VOLUME V – ACADEMIC STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

General Overview

This fifth volume of the Task Force report examines issues related to the use of structural elements at Simon Fraser University and identifies those changes and additions we believe should be implemented.

Specifically, our mandate in this area was to:

Consider and evaluate the coherence, roles, responsibilities, functions, administrative requirements, costs, and terminology of the structural building blocks employed at Simon Fraser University (i.e. programs, schools, departments, centres, and institutes) and, following exploration and consultation with the University community, recommend to Senate a strategy that will provide definitional clarity, administrative effectiveness, and appropriate differentiation among these structures.

The Phase 1 Task Force discussed in detail the way in which structural elements have been used within Simon Fraser University and at institutions elsewhere. We do not wish to reiterate that discussion here and instead refer interested readers to pages 9-13 of the Phase 1 discussion document entitled “Sommes Nous Prêts?” (July, 2006).

We note, however, that Simon Fraser University’s academic structure has, similar to most institutions in Canada, been designed using a traditional academic structural model – Faculties, Departments, Programs, Institutes, and Centres.

The Phase 1 Task Force provided, in our view, an excellent description of the purpose of academic structures:

“Structure provides for disciplinary identity, for academic programming cohesion and organization. It enables the channeling of resources, faculty, staff and students. Our structure is inseparably linked to the constellation of policies and procedures that enable us to manage our activities and that reward and inhibit us. Our academic organization communicates to our communities, both internally and externally, the priorities of the University, what we value and the ways in which we define and differentiate ourselves. Our structures create the framework for the flow of our communications, our interactions, and our innovation. However, the structure does not dictate or determine the totality of the activities and decisions that define our lives as members of a University community. Structure alone does not create organizational success. Strategy, leadership, resources and people all play critical roles influencing and shaping an organization’s success. Different structures may facilitate and enhance the ways these factors play out and create conditions that facilitate and support success.” (Sommes Nous Prêts?, p. 14)

Dr. Michael Howlett, in his submission to the Task Force, “A Comment and Proposal
Concerning Consideration of Faculty/Divisional Structure at Simon Fraser University”, called on the Task Force to be imaginative in our consideration of academic structure and not to have a limited perspective which results solely in the “slight or marginal modifications of the status quo”. Rather, he asked us to consider the bigger picture and larger options that exist, such as “the territorial re-distribution of Faculties by campus, the combination and re-combination of Faculties into non-territorially-based Colleges, and the merger and division of existing Faculties into more equally representative units.” We note its exceptional value in providing the Task Force with a view of alternative conceptualizations for governance and structuring of academic institutions. Ultimately, however, we do not believe that the University is ready for, or in need of, radical transformation. We do, however, agree with Dr. Howlett’s call for the Task Force to consider the bigger picture and to be more imaginative than slight or marginal modifications of the status quo. While we recognize that some of our recommendations will be seen to fall in this latter category, we hope that there are elements that are indicative of our efforts to focus on the future on the University, and to creatively imagine new ways in which we can excel.

The Task Force has considered the ways in which our academic structures enable flexibility and responsiveness and yet provide enduring coherence and disciplinary identity. We have also considered the ways in which terms are used synonymously within the structure, and the reasons for an increase in the number of independent academic programs. We have chosen not to provide a detailed definition of those structural elements (eg. Faculties) that we feel serve the University effectively and require no change. We do, however, discuss several structural elements that we believe deserved further consideration, required redesign, or needed to be added to ensure that Simon Fraser University achieves the future we can imagine for it.

Department and School?

The Task Force considered deploying only the term Department within the academic structure rather than having both the terms Department and School exist as synonyms within the structural framework. Ultimately, however, we felt that there are particular areas of the University where the term School has significant meaning within the larger international context of the discipline. This can be seen in cases where there is a professional orientation of the discipline (eg. Engineering), where there is a practice basis to the field (eg. Contemporary Arts), where there is an applied focus (eg. Interactive Arts & Technology), or where there is a broad diversity or range of programmatic streams within the discipline (eg. Criminology). As a consequence, we have concluded that the terms Department and School both have important value to certain areas of the University and, therefore, we do not recommend the arbitrary removal of the term School from our structural vocabulary.

Independent Programs
Typically, the term program is understood to refer to the framework for a coherent undergraduate or graduate curriculum of study. In most cases, programs will exist embedded within Departments, Schools or non-departmentalized Faculties.

