

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Senate Committee on University Priorities
Memorandum

S.08-3

TO: Senate

FROM: John Waterhouse
Chair, SCUP and
Vice President, Academic

RE: Department of Gerontology

DATE: November 21, 2007

The Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) has reviewed the External Review Report on the Department of Gerontology, together with responses from the Chair and Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, and input from the Associate Vice President, Academic.

Motion :

That Senate approve the recommendations from the Senate Committee on University Priorities concerning advice to the Department of Gerontology and the Dean of Arts & Social Sciences on priority items resulting from the External Review.

The report of the External Review Team* for the Department of Gerontology was submitted in May following the review team's site visit. The site visit took place March 2007. The response from the Department of Gerontology and the response from the Dean were received in July and August 2007.

The Review Team believes that *"the program is very strong with excellent leadership, has a small but solid faculty, an international reputation, and a staff committed to its mission. The Department also has good links with the community, enhanced by its location at the Harbour Centre. Its intellectual stature has been enhanced since the last review by increased publications in peer reviewed journals, presentations at professional conferences, research grants, and participation in the development of large aging related data sets."*

A number of recommendations were made by the Team which may further strengthen the Department.

SCUP recommends to Senate that the Department of Gerontology and the Dean of Arts & Social Sciences be advised to pursue the following as priority items.

1. Programmes

1.1 PhD in Gerontology

- Develop a marketing strategy to promote this programme including the exploration of collaborative opportunities with other similar programmes across North America.

- Explore with the Dean the possibility of adding a full time faculty member and determine if the administrative resources are sufficient to ensure the success of the programme

1.2 Masters programme in Gerontology

- Explore the possibility of creating joint courses between the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Public Policy Programme and the department of Gerontology e.g. public policy/gerontology course.
- Explore ways to reduce the completion times of MA students and investigate the possibility of further/increased scholarship funding.

1.3 Diploma in Gerontology

- Seek permission to appoint a chair for undergraduate studies, with responsibilities that include oversight of the diploma and minor programmes.
- Survey graduates to determine perceptions of the programme and adapt promotional material to ensure it reflects employment prospects associated with the diploma.

2 Research & Integration

- Continue to seek ways to improve integration and identify research opportunities for the Department of Gerontology, the Gerontology Research Centre and the Faculty of Health Sciences.
- Continue involvement and representation in the development of health and aging related data bases including BC Network for Aging Research.
- Review the role and structure of the Gerontology Steering Committee.

*** Review Team**

Dr. Jon Pynoos – Review Team Chair (University of Southern California)
 Dr. John Hirdes (University of Waterloo)
 Dr. Verena Menec (University of Manitoba)

CC Lesley Cormack, Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences
 Andrew Wister, Chair, Dept of Gerontology

**EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT
ON THE DEPARTMENT OF GERONTOLOGY
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

Submitted by

Jon Pynoos, Ph.D., University of Southern California (Chair)
John Hirdes, Ph.D., University of Waterloo
Verena Menec, Ph.D., University of Manitoba

MAY 2007

Report of the External Review Committee

1. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AND OVERVIEW

The External Review Committee (referred to as the Committee) was composed of three outside members (Jon Pynoos, John Hirdes and Verena Menec) and an internal SFU member (Anthony Perl). In advance of our visit, the Committee received materials prepared by the Department of Gerontology (referred to as the Department) along with Terms of Reference and an Itinerary for the Site Visit. The material prepared by the Department included a Self Study Report, Department Faculty and Gerontology Research Centre (GRC) CV's, the Department's Constitution, Grant Funding, Peer Review Publications, and the GRC Annual Report. On day two of the review, the Committee was also provided upon its request with a copy of the report of the previous External Review Committee.

The visit took place from March 28-31, 2007. It included meetings with senior university administrators, Department faculty and staff, staff of the Harbour Centre library, members of the Steering Committee, GRC Research Associates, students representing all programs, and alumni. Meetings occurred at both the Harbour Centre and Burnaby Campuses with time allocated for a tour of the Living Lab.

