To: Public Post-Secondary Education Review Team

From: Dr. Linda Rohr, Dean, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation

School of Human Kinetics and Recreation

Historical Overview

The physical education program at Memorial University began as a two-year diploma program in 1953. The early mandate of the department was to provide leadership in training physical education instructors for the Newfoundland and Labrador school system. The diploma program moved to a four-year full degree program (Bachelor of Physical Education) in 1963. In 1967 a 5-year conjoint degree option was added giving graduates of the program degrees in physical education and education (B.P.E, B.Ed.) The conjoint degree continued to be a significant component of the program until it was phased out in the late 1970’s.

Following formal approval in 1992, students were availing of both co-op and non co-op offerings of three-degree streams - Physical Education, Kinesiology and Recreation. The School was admitting upwards of 100 plus students each fall. As well, offerings of large enrolment on-line courses were developed. This growth took place with a budget model that reflected student enrolment.

In 1973 a small graduate program was offered and the first M.P.E. degree was granted in 1975. A year later the unit was formally designated a professional school. While the graduate program may have languished in the 1980’s and 90’s by 2003-4 with the renewal of a number of faculty members and a greater university wide emphasis on research, the graduate program began to take on a different look. A Kinesiology masters degree was added to the program and soon had full enrolment with wait lists. One of the most important developments in the graduate program came when in 2007-08 the school began offering the Master of Physical Education as a fully integrated online graduate degree program. The success of the online program was recognized when in 2010 it earned an international award for innovation in continuing education. However, as there was no ongoing funding associated with the addition of this program, resourcing it has become a perpetual challenge.

Substantial curriculum changes were introduced to the undergraduate programs in fall 2018. A Bachelor of Human Kinetics and Recreation Co-operative degree began, a degree responsive to student learning objectives and built on the strength of co-operative education. Mirroring this degree change, the graduate programming will be migrating to this more flexible naming in fall 2020. The impetus for these changes was to increase the opportunities for student success, facilitate faculty collaborations and streamline resources.

The faculty complement has remained unchanged at 17 since 2011 when our faculty complement grew by two, in anticipation of an accreditation application. Although faculty’s role as teachers is no less important, there is now a greater expectation toward scholarly research. Faculty want to ensure quality
instruction but are concerned about high workload, the increased research expectations and the potential for increased class sizes that conceivably threaten program quality. To deal with the high workload faculty report doing one of two things: they cut corners on teaching to ensure the quality of their research does not suffer or they cut corners on research to ensure the quality of their teaching is maintained. All agree that this is not the ideal we should be striving for.

Effectiveness

In fall 2019 the Bachelor of Kinesiology degree completed an accreditation review by CCUPEKA. Unofficially, the degree program will be re-accredited for a second 7-year period. In contrast, the accreditation for the Bachelor of Physical Education degree ended in 2017, primarily due to the sub-standard number of full-time faculty instructing degree required courses.

The School typically receives over 300 applications for both the Bachelor of Kinesiology and the Bachelor of Human Kinetics and Recreation Co-operative degrees. In total, we accept 80 students each fall. Recent admission averages were 90% for high school students and 80% for current Memorial students. Admission numbers are capped based on available infrastructure, already large class sizes, availability of instructors and a single Co-operative Education coordinator. Regardless, the graduating class is strong with a large number of graduates furthering their education in graduate school or becoming physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical doctors or chiropractors. Increasingly, graduate from HKR are finding work (or are self-employed) in the health/wellness/fitness industry as kinesiologists. The feedback received from graduating students about their experience in the School of HKR is overwhelmingly positive.

Although fewer applications are received for the Bachelor of Physical Education and Bachelor of Recreations degrees, both programs are competitive entry. Approximately 24 students are admitted to each program annually, a number determined through a risk analysis of courses and available resources.

HKR has struggled over the past 7 years to retain faculty members, particularly those with a Physical Education background. Rather than relying on per-course instructors to fill this void we have hired teaching term appointments, ultimately providing some stability for our program and students. We continue to foster positive relationships with our community members to support educational opportunities, internships, and co-op placements to enhance student learning and scholarship.

There has been a remarkable growth in research productivity from HKR since 2007. This trend has been fueled by both successful senior researchers and highly motivated and successful junior faculty members. HKR has supported a CRC in Population Physical Activity since 2016. Future growth in our research capacity is hindered by available laboratory space and the current teaching load of 5 in the School.

Sustainability

Over the past few years HKR has renovated a dedicated lab teaching space with equipment and resources specific to teaching. This has been invaluable for the successful delivery of our laboratory
courses. Further, an undergraduate student study space was completed in 2017, providing a resource library, quiet group study space, and interactive technology. Our graduate students also moved into a renovated study space in 2017, a collaborative work area that fosters a high level of interaction between students.

Given our limited physical, financial and human resources, there is no opportunity to grow any of our undergraduate or graduate degree programs. In total we receive over 400 applications to our undergraduate programs and over 60 to our graduate programs. Due to constraints we admit 130 and 30-35 students respectively.

**Accessibility**

In fall 2018 a block transfer system was piloted between CNA and HKR. This block transfer is now being expanded to include other institutions, ultimately enabling students who began their education in a two-year diploma program in the college system to transfer to Memorial to complete a degree program.

The vision of the School of HKR is “To be leaders in physical activity, leisure, and wellness with the purpose of advancing knowledge and benefitting people, communities, and society.” To that end, the School maintains a significant list of open elective courses for non-HKR students, focused on healthy living. Most semesters, approximately 500 non-HKR students complete HKR courses, in both on campus and online formats. We are keen to grow the available course offerings for non-HKR students, but currently are impacted by the workload capacity of our faculty.

One challenge that remains for HKR is the availability of the gym, field and classroom space. In particular, the gym and field are not seen as a classroom and constantly competing for these spaces negatively affects curriculum and teaching. Please note, the scheduling for these spaces is not controlled by HKR or Memorial University, a confounding factor.

**Summary**

Our programs are in demand. Recent program revitalization provides a responsive degree with creative programming options. Student retention and graduation rates are high. Our research metrics, including funding and productivity, are on a growth trajectory. Faculty are engaged.

We are challenged to further grow either our research or teaching capacity due to real limitations in physical space and human resource capacity.