

**BSFSC comments on the creation of a Department of Population Health Sciences
November 7, 2016**

After reading the materials provided and having the opportunity to hear about the plan at the October 6 meeting, the **BSFSC approves the proposal to establish a new Department of Population Health Sciences within the Basic Sciences.**

Although it was clear that a great deal of thought had gone into the planning, there were a few areas of concern expressed by the committee. We hope that the summary below is helpful going forward.

The plan to develop PhD and MS programs in Population Health Sciences drew the most discussion. It seemed to us that if development of such programs is a major rationale for establishing the new Department, then consideration of how those programs would be organized should not be deferred until after the Department is created.

Issues to think about include:

- **Mentoring experience:** a new degree-granting department is proposed with a large majority of the faculty not being members of the graduate faculty and not having prior mentoring experience.
- **Protected time:** developing a new and effective curriculum for a PhD program, and teaching classes, will require considerable effort on the part of several faculty. This seems implausible given the expectation of close to 100% salary recovery for Department faculty. Financial planning should include more realistic projected costs for creating and running such programs.
- **Attracting and placing students:** it was pointed out that Public Health is an accredited program with familiar disciplinary requirements. In contrast, Population Health is more vague, and it is less clear what a PhD in that would mean. Thus, a PhD in this area may not be competitive in attracting the best students, and the graduates may not be as marketable as for those with a degree in Public Health.

The motivation to make this a Basic Sciences Department is clear from the administrative point of view, but the many interactions envisaged for the new Department were overwhelmingly with Clinical and A&S Departments, not with other Basic Sciences.

- As the Basic Sciences are viewed as a unified group with specific roles and needs, this expansion of the Basic Sciences may result in some loss of cohesion within this “unit”, with potential for a loss of a coherent voice within the larger Health System.

Daniel Lew
Chair, BSFSC