The Committee's overall view is that the program is very strong with excellent leadership, a small but solid faculty, an international reputation, and a staff committed to its mission. The Department also has good links with the community, enhanced by its location at the Harbour Centre. Its intellectual stature has been enhanced since the last review by increased publications in peer reviewed journals, presentations at professional conferences, research grants, and participation in the development of large aging related data sets. Its focus on the psycho-social aspects of aging and the built environment distinguish it from other aging programs. The Department also has appropriate and well thought out plans to improve the program, many of which the Committee supports such as the creation of a new Ph.D. program and the addition of new faculty.

The report covers the items identified in the Terms of Reference for the review. It is divided into six sections: Educational Programs (PhD, Masters Program, Diploma, and Minor), Research, the Gerontology Research Centre, Departmental Members' Participation in Administration, and Fit/Synergies with other Units/Faculties. In each section we provide the Committee's assessment of the current situation followed by our recommendations.

2. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

A. PhD in Gerontology

Assessment

Among its major initiatives for the next five years, the Department plans to launch a new PhD in Gerontology. The Department's plan is based on the need for such a program in Canada, demand among students, and the difficulty of the current interdisciplinary PhD in the Simon Fraser system. The Committee finds that the proposed PhD will fill a gap in that it will complement the two existing gerontology PhD programs in Canada (one in French at the University of Sherbrooke and the other oriented towards aging, health and well-being at the University of Waterloo). It will better serve prospective SFU students who might otherwise go to PhD programs in the United States or Europe where systems (e.g., health care, governmental) and data sets for research are different, making it difficult to directly apply what is learned to Canada. The Committee agrees with the Department that the proposed PhD program will play a distinct role and expand the capacity of Canadian universities to serve the emerging needs of an aging society.

Based on the evidence of the Department's survey of its students and our discussion with current master's students, (three out of five who indicated an interest in pursuing a PhD if it is available) there will be a demand for the program. A cautionary note based on the experience of U.S. programs is the demand may be initially limited as aging has not yet been completely accepted as a field and that students interested in aging may still opt for what they consider safer, more traditional disciplines (e.g., sociology, political science, psychology).

While it may be possible to tweak the existing system to create such a program, our discussions with faculty and students associated with the existing interdisciplinary PhD indicate it is very cumbersome and poses barriers to attracting the best candidates. Moreover, there is a strong enough foundation on which to build a more free standing PhD program in that existing Gerontology faculty have appropriate skill sets to support it, an increasing number of research grants, and emerging large data sets (see research) that will provide students with excellent opportunity for training.

Recommendations

- The program should consider titling itself the "PhD in Aging, Health and the Built Environment" This would provide the flexibility to cover the research strengths of the Department and identify to incoming students the foci of the program. The review team does not think that the PhD program should have two streams, as proposed by the Department as the limited number of faculty members cannot support it.
- It is imperative to add a minimum of one new full time faculty member to support the PhD program with an emphasis on creating gender balance among the faculty.
- Additional administrative staff is also needed to support the program.
- The PhD program should be built gradually, starting with an intake of 1-2 students in the first 2 years with a focus on admitting the highest quality students only.

- There needs to be guaranteed funding for students during the first 2 years, either through RA positions and/or scholarships (e.g., BCNAR or GRC may provide opportunities to provide support).
- The Department Chair needs to be in contact with other PhD programs in North America and elsewhere in the world to learn from their experience and explore opportunities for collaborative relationships.
- The Department must expand available workspace for PhD and other students.

B. Masters Program in Gerontology

Assessment

The Masters Program in Gerontology (MA) at SFU is a successful, well-established program that draws high quality students. The review committee was impressed by the enthusiasm, motivation, and academic potential of the graduate students we met during the review. There appeared to be a good collegial atmosphere among the graduate students, and they spoke positively of their experience at SFU. The current and past MA students have pursued appropriate topics for graduate research that has generally yielded good quality theses. The review committee was struck by the strong publication record of the MA students.

The lack of a PhD program poses an unfortunate barrier to high quality masters students who wish to continue their graduate training at the doctoral level at SFU. As noted above, the interdisciplinary doctoral program does not appear to be a viable option for general use. As a result, the high quality MA students produced by SFU are sometimes compelled to go elsewhere to complete a PhD.

There were a number of good examples of internships that MA students experienced as part of their program at SFU. The work settings and activities were diverse and appropriate for individuals pursuing a graduate level education. These internships were often obtained by students with limited administrative support or guidance from the department, which does not have adequate staff resources to meet this need. The committee felt that students would benefit from additional support to find internship placements and supervision to ensure that experiences are productive and fit with the mandate of the department.

Given the small faculty complement, junior faculty supervise more students than would be typical at other universities; this has the potential to stretch faculty too thin and delay graduation. It also can adversely affect the career development of junior faculty if they are overburdened with student supervision. The small size of the department also means that MA students sometimes have difficulty in finding members for committees. The review committee felt that better linkages with the GRC would allow its research associates to play a valuable role in the graduate program.

The average length to complete the MA program was somewhat longer than expected. This appeared to be due, at least in part, to the need for students to pursue employment to support themselves over the course of their studies.

Recommendations

- There should be increased involvement of GRC research associates in the graduate program, including as PhD committee members and supervision of MA students.
- The university should establish a mechanism to appoint grant-funded research associates as faculty members in order for them to supervise students. This practice has been used successfully to support gerontology graduate programs in other Canadian universities.
- The average length of MA completion should be reduced to 2 years. This may require further scholarship funding to reduce the need for students to support themselves through employment (e.g., RA positions). When students do pursue RA positions consideration should be given to linking the RA experience to the student's MA thesis wherever possible.
- The Department (and university) needs to clarify the requirements for the MA project. It appears to the committee that current requirements for the project are not clearly distinguishable from a thesis.
- The Department should collaborate with the public policy program to develop a joint public policy course. All graduate students would benefit from this course. The Department should consider making it a required course for PhD students.
- Independent courses should be offered on an on-going basis so that students can explore areas of interest. However, the department needs to provide careful oversight of independent courses to ensure that students do not take too many or take them all from the same instructor.

C. The Diploma in Gerontology

Assessment

The Committee feels that the Diploma Program serves an important purpose for some students. However several of the problems identified in the previous review continued to be evident. Specifically, while the Diploma Program meets the needs of students with a professional or administrative background who want to gain expertise in gerontology, it does not appear to meet the needs of students with non-professional backgrounds who want to enter the field of aging. During our meeting with current and former diploma students there was a clear sense of concern about the lack of employment opportunities in gerontology for those without additional professional or managerial credentials. This was an important source of frustration for some individuals who expected the diploma to prepare them for a career in gerontology.

There is a strong sense of disenfranchisement among diploma students, some of whom felt they were "second class" students. They felt they were not included in department functions, and they sometimes felt that they were marginalized in favor of graduate

students. However, a positive development was an effort by the diploma students to form a student group to represent their views and to establish positive linkages with graduate students.

The diploma students also voiced concerns about the lack of support with the practicum and availability of courses. While they were generally enthusiastic about the courses they were able to take, they were concerned that courses they were interested in were not consistently available.

Recommendations

- The Committee recommends that the Diploma Program be discontinued for students with non-professional/non-management backgrounds. The Diploma Program should be targeted at clinicians or managers of community organizations or long-term care facilities. Literature outlining the program must provide clear description of the purpose of and target audience for the program.
- If the diploma is targeted at students with professional or managerial backgrounds, the practicum will no longer be necessary and could be dropped.
- A gerontology faculty member must be assigned as an associate chair for undergraduate studies, with responsibilities that include oversight of the diploma and minor programs.

D. The Minor in Gerontology

Assessment

The Gerontology Minor serves an important purpose and enrollment is expected to continue to grow. The quality of the teaching is excellent and the minor is a desirable credential for students enrolled in other programs.

The Committee was particularly impressed with the quality of the sessional instructors. However, we were concerned about the number of courses being taught by sessionals. It was felt that the program could be at jeopardy if they leave or retire. A further concern is that there does not appear to be a strong link between sessional instructors and the Department. Given the vital importance of sessionals to this program, it was felt that a strong effort should be made to better integrate these instructors into the activities of the department.

As was the case with diploma students, there was a concern that some courses were not available to minor students every year.

Recommendations

- There needs to be a long-term strategy for retention and recruitment of sessionals.
- There needs to be stronger integration of sessionals into the Department (e.g., sessionals should be invited to Departmental meetings).
- The review team does NOT support the development of a major at this time, given the size of the department. This possible addition of a major should be revisited in a few

years. The current priority for expansion of educational offerings should be the PhD program.

- The distance education courses should be upgraded to use the latest interactive technology to encourage more interaction between faculty and students.
- Core courses must be offered on an annual basis; courses that are currently listed should be taught at least bi-annually or they should be dropped from the academic calendar.

3. RESEARCH

Assessment

The Department has two main strengths: psycho-social aspects of health and the built environment. During the Committee's site visit, the Department was in the process of hiring a new faculty member, whose time will be split between the Department and the Directorship of the GRC. Given that the individual being considered for the position has expertise in the built environment, this will further strengthen that area.

The Committee was impressed with the clear improvement in research productivity and quality of research since the last Departmental review, as evidenced by the substantial increase in peer-reviewed publications and grants, including tri-council grants. The research productivity is especially noteworthy, given the small number of faculty members. The Committee feels that the Michael Smith Foundation BCNAR grant is a particular asset, as it identifies the Department and Simon Fraser University as a leader in aging research in BC. It also creates opportunities for students currently in the Department and has the potential to attract more students into the field of aging.

The Committee further feels that the discussions that the Department has had with the Faculty of Health Sciences regarding the RDC and housing of other data (e.g., vital statistics) are a positive step, as they create a link to that faculty. The data repository has great potential for faculty and students who are conducting research in the area of psycho-social aspects of health, and it could be an important data source for PhD dissertations.

Although the Committee feels that the GRC and Living Laboratory are assets, there was an impression that they function too much in isolation from the Department. Consequently, opportunities to strengthen the Department are sometimes missed. Specifically, some of the research conducted by the GRC does not appear to bolster the two research areas in the Department by, for instance, leading to peer-reviewed publications, grants, or student research projects. The Living Laboratory is under-utilized by Department faculty and students. The Committee acknowledges that the new Director of the GRC may help facilitate the integration of the GRC and Living Laboratory with the Department.

Recommendations

- The Department should maintain its focus on and continue to expand the existing areas of strength (i.e., psycho-social aspects of health and the built environment).
- There needs to be better integration of the GRC and the Living laboratory with the Department, including greater participation of Department members in GRC activities.
- Better integration of BCNAR with the Department is needed. In this respect, the new GRC Director and the Department Chair should play major leadership roles in BCNAR.
- The Department should play a major role in the development of the new data repository in the Faculty of Health Sciences.
- The Department should also play a major role in getting access to linked BC data. The possibility of creating secure, remote access from the Department (i.e. Downtown campus) to any linked BC data holdings should be explored as this will greatly facilitate research.

4. GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

Assessment

The Committee recognizes that the Gerontology Research Centre (GRC) continues to be an asset, as it plays an important role in creating a link between the university and the community. The GRC has clearly been helpful in advancing Simon Fraser's role in aging research and has contributed to the development of the Department. The GRC continues to play a major role in attracting endowment funds of a magnitude that is unparalleled in any other Canadian gerontology centre. High quality products like the Fact Book are helpful for promoting aging in the community.

The major concern that the Committee has in regards to the GRC relates to its relationship with the Department and, as noted above, our assessment that there could be better synergy between the GRC and the Department, which would be of mutual benefit. Moreover, there is duplication with services available at the University in terms of the library holdings. Such duplication is particularly unnecessary, given that the University library has excellent library support and resources in the area of aging, which are readily accessible to everybody.

Recommendations

- There needs to be better alignment of the GRC with Departmental priorities and its areas of strength.
- There must an emphasis on hiring high quality PhD level research associates and the establishment of an endowed research chair. These individuals should be involved in Departmental activities, such as supervision of students or teaching of courses.
- The reporting structure of the GRC should be modified such that the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences delegates her/his authority to the Department Chair. This would mean that the GRC director reports to the Chair, thereby

ensuring that the direction of the GRC fits with the mandate of Department and that there is appropriate synergy between the GRC and the Department.

- The steering committee was originally founded to support the GRC, but has been less active with the formation of the Department. We recommend the dissolution of the steering committee and formation of an advisory board comprised of community stakeholders, representatives of government/regional health authorities, as well as university representatives.
- Given the space constraints of the Department and the GRC, we recommend that the GRC library be moved to the Belzberg library and that freed-up space be reconfigured as work space for students and/or faculty.
- The Information Officer should discontinue librarian functions (e.g., providing assistance with conducting library searches, cataloguing holdings), because there is excellent support through the Belzberg library, which has a librarian specifically assigned to the area of aging.
- The Committee recognizes that the Information Officer plays an important role in supporting faculty members, sessional instructors and students, maintaining websites, and producing newsletters. The Committee recommends that he continue to do this work, but that he should also start to play a role in knowledge transfer activities beyond the current publication of newsletters.
- The GRC should examine the way its newsletters are disseminated. Given the increasing emphasis on disseminating information electronically, this option should be explored.

5. DEPARTMENT MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN ADMINISTRATION

Assessment

The current Chair of the Department has established a collegial atmosphere among the gerontology faculty and staff who have a sense of enfranchisement and involvement in major decisions. Nevertheless, there is some ambiguity in the lines of authority and inefficiencies in administration. Although there is some collaboration with researchers outside the university, there could be more both within the Department and with other units on campus. Faculty members, however, seem stretched to the limits given research, teaching and administrative responsibilities. Two faculty members have spouses with academic appointments in other countries (U.K. and USA). This raises a concern about future retention and quality of life. Anchoring faculty in the Department will be even more important with a new PhD program, again underscoring the need for strategies to attract and retain faculty members.

Recommendations

- There should be graduate and undergraduate chairs with the authority to make decisions over their respective portfolios.
- Sessionals, who as noted above, play an important teaching role in the Department should be more involved in departmental activities such as meetings and events.

- There should be greater collaboration among Department members on research projects as well as with other faculty in departments across campus (see below).

6. FIT/SYNERGIES WITH OTHER UNITS/FACULTIES

Assessment

The Department has numerous shared interests with other units/faculties at SFU. Examples include: public policy, BC IT, sociology, urban studies, kinesiology, geography, engineering and health sciences.

While there is great potential for new collaboration to emerge with the expansion of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), the review committee did not feel that Gerontology needed to be located in FHS to realize those collaborative linkages.

SFU's Gerontology Department has excellent links to the other universities in BC through the British Columbia Network on Aging Research. SFU has played an important leadership role in this network and every effort should be made to capitalize on new opportunities that may arise from BCNAR.

The addition of the new GRC Director (Andrew Sixsmith) and a new post-doctoral fellow (Eunju Hwang) brings the potential for expanded international collaborations. While SFU already has a strong international presence (e.g., as a result of hosting the 2001 International Association on Gerontology Conference in Vancouver), it was felt that these individuals would bring new opportunities to establish linkages in aging, health and the built environment.

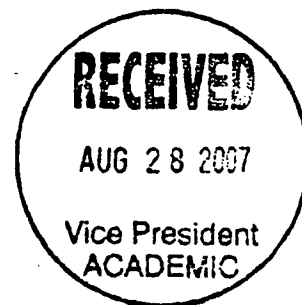
The committee also felt that the relationship between the Department and its alumni appears to be positive. The department should continue to foster interactions with its alumni, particularly with those in settings that may be appropriate for internships.

Recommendations

- The Committee strongly recommends that Gerontology should at this point remain within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). The Department is in an important transitional stage following the founding of the GRC and the establishment of the Department. FASS provides an appropriate and supportive academic context for the new PhD.
- Sufficient resources should be allocated to ensure that the Department continues to play a major role in BCNAR.
- The Department should establish an on-going dialogue with the Faculty of Health Sciences to identify areas of mutual interest and opportunities for collaboration in graduate education and research.
- There should be more formalized interaction between alumni and the Department through the practicum and internship placement. In addition, some alumni could serve as externals on committees for theses or projects with a more applied focus.



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ATTENTION Bill Krane, Associate VP Academic

FROM John T. Pierce, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

RE Response to Gerontology External Review

DATE August 28, 2007

I consider this to be a very strong and positive assessment of a department that "punches well above its weight". I think the Review Committee (RC) succinctly captures the success of the unit with the following: "...[the] program is very strong with excellent leadership, a small but solid faculty, an international reputation, and a staff committed to its mission". Furthermore, the RC acknowledges that the department has succeeded in differentiating itself from other programs through its focus on the psycho-social aspects of aging and the built environment.

All of this said, there are inevitable "teething" and course corrections issues in an expanding program which must be addressed if Gerontology is to reach its potential and continue the leadership role that it has carved out for itself.

I do not intend to focus on all the issues raised. I believe that Dr. Wister has effectively responded to various and sundry concerns raised by the RC. Instead I wish to identify four areas that will require attention.

- 1) PhD Program: The RC was supportive of the newly proposed PhD program although there was concern expressed regarding the demand for the program unless it was properly differentiated from other programs. I think Dr. Wister has addressed these concerns although I would urge him and his colleagues to think about the proper marketing strategies for a new program. It is clear that the program will require at least one additional faculty member and perhaps additional staffing, but the final determination of numbers will be heavily dependent upon an accurate assessment of demand and the willingness of the University to support

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this initiative, which clearly overlaps with the research mission of the University in the area of Health.

- 2) Synergies: Clearly closer ties need to be developed between Health Sciences, maintenance of databases and to Public Policy. I understand that Gerontology and Public Policy are considering a joint course which would strengthen these ties. Joint courses between Health Science and Gerontology would be an effective way to strengthen their respective MA programs.
- 3) Gerontology Research Centre (GRC): Closer ties were also recommended between the GRC and Gerontology in both research and graduate supervision. My office has recently supported the appointment of a new external Director of the GRC and I am confident, as is Dr. Wister, that this individual has the credentials and desire to build the necessary bridges. I also support Dr. Wister's suggestion to re-examine the role of the GRC Steering Committee.
- 4) Other Programming: The MA is a highly successful program and like the RC, I see room for improvement in completion times, ties with the GRC and expanded internships. These changes can be accomplished with some better planning. I, however, do not support the RC's suggestion that the diploma be limited to professionals. It is clear that Gerontology needs to do a better job of how the diploma is portrayed. I am encouraged by Dr. Wister's suggestion that a survey be conducted of diploma students to better gauge expectations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "JTP".

JTP/rt

cc: A. Wister, Chair, Department of Gerontology

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DEPARTMENT OF GERONTOLOGY
GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

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ATTENTION **Glynn Nicholls, Director, Academic
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FROM **Andrew Wister, Chair, Dept. of Gerontology**

RE **Response to External Review Report for Dept. of Gerontology**

CC **John Pierce, Dean of Arts and Social Sciences**

DATE **July 3, 2007**

The Gerontology Department has carefully reviewed the external report of the Review Team. We find their recommendations to be very useful for the future development of the Gerontology Department and Gerontology Research Centre (GRC) at SFU. Overall, the reviews of the Gerontology Department and the GRC are extremely positive. There is clear support for our strategic plan, in particular, the initiation of a PhD Program in Gerontology at SFU. The recommendations also parallel our request for an additional faculty position and staff resources commensurate with expansion of our graduate programs and the anticipated growth in undergraduate enrolment. The Department of Gerontology has ratified the response to the review, which is organized in the order of points in the external review report.

