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Provost Peter Lange, Ph.D.
Thomas A. Langford University Professor
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Dear Provost Lange:

At its meeting of 2 October 2013, the Academic Programs Committee considered a proposal for a new medical physics graduate program (MPGP) at DKU, leading to an MS degree in its first phase. APC members had access to the proposal in advance of the meeting, along with documents arising from earlier deliberations at ECGF and MAC. APC raised questions about the demand for medical physicists in China, potential challenges of teaching students technical material in English given that they may then need to interact with clinical practitioners in Mandarin, staffing of the program, and other issues relating to local clinical institutions and practice in China. Overall, APC was satisfied with the responses to these questions. In particular, Professors Fang-Fang Yin and James Dobbins made a compelling case that there is substantial demand in China for students with world-class graduate training in medical physics. Moreover, while Duke policy requires the curriculum at DKU to be in English, this also offers co-benefits specific to the proposed medical physics program: developers, manufacturers, and vendors of medical physics technology and equipment generally communicate in English; students will be better prepared to spend time on Duke's campus in their third semester; and it permits involvement in the program by a broader swath of Duke faculty.

Replicating a successful program on a new continent entails uncertainty. Consequently, APC would like to draw attention to three issues:

1. The MPGP at DKU is modeled after MPGP-Durham, but the staffing will be very different. In the early years, the DKU program will rely heavily on faculty with significant teaching and mentoring loads, and minimal time for research or clinical practice. APC understands the plan is for this allocation to shift over time in the direction of more research and clinical practice—in line with the Duke program—but this will need to be monitored. For this and other reasons, APC concurs with ECGF's requirement of a third-year program review.
2. APC recognizes a tension between creating a program at DKU that is of high enough quality to be self-sufficient, yet retains the kinds of interconnections that open up opportunities and synergies. At the onset, the program at DKU will rely heavily on teaching and mentoring resources in Durham. Over time, the goal is to phase out this reliance on Durham faculty, and APC agrees this is important. However, avoiding dependence should not mean avoiding interdependence: Durham faculty participation should be maintained, and development of

strength at DKU should, in time, lead to the converse being true as well. Fluid and mutually beneficial exchange between two strong programs will serve both better than independence.

3. APC's understanding is that a faculty member from MPPG-Durham will serve as a co-mentor for each student in the proposed MS program. APC supports this plan and further expects, though it isn't explicitly stated, that the co-mentor in Durham will also be a member of the MS student's final thesis committee. Having at least one Duke faculty member on each thesis committee will ensure consistency in expectations across programs (and maintain the interdependence described in point #2).

Having drawn attention to these issues, APC voted on the proposal: the vote was 15 in favor and 0 opposed, with 1 abstaining.

In closing, any bold venture like DKU entails considerable risk and even more uncertainty. If one were to require the levels of risk and uncertainty to be negligible before embarking, no such venture would ever be undertaken, posing a different risk in its own right. Still, when undertaking such a venture, it behooves Duke to manage the risk and uncertainty as well as possible, even though it cannot be eliminated. While APC sees some risks with launching this program at DKU, on balance the risks seem to be managed well: the program curriculum is well established, the program faculty at Duke are strong and numerous, the administration has a stake in the success of the program, the need in China and the broader region seems great, and ECGF has already committed to review the program carefully after three years of operation. With these in mind, all that remains is to execute well: APC hopes the program will be wildly successful as part of the vanguard of programs being established at DKU.

Respectfully submitted,



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