



To: Chris Partridge, Director, Academic Program Review, Graduate School

From: Daniel Pollack, Divisional Dean of Natural Sciences

Date: December 10, 2023

Subject: Comment on Unit Response: 10-year review UW Astrobiology Program

The College of Arts & Sciences Dean's office agree with the review committee's assessment that "*The Astrobiology Program at the University of Washington (UW) is considered the premier graduate Astrobiology Program in the US and is an outstanding program by any measure.*" We are grateful to the review committee and the program leadership for the substantial effort that they devoted to the program's review.

The focus of our comment is on the finding of the review committee that "*The funding model for the program in its current form is tenuous, and the Astrobiology steering committee and faculty should explore options for a more secure funding model.*" We fully support this finding and believe that it is of paramount importance, in order to place the program on a stable foundation and allow it to continue to excel.

We appreciate the program's response to this recommendation and their creative ideas for exploration in this area. They note:

*The Astrobiology Program's strength is in its massive interdisciplinarity, and the program coordinates training and research across a University-spanning eleven departments and four Colleges and Schools. However, while this interdisciplinarity is a distinguishing feature of our research and training, it poses significant issues for funding the program. While the Astrobiology Faculty will follow the committee's suggestion and raise the profile of our program with the relevant Chairs and Deans, we will need program allies at the Deans level to either coordinate cross-College and School support, or to take a request to the Provost for consideration. To further explore possible funding avenues, and to coordinate the advocacy required to find program allies in upper levels of administration, we have formed a Funding Committee of Astrobiology Program faculty.*

Within the College of Arts & Sciences we have and will continue to have strong support for the program, but we have not witnessed a broad representation of faculty support which spans the breath of the program across the UW. It is imperative that this support reaches the leadership in all the four Colleges representing the program, from within their own faculty. We commend the program's formation of the Funding Committee and look forward to receiving, along with the leadership of the other colleges, their recommendations, and ideas for stable and sustainable funding.

cc: Dianne Harris, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences