External Review Report of the School of Health Information Science

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External Review Committee

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Executive Summary

The School of Health Information Science at the University of Victoria has a strong foundation in research, teaching, and recognition within the field. It is a forward-looking school in a growing field with transformational potential. It should be a leader and not a follower. However, to sustain its leadership and fully realize the potential of its recent and planned expansion, the School needs to address key resource constraints and strategically align its operations with the evolving needs of health informatics. This review highlights critical findings and provides recommendations for the School's development over the next seven years.

Key Takeaways

- Expansion Challenges: Navigating growth while maintaining program quality requires careful planning and resourcing.
- Evolving Curriculum: Staying at the forefront of health informatics necessitates continuous curriculum review and updates.
- Micro-credentials: Offering flexible programming is an opportunity, but developing and delivering these programs requires resources and a specific skillset.
- Partnerships: The existing strong collaborative base bodes well for expanding knowledge exchange and real-world impact.
- Top Priorities:
    - Tuition revenue share
    - Increased operating budget
    - Alignment of resources and student growth
- New Health Faculty: The move to a dedicated Health Faculty is viewed positively, but the School's distinct identity and interdisciplinary culture provide opportunity to develop synergies and partnerships with the other units within the new faculty.

List of Recommendations

The School can realize its full potential by addressing the following recommendations:

1. Health Faculty Transition: Clearly articulate the School's vision and strategic goals for maintaining its unique identity while becoming a collaborative engine spurring innovation in the new faculty.

2. Expansion Planning: Develop detailed implementation plans for the approved expansion, outlining timelines, resource requirements, marketing strategies, and benchmarks to track progress and balance growth and quality.

3. Funding for PhD Students: The current model for PhD education largely engages part time students who are working full time and paying their own way. A mature research program for HINF should include some students who are fully supported and contribute more fully to the school's research.

4. Admin Support for Expansion: Recruit a full-time coop staff and a part-time program assistant.

5. Faculty Research Productivity: A robust research program would benefit from a greater proportion of larger grants.

6. Technical Support for Research: Secure budget for a dedicated laboratory manager position to fully leverage recent technology investments and support faculty research in emerging areas.

7. Operating Budget: Advocate for an increase in the non-salary operating budget proportionate to student numbers and program operations growth.

8. Tuition Revenue: Renegotiate the distribution of tuition revenue from highly profitable graduate programs to adequately support program delivery and infrastructure needs.

9. Faculty Growth and Succession Planning: Develop a long-term strategic plan for hiring and retaining faculty to meet the teaching and research demands of the expanded program, considering emerging trends such as AI for Health.

10. Educational EHR System: Prioritize acquiring and implementing an educational electronic health record system. Include funding for a technical support person to ensure its long-term sustainability and integration.

11. Curriculum Evolution: Establish a formal process for regular curriculum review and updates in the rapidly changing field of health informatics. Explore the development of micro-credentials to meet emerging professional development needs.

12. Collaboration and Impact: Foster partnerships that focus on co-creating knowledge, developing innovative solutions, and ensuring that research findings are translated into real-world impact.

13. Data-Informed Decision-Making: Establish processes to collect and track key metrics (student outcomes, faculty productivity, grant success rates) to inform strategic planning and resource allocation.

14. Engaging Students: Students should be more involved in different departmental meetings and committees as appropriate.