Phase 2 Task Force on Academic Structure

Presented to the University Community
February 11, 2008
In Volume II of our report, the Task Force recommended major structural changes to the academic organization of the University. This has included the creation of three new Faculties, a new College, and a proposal for a new Institute for Advanced Scholarship.

This Volume examines four additional areas that came before the Task Force in the submissions we received: specific academic programs, existing structures, process reviews, and infrastructure support.

Specific Academic Program Areas

Cognitive Science Program

As a significant experiment in multidisciplinary collaboration spanning multiple Faculties, the Cognitive Science Program is an exemplar of what can be imagined, and how facilitation of that imagination is constrained. A series of pragmatic and logistical problems in the arrangements of collaboration have resulted in frustrations by both faculty members and students alike. Yet, the Task Force does not believe, at least upon initial investigation, that these problems require structural solution. Rather, we recommend that the commitments made by collaborating units be codified and formalized and that adequate commitment be given in terms of faculty teaching contributions and program service to ensure that program quality can be returned and sustained. We are aware that the Cognitive Science Program is scheduled for review under the Senate External Review processes in April 2008. This will prove an important and timely review. The Task Force believes that this review provides the opportunity for an objective expert assessment of the issues identified by the Cognitive Science Program in its submission to the Task Force.

Recommendation 14: That there be formalization and adequate commitments given to the Cognitive Science Program by participating units and that the Terms of Reference for the External Review Team of the Cognitive Science Program (scheduled for early 2008) specifically solicit the advice of the review team on the issues identified in the submission by Cognitive Science to the Task Force.

The issues raised by the Cognitive Science Program have led the Task Force to further consider the processes by which new interdisciplinary programs present their proposals through the Senate process and the extent to which the issues the Cognitive Science Program has encountered may have been avoided had the original proposal included more formalized understanding of the expectations surrounding collaboration and the ways in which faculty members and students would be enabled and supported to participate. We suggest that Senate develop a required template to guide the development of interdisciplinary program proposals which would also provide Senate
with a framework to ensure appropriate mechanisms for collaboration are envisioned. As part of defining these commitments, we would suggest that the following issues be addressed within that guiding framework:

- plans for the provision and prioritization of student access;
- description of how faculty members who contribute will have their contributions considered as part of annual workload expectations;
- overview as to how academic leadership for the program will be encouraged and supported and what arrangements will be made for recognizing leadership roles;
- identification of what oversight structures will be in place of the program and what accountability structures/processes will be in place to ensure the continued quality of the program; and,
- identification of the composition and reporting structure of the steering committee for the interdisciplinary program and what communication structures will be in place between the steering committee and the collaborating units.

**Recommendation 15: That Senate develop a submission template to ensure that sufficient commitments are in place for the development of new interdisciplinary programs and that such a template addresses the issues identified in this report.**

**IT/ICT Program**

As one example of the potential for collaborative engagement with other units at the leading edge of knowledge advancement, the School of Computing Science and the School of Interactive Arts and Technology have developed a joint proposal for a new initiative in Information and Communications Technology (IT/ICT). This program represents a significant turning point in the interrelationship between the School of Computing Science and the School of Interactive Arts and Technology. The proposal from Computing Science and Interactive Arts and Technology calls for a program to be created at the convergence of information and communications technology.

In addition to being an important proposal for the future collaborative relationship between Computing Science and Interactive Arts and Technology, the proposal also draws expertise from, and extends partnership involvement to, Engineering Science, Business Administration, and Cognitive Science. Others may also be interested in this initiative. We can imagine particular interest being expressed from faculty members in Communication and Health. Students from all of these programs would benefit from the expanded collaborative environment, and it is envisioned that specialty streams could be developed within the undergraduate IT/ICT program such that students could then further specialize at the graduate level within the partnership disciplines or perhaps even in a graduate IT/ICT Program. Collaborative opportunities would also be highly likely with

---

1 “When combined, information and communications technology focuses on the development and use of computer-based information systems and communications systems to process, transmit, and store data and information.” (IC/ICT Joint proposal, p. 1)
industry and the program would be extremely compelling as an object of external financial support, industrial collaboration, and co-op and career placement for students, thus serving our external community and our students in a highly effective way.

