SFU Employment Equity Summary

from Brenda Taylor, Director, Human Rights

27 June 2005

In 1987 SFU signed a Certificate of Commitment to the Federal Contractors’ Program as a condition of securing contracts of $200,000 or more with the Federal Government. To meet this commitment, an Employment Equity Policy was approved by the Board of Governors in 1989, and has been updated since.

One of the main objectives of the Employment Equity Policy is to have continuing employees’ participation in the SFU workforce reflect the representation and distribution of designated groups in the external workforce, based on Stats Canada census data and the National Occupational Classification system categorizations. Another primary objective is to provide a fair and equitable workplace and to offer all individuals an equal opportunity to develop their potential by removing barriers to employment and advancement when and where they exist.

Among the criteria to be met under the Federal Contractors’ Program are:

1) Assign responsibility for employment equity to senior personnel.

2) Collect and maintain information on occupation, salary levels, and promotion and termination in relation to all other employees in each designated group.

3) Analyze designated group representation in relation to their representation in the external workforce. (Designated groups are: women, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, and First Nations peoples.)
4) Eliminate or modify human resources policies, practices and systems shown to have or likely to have an unfavorable effect on the employment status of designated group employees.

5) Adopt special measures where necessary to ensure goals are achieved, including provision of reasonable accommodation as required.

6) Establish a climate favorable to the successful integration of designated group members within the organization.

7) Adopt procedures to monitor progress and results achieved in implementing employment equity.

The method by which employment equity data is recorded has changed since 1991, therefore, direct comparisons are difficult to make. Early in 2004 a complete re-survey of SFU employees took place, providing a snapshot of the workforce as of December 31, 2003. This fresh baseline data is updated annually. It is clear, however, that SFU has improved its employment equity position over the past 15 years.

Taking full-time faculty as an example, in 1991 females comprised 19% of faculty members. By the end of 2003, females comprised 29% of faculty members. Among faculty, visible minorities have increased from 7% to 8%. Among non-faculty staff, persons with disabilities have increased from just a single person in 1991 to 53 or 3% in 2003. First Nations representation has increased from 0.4% in 1991 to 0.9% in 2003.

Other local universities are working on employment equity as well. Although UBC counts sessional and extra-sessionals appointments in their faculty statistics, in 2003 their University Teachers were 32% female, just slightly higher than SFU’s without counting sessionals. The University of Victoria faculty was 37% female in 2003. The official Canadian Labour Force Availability (LFA) figure for female faculty is 34%, therefore, SFU at 29% is close to the LFA target. SFU has exceeded the LFA for First Nations faculty, with the LFA at 0.5% and SFU at 0.9%.
Progress is being made. SFU’s employment equity goals are clearly being achieved. In 2003, 20% of full professors were female. Showing directly the results of SFU’s employment equity hiring practices, i.e., those hired since employment equity efforts began, in 2003 35% of associate professors and 32% of assistant professors were female. Among instructors and lecturers, the percentage was higher at 43% and 39% respectively. Females were 23% of senior managers, 40% of middle managers, 54% of non-faculty professionals and 32% of technical positions. It is notable that three of the eight senior administrators at the executive table are now women.

In 2003 in Applied Sciences, women comprised 19% of faculty, with the highest percentage being in Communication and the lowest in Engineering Science. In Arts (now Arts and Social Sciences), women comprised 38% of faculty, with the highest percentage being in Women’s Studies and the lowest in Economics. Business Administration had 25% women faculty; Education had 47%. Science had the lowest at 17%, the lowest percentage was in Physics and the highest was in Molecular Biology.
Improvements have been made in hiring and retaining visible minorities, as well. Thirteen percent of non-faculty staff were visible minorities in 2003: they comprised 6% of senior managers, 5% of middle managers, 19% of professionals and 14% of technical staff. Among faculty, visible minorities are 8% of professors, 7% of associate professors and 7% of assistant professors.

In 2003, in Applied Sciences, visible minorities comprised 16% of faculty, with the highest percentage being in Computing Science and the lowest in Resource and Environmental Management. In Arts (now Arts and Social Sciences), visible minorities comprised 7%, with the highest percentage being in First Nations and none in Geography, Gerontology, Philosophy, or Psychology. Business Administration had 8% visible minorities faculty; Education had the lowest at 2%. Science had 8%, the lowest percentage was in Earth Sciences and the highest was in Chemistry.

Since its inception nearly 20 years ago, SFU’s Employment Equity Policy has worked to achieve and maintain a fair and representative work force, including the identification
and removal of any artificial barriers to the selection, hiring, promotion and training of designated group members so that no one is denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to merit. The total SFU workforce has increased from 1,580 in 1991 to 2,070 in 2003, and due to this policy’s implementation, the SFU employee community better reflects the representation and distribution of designated groups in the external workforce.

There is still work to be done. Vigilant attention to employment equity principles will ensure that SFU maintains its reputation of innovation and accessibility.