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September 13, 2021

## DEAN'S RESPONSE

### External Review | Department of Surgery

On behalf of the Temerty Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, I would first like to thank the reviewers, Dr. Susan Reid and Dr. Nita Ahuja, for a fulsome and rigorous review of the Department of Surgery on February 25-26, 2021. On behalf of Temerty Medicine, I would also like to thank Dr. Jim Rutka, Chair of the Department, the administrative staff, and all those who contributed to the preparation of the outstanding self-study report. I also wish to thank the numerous staff, trainees, and faculty members who met with the external reviewers and provided invaluable input.

The reviewers reflected that, *“Overall, the Department of Surgery at the University of Toronto, with significant, nation leading strengths in all domains, remains the lead Department of Surgery within Canada. The clinical strengths are varied and extensive, with expertise in the fields of Transplantation, Trauma Care and Surgical Oncology. This pillar is supported by highly engaged and expert clinical faculty.”* Temerty Medicine greatly appreciates the insightful and comprehensive report provided by the reviewers. It serves as an invaluable guide for future strategic directions and program enhancements of the Department of Surgery. I am in full agreement with Dr. Rutka's response of the Chair. After consultation with him, I comment below on specific areas addressed by the reviewers and their recommendations.

1. *“There is a high level of good will between the hospitals and University. Faculty members strongly identify with their base hospitals and hospital divisions. Within the allegiance hierarchy, the academic department sits at the bottom, below the academic division, which is below the hospital and at the top of hierarchy is the hospital service. This perception can be mitigated, with an aim to have the faculty view the hospital and the University Department as the foundation upon which the hospital division and service are mounted. This will require the next chair to engage with each of the Hospital Chiefs of Surgery to develop a common branding, with opportunities for bi-directional recognition of each partner.”*

As noted by the reviewers, a comprehensive strategy to break down barriers between hospital-based programs and to strengthen identification with the University academic department will solidify departmental allegiance. Some of this work is already underway through a common branding approach, including the Surgical Skills Centre, joint endowed Chairs, and a city-wide Brain Tumour Bank. As suggested by the reviewers, a strategic and synergistic approach to faculty recruitment among the department, hospitals, and divisions will be very helpful. At the suggestion of the reviewers, creation of a working group to explore methods to improve inter-hospital collaboration and alignment will be considered.

2. *“FACULTY SUPPORT: Several areas of faculty support will require the attention of the new Chair*
  - a. *SUPPORT FOR PROMOTION AND TENURE PROCESS: the process for faculty to create an Academic CV needs clarification.*
  - b. *PROFESSIONALISM: All involved, the Department Chair, the Surgeons-in-Chief, University Division Chairs and Hospital Heads could benefit from a centralized process to address professionalism concerns via an independent review body that has the ability to gather information from academic as well as clinical environments. As the Temerty Faculty of Medicine is heavily invested in this area, the new Chair is advised to review this initiative with the Associate Dean to discuss.*

- c. *EDI: The new Co-Directors in conjunction with the EDI Committee should provide an action plan for review by the Chair and the Surgical Executive within 2021.*
- d. *BURNOUT: The Faculty lead should provide an action plan for review by the Chair and the Surgical Executive within 2021.*

Professional values are a priority area of focus of Temerty Medicine. To address issues of professionalism and mistreatment Dr. Pier Bryden was appointed Senior Advisor, Clinical Affairs & Professional Values, and works closely with Dr. Lynn Wilson, Vice Dean, Clinical & Faculty Affairs. Under her direction, the “Standards of Professional Behaviour for Clinical (MD) Faculty” was developed and a mandatory module on professionalism was introduced for all clinical faculty seeking annual reappointments in TAHSN hospitals. To address learner mistreatment Dr. Reena Pattani was appointed Director, Learner Experience in May 2020. She has worked closely with Dr. Glen Bandiera, (former) Associate Dean, Postgraduate Medical Education, and Dr. Patricia Houston, Vice Dean, Medical Education and current Acting Dean. The Learner Experience Advisory Committee was established and is chaired by Dr. Pattani. The committee includes members from across departments and programs. Professional reports from 2019 and 2020 were drafted and shared with the Temerty Medicine faculty and learner community. These reports included relevant information and plans to address mistreatment. It should be noted that the reports do not reflect the new guidelines and new methods for data collection that began in mid-2020 and onwards. We will continue to distribute annual professionalism reports that will summarize the learner concerns brought to our attention; to preserve claimant and respondent anonymity, they will be aggregated and de-identified.