In recognition of this program’s potential to position Simon Fraser University as a world leader in this emerging field of knowledge (there are currently no other competing programs in Canada and an initial review suggests no direct competition within North America), and in developing a culture of effective collaboration among disciplines within the University, the Task Force supports the development of an IT/ICT program.

Recommendation 16: That a new “Information and Communications Technology” (IT/ICT) program be collaboratively pursued at Simon Fraser University as follows:

16.1 A Joint Program Development Committee be established with representatives from Computing Science, Engineering Science, Interactive Arts and Technology, Business Administration, Cognitive Science, and potentially others;

16.2 The IT/ICT Joint Program Development Committee develop a report for consideration by Senate by September 2009 outlining the feasibility, faculty gap analysis, resource requirements and draft curriculum of implementing an IT/ICT program at SFU.

Publishing Programming Consolidation

The Working Group and the Task Force support the overall consolidation of publishing programming under one umbrella, and thus the inclusion of the undergraduate publishing courses from Communication and the Writing and Publishing Program from Continuing Studies as part of the Publishing Program in the new Faculty. We understand that the School of Communication and the Director of the Master of Publishing Program are supportive of our view and have agreed to transfer the undergraduate credit publishing courses from Communication to the Publishing Program. In contrast, we have learned that the Director of the Master of Publishing Program and the Director of the Writing and Publishing program at Continuing Studies have agreed to “continue to seek opportunities to complement each other’s efforts and to coordinate offerings” but not to consolidate the Continuing Studies programming into the Publishing Program. As a consequence, the Task Force will not recommend the consolidation of the Writing and Publishing program of Continuing Studies with the Master of Publishing Program programming without a better understanding of the reasons for the decision of the program directors. We do, however, believe that there are compelling arguments to consolidate cognate publishing programs within a single unit and believe this should be reconsidered in the future.

Recommendation 17: That the undergraduate publishing courses now offered by the School of Communication be consolidated with the Master of Publishing
Program and that Continuing Studies publishing programming be further explored for consolidation with the Master of Publishing Program.
TechOne Program

Simon Fraser University’s TechOne program is a model first year cohort experience, providing entering students an introduction into the field of technology and future educational paths in Computing, Engineering, Business Administration, Mechatronics, Interactive Arts and Technology, and Communication. This unique program has been evolving since its inception at the University and it has recently undergone a fairly extensive redesign. The TechOne program which is comprised of six core courses, four interdisciplinary courses and two elective courses, will, by the various recommendations of the Task Force, serve three distinct Faculties. This program’s history has been fraught with challenges in design, in interrelationships with various disciplinary units, and with a series of administrative constraints. Until recently, limited term teaching appointments were offered under the umbrella of the School of Interactive Arts and Technology and seconded to the program. Permanent positions have now been authorized under the appointment of other disciplines but again with the majority of duties seconded to the program.

In our Discussion Document released to the University community on December 17, 2007, the Task Force argued that the interdisciplinary, cross-Faculty nature of the TechOne program makes it an ideal candidate for inclusion as an independent College Program within the College of Lifelong and Experiential Learning. Headed by a discipline-based academic steering committee, the program would find a nourishing and supportive home that would encourage interdisciplinarity. The Steering Committee of the TechOne program had, however, requested that the Task Force instead provide the TechOne program with the opportunity to stabilize its newly designed program and leave it in a familiar environment for a temporary two-year period. On the basis of this request, the Task Force accepted the view of the Steering Committee. Subsequent to the release of our report we have heard various views from the constituent disciplines served by the TechOne Program regarding the effectiveness of the program in serving their discipline’s needs, their view as to where the program should ultimately be located, and the resource implications of the location of the program. While we are committed to elements of our original recommendation, we believe it will be essential for the University to develop a clear view of what direction it wishes to pursue with the TechOne program, how best to serve the needs of constituent disciplines, and the resource implications of these decisions. This needs to be done as soon as possible. As such we recommend that a process of review be undertaken with the oversight and engagement of the Vice President, Academic’s office and constituent members prior to a decision being made as to the permanent home of the TechOne Program.

