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February 5, 2009

Dean Gerald Baldesty
The Graduate School
University of Washington
Box 353770

Dear Dean Baldesty:

I would like to start by expressing the appreciation of both myself and the Executive Committee for the hard work and perceptiveness of the Review Committee. The report is excellent and reflects the many hours that the Committee spent talking with members of the Department and the understanding that resulted. Comments on a few of the report's summary recommendations are given below, and more detailed consideration of it by the Department is in progress.

We are gratified that this broadly constituted Review Committee affirms the general importance of Physics as a subject and acknowledges that we are among the most distinguished departments in the University of Washington. We also affirm that the Review Committee points out very real problems including: the drop in rankings, loss of high quality faculty and the age distribution of faculty. The Review Committee states that it is vital for the UW to help us to solve these problems. In particular, as the Review Committee states, "without serious intervention the decline would continue". The Department agrees and is moving to address these issues. Successfully doing so will require effort on the part of both the Department and the University.

The Executive Committee and I urge that the University move promptly to appoint the recommended external advisory committee on options for future growth in Condensed Matter Experiment and Biophysics and that members of the Department's Condensed Matter Group be consulted as to the membership of the Committee. We also concur that a committee of faculty engaged in 'large-scale' experiments and cognate areas be convened to recommend priorities in those fields. We believe that the recommendations from both these groups should provide guidance to a Departmental strategic planning process focused on areas much broader than our traditional group structure.

We concur with Committee's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of our undergraduate program. The major recommendation of the Committee is already in progress; in consultation with other units on campus, we are preparing proposals to offer multiple undergraduate degree tracks in physics. The cautions of the Committee about the impacts of proposed changes in the Department's undergraduate program are sentiments we share and are being addressed in a new proposal for the requirements for a B.S. in

physics.

The suggestion for a revisit of the Department in five years¹ is appropriate and the Department supports that recommendation. It is starting the process of developing the vision of its future that is required both for the near future and for the revisit.

Sincerely yours,

David G. Boulware
Chair, Department of Physics

Erratum

page 4, l 13 The text:

“held on October 30, with the Nuclear Physics Group combined with members of the Institute for Nuclear Theory.”

should read:

“held on October 30, with the Nuclear Theory Group and with members of the Institute for Nuclear Theory.”

¹The suggestion is explicit in stating that no self-study should be required.