The Task Force has noted an increase in the number of small academic programs that have been created recently outside of departments within the University academic structure. It is recognized that these nascent programs with small academic complements depend heavily on other academic units for course offerings, faculty expertise, and the fulfillment of administrative processes such as appointment, tenure and promotion committees, etc. We also realize that the collegial system of governance generally provides equal representative weight of these areas to large departments within the Faculty structure. These issues question the long-term efficiency and viability of a proliferation of small programs independent of disciplines within the Faculty structure. However, the Task Force believes that issues of representation within a Faculty not covered by academic policy, faculty collaboration arrangements, curriculum and workload arrangements across disciplines, and budget provisioning for these new programs should be a matter for decanal determination within the University’s decentralized administrative system.

Notwithstanding these issues, the Task Force comprehends the important role that these programs play both within and external to Faculty, Departmental and School structures as a mechanism of change, experimentation, and new knowledge creation. They also serve as important vehicles for interdisciplinary collaboration within the framework of a Faculty due to their interconnection with other units and their dependence upon the contributions of faculty members from other disciplines. This is particularly true at nascent stages of development.

We recommend, however, that in order to maintain economic efficiency while simultaneously facilitating these important incubating structures, that models of shared support staff, advising, and other types of collaborative administrative strategies be considered and implemented wherever possible.

Throughout our report we have referred to this category of programs as “Independent Programs”.

**College of Lifelong and Experiential Learning**

The Task Force believes that a new entity – a College – needs to be added to the academic structure of the University. We do not propose this as part of the structural templates to be deployed in other circumstances. Rather, we imagine the creation of a single College; the College of Lifelong and Experiential Learning (herein after referred to as the College). The detailed rationale for the creation of this College was presented in “Volume II – Academic Structure Recommendations”, but here we wish to highlight some of this unique structural element’s features.
The College will be headed by a Dean. Given the role of the Dean in oversight and adjudication of student matters and in the performance review processes of academic staff, this position is conceived as a senior academic position. The roles and responsibilities of the position will be uniquely defined from Faculty Deans in consideration of the nature of the divisions embodied within the College. The College will be comprised of two divisions. First, a division of Experiential Learning that will house “College Programs” (see below), other forms of experiential learning, and University-wide coordination activities related to experiential learning. Second, a division of Lifelong Learning that will house the existing portfolio of Continuing Studies, Distance Education, and future activities related to the University’s activities in promoting lifelong learning and engagement with our many communities.

The College may house College Programs, and may offer credit courses, (as is the case now for Continuing Studies) program components (eg. Semester in Dialogue), for-credit certificate programs, and non-credit programming. All programming within the Experiential Division must be of an experiential or interdisciplinary nature. The College will not be degree granting. Programming is envisioned to occur at both graduate and undergraduate levels. We wish to be clear that it is not our intention to create a parallel curriculum or synonym for Faculty and we further note that any credit program developed within the College would, as is true for discipline-based programming, require Senate approval.

**College Programs**

A College Program is an academic program created with a primary focus of delivering undergraduate or graduate programming that extends across more than one Faculty. Due to our recommendation that College Programs not be given degree-granting powers, they are conceived to provide supplementary or enhanced programming to that which occurs within Independent Programs, Departments, Schools and non-Departmentalized Faculties (these areas hereinafter referred to as disciplines).

The Director of a College Program would be an academic administrative appointment and report directly to the Dean of the College. They would be governed by the provisions in A13.03 and A13.04 as is true for all other academic administrators.

As College Programs have a credit-teaching mandate, we recommend they have the power of academic appointment as follows:

- Teaching faculty appointments may have their entire academic position appointed to a College Program or they may be cross appointed with disciplines. We believe that the use of joint appointments would be a particularly effective device to retain the interdependent nature of interdisciplinarity in relation to disciplinary programming.
- Tenure-track research faculty may also be appointed to a College Program, however, they must hold a joint appointment with a discipline.
It is our view that the review process for teaching faculty appointed solely to a College Program could be concluded within the College. The review process for joint appointed tenure-track faculty appointments, however, would require research assessment by the non-College discipline to which they are appointed. Additionally, appropriate interdisciplinary review mechanisms may be required for some members and these should be identified at the time of appointment.

We remind readers that all matters involving academic appointments are the jurisdiction of negotiation between the Simon Fraser University Faculty Association and the University. Our recommendations, therefore, must be considered within this context and are therefore subject to amendment by those parties. We hope, however, that our careful thought on these matters will be considered as important input into those negotiation processes.