Recommendation 18: That the TechOne Program temporarily be moved to the new Faculty comprised of Contemporary Arts, Communication, Interactive Arts and Technology and Publishing.

18.1. That the Vice President, Academic establish a review committee to examine the design, future and resource allocation of the TechOne Program and to develop a written report by December 2008 for how all constituent units
will be provided with a first-year cohort experience that effectively serves their disciplines.
18.2. That upon receipt of the report, the Director of the TechOne program along with the Deans from the Faculty of Engineering and Computing, the new Faculty comprised of Communication, Contemporary Arts, Interactive Arts and Technology and Publishing, the Faculty of Business Administration, will propose to the Vice-President, Academic the future permanent home for the program. Once the location is agreed to by the Vice-President, Academic, a recommendation would then be forwarded through Senate for approval by no later than March 2009.

Foreign Languages Study Program

The Task Force believes that given the University’s commitment to internationalization and global participation and its geographical location at the edge of the Pacific Rim, Simon Fraser University should be positioning itself as one of the nation’s leaders in the study and training in foreign languages and cultures. To date, this has not occurred. In particular, we have the following observations to make with regard to the way in which foreign language training is currently structured and offered at the University:

- First, foreign language learning at Simon Fraser University is viewed by students as incoherent, poorly profiled, and a difficult area of programming to navigate.
- Second, in our view the Language Training Institute has not found a successful partnership in its relationship with the Department of Linguistics.
- Third, there is poor integration between academic unit programming requiring foreign language learning and the language offerings of the University.
- Fourth, there does not appear to be a clearly developed strategic plan for foreign language study in relation to the University’s key commitment and priority in internationalization nor in the development of foreign language learning in support of the communities within which we have situated our campuses (i.e. east Asian languages are not adequately developed at the Surrey campus).
- Fifth, the internationalization of disciplines across the University and the increased presence of international research teams and the study of issues globally speaks to the need for language study in disciplines across the University.
- Sixth, in comparison to most other universities locally, nationally and internationally who espouse a commitment to global engagement, Simon Fraser University does not have a sufficiently strong or diverse foreign language learning program.

Despite our findings, the Task Force believes that foreign language study and training is an area of critical import to future generations of students who will increasingly be needful of further language acquisition, cultural understanding, and international engagement. There is already evidence of foreign language learning becoming an integrated component of disciplinary learning at the University. For example, Chinese language learning is required in association with the dual undergraduate degree program in Computing Science, the new international experiential programs in Business Administration and the School of International Studies within the Faculty of Arts and
Social has a requirement for language both have foreign language requirements. The Task Force believes there will be an active expansion of such integrated language requirements in the future.

We also see significant opportunities for the expansion of language learning in connection with our international agenda and potentially in terms of the creation of certificate programs to accompany majors, particularly in areas of international business, development, health, environment, and others. Further, there will in a need for the development of greater coherence and articulation between non-credit programming, our translation programs, and for-credit language learning. If structured in a coordinated and effective manner, we believe that ultimately non-credit language learning could form a pathway into credit language and cultural studies for those members of the community who, over time, seek to continue their exploration and acquisition of foreign languages.