In 2020 Drs. Laura Snell and Najib Safieddine were appointed EDI Co-Leads for the Department. In this role they are leading departmental strategic planning for EDI. Drs. Snell and Safieddine work closely with Dr. Lisa Richardson, Associate Dean, Inclusion & Diversity and are integral members of the Diversity Advisory Council, which collaborates across Temerty Medicine, TAHSN, and the University of Toronto to share wise practices and to develop and coordinate equity-related programs and activities across the system.

As noted by the reviewers, issues pertaining to wellness and burnout are of paramount importance and have been heightened by the pandemic. Dr. Rutka states in his response that stress and burnout are being addressed in the Department through surveys, focused interviews, and “wellness rounds.” These activities complement the work being done at the broader Temerty Medicine level. In 2020 Dr. Julie Maggi was appointed the Director, Faculty Wellness. In this role she is working closely with stakeholders across the system to develop a strategy to address the issues at hand.

Finally given the interconnections among experiences of mistreatment and unprofessionalism, EDI, and wellness, Drs. Bryden, Pattani, Wilson, and Maggi work very closely with Dr. Lisa Richardson (former Strategic Advisor, Indigenous Health and now Associate Dean, Inclusion & Diversity), Anita Balakrishna (Director, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion), and Dr. Lisa Robinson (former Associate Dean, Inclusion & Diversity and now Vice Dean, Strategy & Operations).

### 3. “RESEARCH

1. *Sustaining Basic Science Research: Bring together all those involved in basic science research including the leads of research for the University Department and Divisions with the Research Leads at each hospital site, the research faculty, both clinical and non-clinical, research coordinators, and assistants. A full day retreat is suggested to explore common concerns and set a path forward highlighting collaboration amongst the various research labs.*
2. *Research committee to set priorities and targets for the development of research areas such as AI, QI, and Clinical Trials.*
3. *Research committee to set a plan in motion to engage the hospital Research Ethics Boards to create a single city-wide REB.*
4. *In conjunction with Department Division Chairs, set a process in place to identify and then mentor mid-career scientists who may be challenged in direction, funding, or both.*
5. *Increase the focus on Surgical Education Research in the Department. The new Chair is advised to meet with The Wilson Centre lead to discuss further opportunities for alignment.”*

The reviewers recognize the Department's outstanding history of basic science discovery and innovation. It will be important to sustain leading-edge fundamental research going forward. Consideration will be given to holding a department-wide and system-wide retreat to explore common concerns and to removing barriers to collaboration across research programs. To identify priority areas for research development in the Department, enhancing collaborations with various partners can be explored. These partners include Temerty Centre for Artificial Intelligence, Research and Education in Medicine (T-CAIREM), the Department of Surgery Best Practices in Surgery Program, the National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (NSQIP) across hospitals, and the departmental Innovative, Multicentre, Patient-Centred Approach to Clinical Trials (IMPACTS) program. As noted in the Chair's response, to streamline research operations and enhance efficiencies, TAHSN institutions have committed to deferring oversight of research ethics from multiple TAHSN member REB to a single member REB (Lead REB) for studies involving at least two TAHSN institutions.

As recommended by the reviewers, the Department will consider approaches to mentorship of mid-career faculty that jointly involve the departmental Research Committee and University Division Chairs and TAHSN research institutes. As noted by the reviewers, enhanced focus on surgical education research is warranted. Consideration can be given to optimizing engagement with The Wilson Centre and the Centre for Faculty Development and to building on the Department's areas of great strength, including competency-based medical education and surgical simulation.

In conclusion, the Department of Surgery is outstanding in its achievements, benefitting from Dr. Rutka at its helm. The reviewers acknowledge both in fitting laudatory terms: *"The Department enjoys an incomparable reputation as a leader in surgery both nationally and internationally. [It] has flourished under Dr. Rutka's leadership with success in all of the academic pillars of clinical growth, research and education...The Department is ranked 4<sup>th</sup> globally reaffirming its global position. The current Chair has leveraged to expand its clinical operations in conjunction with the hospital leaders and Dr. Rutka is held in universal regard."* I congratulate Dr. Rutka on his excellent longstanding and visionary guidance and the members of the Department for their many contributions to its success.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Patricia Houston', written in black ink.

Patricia Houston, MD, MEd, FRCPC  
Acting Dean | Vice Dean, Medical Education  
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology & Pain Medicine