Centres and Institutes

In Volume III of this report, the Task Force described the rationale and overarching qualities of a reformulation of the Centres and Institutes Policy R40.01 that we feel is needed to enhance both interdisciplinary and disciplinary research at Simon Fraser University.

This section of our report will focus on a more detailed articulation of the defining characters of the three types of Centres and Institutes that our reformulation envisions:

- Departmental Centre
- Faculty Centre
- Institute

Please note that the term “temporally limited joint appointment” used throughout this section of our report refers to a recommendation in the interdisciplinary section of our report (Volume II) that the joint appointment policy be revised to enable joint appointments for short periods of time (3-5 year terms) in connection with certain categories of Centres and Institutes.

Centre:

A Centre is defined as a structural mechanism established for the purpose of promoting collaborative engagement among its members in the area of research that primarily falls within the framework of a single Faculty. Such research activity must extend the disciplinary or interdisciplinary research provided within the contexts of Independent Programs, Departments, Schools or non-departmentalized Faculties. The majority of membership within a Centre will be from within a single academic Faculty.

We propose two types of Centres:
Departmental Research Centre – A Departmental Research Centre (DRC) may be established when a group of cognate researchers from within a single Independent Program, Department, School, or non-departmentalized Faculty wish to associate and collaborate for the purposes of collectively representing themselves and their research niche to the external community. Graduate students may be granted student membership in a DRC. Such membership does not confer any qualifications or satisfaction of requirements towards their degree designation. This category of Centre will report to the Chair/Director of the Independent Program, Department, School or Dean of the non-departmentalized Faculty in which the majority of members belong and will normally not require any University resources. An Independent Program, Department, School, or non-departmentalized Faculty may choose to provide resources at its discretion. Members of DRCs will carry out their full obligations to their primary or joint academic units. With the focus on research, a DRC will not be permitted to offer any credit instruction. It may, however, be engaged in the offering of non-credit modes of instruction. Temporally limited joint appointments or internal secondments are permitted in accordance with the proposed revised policies on these appointments. Normally, no more than 2 SFU faculty members may be temporally appointed to a DRC at any one time. Should a DRC seek an exemption to this limitation, they must apply at the time of establishment or renewal and include in their application a clear plan for offsetting the impact of the extended involvement of faculty members on the academic units from which faculty are drawn. These Centres will be established for 3-5 year renewable terms.

Faculty Centres – A Faculty Centre (FC) will be established where there is a group of researchers who wish to collaborate and associate in relation to a special research topic that extends the research programs of more than one Independent Program, Department, or School, especially those that are interdisciplinary in nature. To qualify as a FC, there must be significant membership drawn from two or more disciplines within a Faculty. Graduate students may be granted student membership in a FC. Such membership does not confer any qualifications or satisfaction of requirements towards their degree designation. While typically focused upon research, a FC may also engage in multi-, or interdisciplinary programming of a supplemental (non-degree granting) nature to programming within disciplines. It may, however, be engaged in the offering of non-credit modes of instruction. Temporally limited joint appointments or internal secondments are permitted in accordance with the proposed revised policies on these appointments. Normally, no more than 2 SFU faculty members may be temporally appointed to a FC at any one time. Should a FC seek an exemption to this limitation, they must apply at the time of establishment or renewal and include in their application a clear plan for offsetting the impact of the extended involvement of faculty members on the academic units from which faculty are drawn. FCs are expected to be self-financing. FCs will report to the Dean of a Faculty. They will have 3-5 year renewable terms.
Institutes:

An Institute is defined as a structural mechanism established for the purpose of promoting collaborative engagement among its members in the areas of research or research and teaching that crosses the boundaries of Faculties or which involve other Universities and/or Institutions. Such research and teaching activity must extend the disciplinary or interdisciplinary research and teaching provided within the contexts of Faculties. Significant membership must be drawn from each of two or more Faculties, or involve a University or Institution outside of Simon Fraser University. An Institute will be established where there is a group of researchers and educators who wish to collaborate and associate in relation to a special research topic that extends the research programs of more than one Faculty. They may also engage in multi-, or interdisciplinary programming of a supplemental (non-degree granting) nature to programming within Faculties. Graduate students may be granted “graduate student membership” in an Institute. Such membership does not confer any qualifications or satisfaction of requirements towards their degree designation. An Institute may offer credit and non-credit courses and certificates that lead to degree credit but will not be degree-granting. Temporarily limited joint appointments or internal secondments are permitted in accordance with the policies on these appointments. A limited number of SFU faculty members will be permitted within an Institute. An application outlining the extent of faculty participation envisioned for a particular Institute must be presented to Senate at the time Institute approval or renewal. Such application must include a clear plan for offsetting the impact of the extended involvement for the academic units from which faculty are drawn. Faculty members who teach approved credit courses within an Institute will have their instructional activity count towards their annual workload as provided by the Faculty Workload Policy A30.03. These Institutes are expected to secure significant external funding for their operations. Normally, they will have 3-5 year renewable terms unless the agreement of an Institute dictates other conditions on the term of the Institute.