In the discussion document released in November 2007, the Task Force recommended that the College of Lifelong and Experiential Learning assume leadership and responsibility for both credit and non-credit foreign language instruction and development. During the consultation process, however, we received a strong appeal by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, especially the Dean’s office, to provide them with the opportunity and mandate to execute the vision for the study of foreign languages and cultures that is articulated below by the Task Force. Through some web-based research, the Task Force has discerned three general models for the structuring of foreign language learning at institutions that have active profiles in international activities. These are: (a) area-based language learning (i.e. East Asian languages in an “Asian Studies Department”), (b) non-area based credit language learning (eg. Languages taught for the purpose of diversity but where the institution does not have a specific department dedicated to the area where the language is from), and (c) language resource centres. The location of language resource centres depends on the desired positioning by the University. We have found them located in Faculties of Arts, in Faculties of International Studies, in Continuing Studies operations, or as completely independent units that seem to be service centres to the University as a whole. We recognize that the predominant model is within the Faculty of Arts although we would note that these are typically in the presence of significant area-based programming, the type of which Simon Fraser University does not have many examples. The Task Force has thought carefully about models for foreign language learning at other institutions, the problems we see that challenge Simon Fraser University’s language offerings, and the content of conversations and insights offered to us by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. What has emerged most clearly to us is that we have found in the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences an advocate and a passionate leader for the vision we have defined. In consequence, the Task Force has ultimately concluded that we should provide the Dean with the opportunity and the mandate to redefine foreign language and culture studies at Simon Fraser University.

We continue, however, to believe that the program of foreign language study (possibly renamed under a heading of “modern languages”) that is pursued by the University should continue to be established on the basis of the governing principles and plan of
action we initially envisioned in our discussion document and that it must be established as an independent unit from the Department of Linguistics. The six governing principles we identify are as follows:

1. Be supplementary to area-based studies Departments and Schools;
2. Be a university-wide cross-latticing entity;
3. Have a service mandate to area-based foreign language learning in disciplines;
4. Be responsive to academic programming that has an international character to it;
5. Be integrated with the University’s internationalization strategy and our commitment to responsiveness to the communities within which our campuses are situated; and,
6. Be grounded in sound linguistic theory and pedagogy.

We note that our vision of foreign language learning is designed with a multifaceted purpose not only to develop and offer credit programming and courses towards degree credit, but also as a service and coordinating unit for the University. We further note that we have imagined a rationalization and consolidation of both credit and non-credit foreign language study within the program that is developed. As part of the consultation process we have heard, however, some concern from the Dean of Continuing Studies as to the location of non-credit language offerings. At this juncture, we wish to proceed with our recommendation for consolidation of credit and non-credit activities but recognize that further study of this component of our report should be collaboratively undertaken by the Deans of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Continuing Studies. The Task Force recommends that the mandate, responsibilities and features of the Foreign Language Studies Program (name to be identified) should be established as follows:

(a) Offer non-credit, certificates and credit programming not offered in area-based studies departments although an area-based department wishing to have language instruction done by the Language Studies Program can do so;
(b) Provide a web directory of all language learning opportunities at Simon Fraser University, showcasing area-based language learning as well as its independent programming;
(c) Develop certificate and credit programming around a model that combines language and culture studies;
(d) Work with SFU International to look for opportunities for studies abroad language learning optional components wherever possible;
(e) House technology-based language learning infrastructure for all foreign language training at the University (including both area-based and non-area-based language learning);
(f) Provide professional development activities and teaching resource materials for language instructors within the Foreign Language Studies Program and area-based disciplines;
(g) Administer foreign language proficiency examinations for its programming and programming in area-based departments if an area-based unit so desires;
(h) Have a research mandate and consider housing a Centre for Language Teaching and Learning for faculty members from across the University interested in language acquisition, language learning, pedagogy, etc.;
(i) Work with academic units across campus in developing language programs to suit requirements they wish to have as part of their degrees (eg. with International Studies, Business Administration, etc.);
(j) Develop language certificate programs customized to external partners or in view of interest of activities of organizations (eg. Asian languages certificate program for Business Administration Students);
(k) House Continuing Studies programming related to translation; and,
(l) Have an advisory committee that will provide advice on strategic direction and activities and would include strong representation from area-based language disciplines.

The Task Force is optimistic that the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences will be successful in realizing the vision identified in this report for foreign language learning and for setting in place the framework for long-term leadership in this critical area of our internationalization and global participation strategy for Simon Fraser University’s future. This area of activity is so critical to our view of success in preparing students effectively for the future that the Task Force believes it appropriate to require significant and demonstrated action on this important initiative within a fairly short timeframe. We are therefore recommending that a fully detailed plan for a foreign language studies program be submitted by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences to Senate by no later than April 2009. Should a plan not be forthcoming, the Task Force recommends that the College of Lifelong and Experiential Learning be requested to assume the mandate, responsibility and development of a program in Foreign Language Studies based on the vision outlined in this report.

