports Structural Biology. However, these concerns are being addressed by the Biophysics Executive Committee.

**The Committee on Graduate Studies therefore recommends that the degree-nominating authority of the Interdisciplinary Program in Biophysics, for the PhD and MS degrees, be renewed for a five-year period, from September 1, 2009 through August 31, 2014.**

COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES  
RECOMMENDATION FOR RENEWAL:  
INTERDISCIPLINARY PROGRAM IN BIOPHYSICS  
TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Memo from Philip Lavori, Chair, Committee on Graduate Studies, to Eamonn Callan, Chair, Faculty Senate, dated 11 February 2008.
- II. Memo from Richard Saller, Dean of Humanities and Sciences, and Susan Stephens, Senior Associate Dean of Humanities and Sciences, to C-GS, dated 10 December 2007.
- III. Self-Study: IDP in Biophysics

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AND BY REQUEST.

- IV. Biophysics in the *Stanford Bulletin* 2006-07.
- V. Graduate Student Handbook 2006-07.