Faculty Participation in Centres and Institutes

As has been overviewed in the sub-sections above, the Task Force recommends temporally and numerically limited appointment mechanisms for faculty members to engage with certain categories of Centres and Institutes. Such provision requires identification of the ways in which performance reviews will be conducted and workloads will be developed. With regard to performance reviews, the Task Force recommends that the primary academic department of the individual remain their discipline. As a consequence, as is true with current academic policy, performance review is centered within the disciplinary unit. The Centre or Institute would be required, as is the case for secondary appointments to disciplines, to provide an assessment to the primary discipline of the accomplishments and contributions made by the faculty member to the Centre/Institute, in accordance with the provisions and processes identified in the performance review policies of faculty members.
In the matter of workload assignment, the Task Force believes that the workload of faculty members who have joint appointments with Centres and Institutes will be as provided for in the Faculty Workload Policy (A30.03). Particularly in the case of Centres/Institutes that seek to have faculty members engage in credit teaching activities of the Centre/Institute, we envision that the faculty member, the Director of the Centre/Institute, and the Chair/Director of the disciplinary home will negotiate a workload arrangement that is consistent with University policy and is satisfactory to all parties. Given the diverse nature of agreements that might be imagined, we do not wish to make any recommendation that might constrain the productive agreement of the parties.

**Centre/Institute Quality Review**

The Task Force believes that Centres and Institutes at Simon Fraser University must be viewed as important vehicles for advancing research and enhancing the research profile and agenda of the University. To ensure that we are successful in this regard, the Task Force believes that there needs to be increased rigor introduced into the adjudication of the application of Centres and Institutes and the renewal processes that will occur in the final year of the term of the Centre or Institute. We also believe that those Centres and Institutes that do not meet the expected standards of quality should not be renewed.

The Task Force has not had the opportunity to research what processes should be established to achieve the goals we outline in the previous paragraph. We are aware that currently Centres and Institutes are established through review and approval processes of the Senate Committee on University Priorities and Senate, which we do not believe should be changed. We believe that, particularly at the time of renewal, additional evaluation processes (perhaps with external review as in the case of CTEF applications) will need to be developed. We recommend that the Vice-President, Research be mandated to develop the appropriate review processes to ensure the overall quality and reputation of Centres and Institutes at Simon Fraser University. We further recommend, that the Vice-President, Academic participate in the development of appropriate review processes for those Centres and Institutes that involve credit teaching.

**Summary and Recommendations**

As we think about the changes we have proposed over the course of this volume, we return our thoughts back to the four qualities (see p. 9-10) that we are striving to have emblematic of Simon Fraser University in the year 2025.

Independent Programs are important vehicles for change, experimentation and new knowledge creation. The way in which they support interdisciplinarity through cross-disciplinary faculty collaboration and collegial interconnection will enable Simon Fraser University to meet its goals in creating a nourishing environment for faculty members,
for providing new learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, and for responding to pressing societal issues.

The College for Lifelong and Experiential Learning is one of the most significant initiatives being recommended by the Task Force. This entity will demonstrate Simon Fraser University’s long-standing commitment to the educational experience of undergraduate and graduate students and to the communities we serve. It will incubate, develop and nourish cross-Faculty, interdisciplinary educational experiences for students that will enhance their disciplinary degrees. It will be the locus for profiling the many and varied experiential learning opportunities for students both newly developed within the College but also in academic areas throughout the University.

The changes to the Centre and Institute policy are viewed by the Task Force as important to ensure the increased stature of Simon Fraser University’s research contribution and activity. The increased mechanisms for faculty engagement and commitment, for graduate student participation, and for the development of research driven interdisciplinary courses and supplemental components to graduate programming are, we believe, important contributions to the future of the University.

**Recommendation 24:** That the structural elements as described this report be adopted as part of the structural framework for Simon Fraser University.

**Recommendation 25:** That the Vice-President, Research be mandated to develop a systematic and rigorous process of evaluation for the establishment and renewal of Centres and Institutes.