TUCSON EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
March 7, 2012

Present: Paul St. John (Chair); Bill Grana; Carol Howe; Patricia Lebensohn; Aditya Paliwal; Andrew Tong; Julie Wynne

Apologized: Diana Darnell; Elizabeth Dupuy; Kristi Grall; Randy Horowitz; Adam Luber; Ted Price; Cindy Rankin; Sydney Rice; Wyatt Unger

Resources: Jack Dexter; Carol Galper; Raquel Givens; Kevin Moynahan; Lacey Orsini; Gail Pritchard; Sonya Seaman; Karen Speer-Ellinwood; Amy Waer

Guest: Todd Vanderah

Minutes: The minutes of February 1, 2012 were approved as written.

Announcements:

1. Introduction of T. Gail Pritchard and Lacey Orsini (Joanna Arnold)
Dr. Arnold announced the addition of Gail Pritchard, PhD to the Office of Student Development. Dr. Pritchard’s services will be divided between the learning needs of medical students and of residents. Dr. Arnold reintroduced the other member of the Student Development staff, Lacy Orsini, MS. Ms. Orsini is a learning skills specialist for medical students.

2. Director of Medical Education Research and Evaluation (Amy Waer)
Dr. Waer announced that with the pending (June) retirement of Dr. Gail Koshland, a search is underway for a new Director of Medical Education Research and Evaluation. The opening has been published locally as well as nationally. Five potential candidates have submitted applications.

3. COM Medicine Education Research Day – June 5th (Amy Waer)
Dr. Waer also announced that, in lieu of a retirement party, Dr. Koshland has asked that a Medicine Education Research Day be held for the College of Medicine. The Kiewit Auditorium has been secured for the all-day event. A call for participants is being made for those engaged in medicine education research to present posters on their work. A keynote speaker will also be engaged for the event.

Guided Tour of the Curriculum: Nervous System (Todd Vanderah)
Dr. St.John introduced Todd Vanderah, PhD (Pharmacology), who is the Block Director for the Nervous System block. Dr. Vanderah presented the third block in the “Guided Tour” series, whereby directors present the overall objectives, structure and delivery of their blocks. Previously the Prologue and Foundations blocks have been presented by their directors.

Dr. Vanderah began by providing an overview of the faculty involved with the block. He stressed that the strength of the NS block is directly attributable to the quality of instructors. Core faculty meetings begin well before the delivery of the block. At those early meetings the evaluations of
the block and faculty by students are reviewed. From that data, decisions are made about revising the organization and delivery of the block. By August the NS faculty are meeting twice a week and the learning objectives and exam questions are given full attention. The NS faculty are required to take the three block examinations and provide feedback on readability, accuracy of content and the appropriateness of distracters and answers. All NS faculty review of all learning objectives. The NS faculty are also involved in Team Learning and labs and encouraged to attend—as does the director—all lectures.

The NS block delivers the gross anatomy for the head and neck, which works well with cranial nerve content. The NS block differs from other blocks in that three quizzes are given across the nine weeks of the course. No cumulative final exam is given. Each of the quizzes is offered in two versions, whereby students may elect to take both and accept the highest grade, or they may take the first only, if they are satisfied with the grade received. Most students take both quizzes. Overall satisfaction with the block is high.

Discussion and Possible Vote:

Foundations Block Review (Bill Grana)
Dr. Grana provided the committee with the draft report for the Foundations Block, prepared with the assistance of Dr. Dexter of OMSE. The block is well designed and delivered, with two small recommendations for improvement related to the testability of some learning objectives and the use of content in a few exam items that was drawn directly from lecture notes or illustrations used in class. Of particular note for this block is Dr. Amerongen’s development of “context notes”, which are reviewed at the beginning of every session, and included in the notes. These notes provide students and faculty background information on how the subject matter for that session develops previously-covered, and supports content yet-to-be covered. The narrative assessment of student performance in the professionalism competency for their activities in the gross anatomy labs is considered a good innovation by the block, as direct mechanisms for assessing this competency are few across the curriculum.

Dr. Grana noted that there were no concerns of consequence for the block, but some concerns were raised in the report for issues extending across blocks and for the activities of the TEPC. One concern was that a regular and systematic process needs to be established for the review of content, especially that required by LCME accreditation standards. A second note concerned the need to implement a process by which the developmental characteristics of the curriculum can be assessed. Recently the TCMS has been giving increased attention to the use of “higher-order” learning objectives and exam items, but a systematic approach to the review of how the developmental ideal is being expressed is not yet in place. Finally, a concern for the TEPC to address is the annotation of literature and images sources used in the development of lectures. These acknowledgements are frequently missing from the PowerPoint slides used in class. Dr. St.John briefly addressed progress on these issues, with a note that they will be covered more thoroughly in the near future. The Foundations Review Report was approved. The final draft will be delivered to the block director along with an invitation to attend a future meeting of the TEPC to discuss the block and the report.

Minutes supplied by
Jack Dexter, PhD
Office of Medical Student Education