**Recommendation 19: That the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences present a detailed plan to Senate by no later April 2009 for the establishment of an independent unit for the study of foreign languages based on the vision identified in this report.**

**Existing Structures and Activities**

In examining the various submissions to the Task Force as well as the recommendations made by the Working Groups, there were four occasions where the Task Force concluded that the existing structures, and activities underway were the most effective approach for realizing our goals for 2025.

First, the submission from the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences proposed the “establishment of a Department of First Nations Studies, housed in FASS. This department would take the lead in coordinating activities, programming, and research throughout the University.” The Task Force notes the historically strong contributions to First Nations programming carried out by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,
particularly that offered through Simon Fraser University’s Kamloops operations. We also note the two recent programming initiatives before Senate that will lead to the expansion of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences First Nations programming activities. We applaud this historical and recent commitment to First Nations activities. The Task Force is, however, also aware that at the beginning of this year a University-wide First Nations Strategic Plan was developed and ultimately approved by Senate and the Board of Governors. This Strategic Plan provides a coordinating, facilitation and development role for a First Nations office with a senior-level Director position. The Task Force believes that this pan-University structure is the appropriate vehicle for encouraging the development of First Nations programming and understanding in all areas of the University.

Second, in its creation of the notion of a College for the University, Working Group 5 proposed that the portfolio of the Associate Vice-President, Students and International be conceived as a College. The Task Force does not believe that these areas of activity require, or would benefit from, the College structure.

Third, while some of the design of our multifaceted strategy to enhance interdisciplinarity at Simon Fraser University has been premised on issues raised by Dr. Rick Gruneau’s proposal to the Task Force for the creation of a new program in Sport, Commerce, Culture and Community, as well as Dr. Ellen Balka’s proposal for a Technology Assessment Teaching and Research Unit, we believe that our recommendations for changes to various policies and to the structural elements, will provide these proposals with the appropriate mechanisms to be successful. For new interdisciplinary initiatives that are non-degree granting and which seek to offer individual interdisciplinary courses or programs of courses leading to certificates or credit components of degrees, either a new College Program or the reformulated Centres and Institutes policy that provides for either a Faculty Centre or Institute would facilitate the development of these initiatives. While it remains true that new proposals using either of these routes – College Program or Centre/Institute - will require sponsorship from existing disciplines or Faculties or co-sponsorship from the College, we think it is important that there remain a requirement for evidence of sufficiently broad support for new initiatives. The Task Force recognizes the efforts and inventiveness of faculty members like Dr. Gruneau and Dr. Balka and we thank them for drawing to our attention a variety of issues that currently constrain new interdisciplinary initiatives from emerging at the University. It is our belief that with the changes proposed with regard to the Centres and Institutes policy, the creation of a College and its subsidiary “College Program”, and the establishment of an Office for Interdisciplinary Collaboration, we will have developed the structures and policy environment that will enable outstanding interdisciplinary initiatives to flourish in the future.

Fourth, while the Task Force makes a series of recommendations with regard to foreign language learning, we are convinced by the “Report of the Language Instruction Committee” written in 2005 and chaired by Dr. Paul McFetridge, that the issues surrounding English language instruction are significantly different from those of foreign language learning and that they need to be dealt with separately. We have found the
Report to provide a comprehensive and compelling examination of the issues and possible paths forward. As a consequence, we do not wish to retrace an area that has been effectively assessed previously. At the same time we recognize that our recommendation to disaggregate English and foreign language learning currently housed within the Language Training Institute in Linguistics and to relocate only the foreign language component to the new College of Lifelong and Experiential Learning, leaves us with an obligation to address the future of the English language training that is currently offered through the Language Training Institute. It is our recommendation, therefore that the Report authored by Dr. Paul McFetridge and his committee, be revisited by the Vice-President, Academic with the goal of implementing a coherent, consolidated, and sustainable strategy for English language learning at Simon Fraser University.
Recommendation 20: That the Report of the Language Instruction Committee (2005) be revisited by the Vice-President, Academic with the goal of implementing a coherent, consolidated, and sustainable strategy for English language learning at Simon Fraser University.

Process Review

In some cases, we felt that revisions to the process or policy framework of Simon Fraser University would prove more beneficial to the issue in need of resolution and to the overall cost and administrative efficiency of the institution. Many of these are intimately connected with our recommendations for a multifaceted strategy to enhance interdisciplinarity as described in the previous volume.

Student Mobility / Course Access Review

As noted in the previous Volume in the discussion of barriers to interdisciplinarity, we heard of a number of interrelated concerns with regard to the presence of obstacles for effective interdisciplinary study by students. We do not have a sense, nor the expertise, of what the exact scale of the problems reported are or the extent to which the problems noted intersect with other areas of student learning. As a consequence, we believe that those who are expert in the undergraduate student learning experience should engage in an evaluation of these issues.

Recommendation 21: That a Student Mobility and Course Access Review Committee be established by the Vice-President, Academic to identify barriers to interdisciplinary educational experiences of students. We further recommend that a report of findings, recommendations for improvement, and a plan for implementation, be submitted to Senate by April 2009.

Graduate Student Interdisciplinary Program Review

In many areas of the Task Force report, we have noted the critical need by the University to increase our profile and activity in graduate education. We applaud President Stevenson’s ambitious goal to have 25% of Simon Fraser University’s student population be comprised of graduate enrolments. Achieving this goal is recognizably an important component of the overall institutional objective to secure Simon Fraser University’s reputation as an outstanding comprehensive research institution. We have recommended elsewhere that graduate students should have a direct and enhanced connection to the research activity of the University through membership in Centres and Institutes. We have also recommended a number of structural recommendations that we believe will set the seeds for an expansion of graduate education in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary venues. We also believe that the changes to the Centres and Institutes policy as well as
other structural elements will more effectively enable graduate certificate programs to be imagined and developed. Notwithstanding these important changes to the benefit of graduate education, the Task Force supports the submission by the Dean of Graduate Studies to mandate him to research further the ways in which interdisciplinary programming for graduate students might be fostered.

**Recommendation 22:** That the Dean of Graduate Studies research and recommend a strategy for supporting and stimulating the development of new interdisciplinary graduate programming and providing financial support to graduate students who undertake interdisciplinary projects. We further recommend that his report be presented to Senate for consideration by September 2009.

**Infrastructure Support**

A final area of consideration by the Task Force with regard to academic structure, is the examination of those structures of infrastructure support that are affected by the recommendations we have made in other areas.

The only area we can identify of immediate impact is the role of the Network Support Group currently housed within the Faculty of Applied Sciences. While there have been proposals submitted to us to relocate the Network Support Group (NSG) to the new Faculty of Engineering and Computing, we have also been made aware that the issues in supporting research networks and computing at Simon Fraser University extend beyond the boundaries of the units within the Faculty of Applied Sciences and that not all members of those being supported have been fully satisfied with the current structure and arrangements. In the discussion document released on December 17, 2007, the Task Force recommended that “a more systematic and institution-wide review” be undertaken and that such a review be undertaken “under the auspices and direction of the Chief Information Officer of the University”. This recommendation has garnered considerable response from some sectors of the University community. While in some instances there has been an incorrect assumption that our intention was to relocate research computing into the portfolio of academic computing services (which was never our intention), we believe significant support has emerged for having the Network Support Group positioned within the new Faculty of Engineering and Computing. The Task Force is prepared to proceed with this recommendation on the condition that all areas of the University currently served by the Network Support Group continue to be supported.

**Recommendation 23:** That the Network Support Group be relocated to the Faculty of Engineering and Computing in April 2009 and that it continue to support all areas of the University that it currently serves. Further, we recommend that in April 2010, the Vice President, Academic follow up with areas served by the Network Support Group to ensure that all areas continue to be effectively served.