Educational Programs

PhD in Gerontology

A Proposal for a PhD in Gerontology has been approved by the ACNGP and is moving to the final stages of approval in the university. The departmental review strongly supports the proposal, and adds that "it is imperative to add a minimum of one new full-time faculty member to support the PhD Program with an emphasis on creating balance among the faculty." They also support the request for additional staff resources to support the program. We concur with their recommendation that the PhD Program should begin gradually with small numbers of highly qualified students. As suggested, we will be able to guarantee a minimum level of funding for two years within the funding restrictions at SFU; provide work space; and the Chair will continue contact with other programs to explore collaborate opportunities. The Chair of Gerontology has recently been discussing a Memorandum of Understanding outlining a mutually supportive relationship between SFU Gerontology and Sherbrooke's graduate Programs in Gerontology. These efforts will be expanded.



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GERONTOLOGY RESEARCH CENTRE

A final recommendation pertaining to the PhD Program is to change the title to: "PhD in Aging, Health and the Built Environment" and eliminate the two streams – Aging and Environment, and Health and Aging. The Gerontology Department disagrees with this recommendation. The title change suggests that a student must pursue research that cuts across the two themes, which may deter potential students from applying. Furthermore, our PhD proposal currently requires that students choose a minimum of two (out of five) courses in either of these two major themes, but provides considerable options. These are termed concentrations, and we do not have separate streams per se in the proposed program. The rationale is that we would be building on the strengths of the Masters Program that shares these thematic concentrations.

Masters Program in Gerontology

The Masters Program received a glowing assessment by the Review Team. While some of the suggestions are instructive, some others appear to have been based on assumptions that are misinformed. The first recommendation is to increase the involvement of GRC research associates in the graduate program. However, research associates and post-doctoral fellows have and continue to sit on thesis/project committees. Given that the GRC has been increasing the number of high quality PhDs appointed into these positions (see GRC section), we anticipate that supervision by GRC staff will certainly escalate. We also have 20 Adjunct Professors, five Associate Members, and a significant number of professionals working in the field of Gerontology outside of SFU who also serve on theses. The second recommendation suggests that SFU should have a mechanism to appoint grant-funded research associates as faculty members to allow them to supervise students. Any of the above listed individuals currently may act as a Co-Senior Supervisor, in conjunction with a faculty member from Gerontology. This is the norm in Graduate Studies at SFU in order to provide stability in supervision and to make certain that there is a Departmental representative serving as a senior supervisor who is familiar with SFU policies.

It is recommended that the average length of completion for an MA be reduced to two years. Currently our completion time is 2.4 years, which I understand is lower than the large majority of departments. Recently, the Department decreased the required coursework by one course. Although we agree that two years is a reasonable target, there are factors that are outside of our control. There is a systemic issue that many students must work part-time to support themselves because of limited funding. While our students receive a significant number of awards (SSHRC, MSFHR, SFU Entrance Scholarships, Graduate Fellowships, internal awards, etc.), some require or choose Research and Teaching Assistantships to support them, and further their careers. We also have some students who work full-time while completing their degree. Our faculty

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will continue to provide excellent supervisory support in a timely manner.

It is also requested that we differentiate the thesis and project requirement in the MA Program. These requirements are delineated in a document distributed and discussed with students during orientation (not supplied to the Review Team, but available upon request). The main distinguishing feature is that a thesis is expected to be a publishable work, while a project likely would not be because of a more circumscribed literature review, methodology, analysis and less depth. We also provide examples of each for students and faculty. The decision whether a student completes a project or thesis is made at the proposal defense stage by their supervisory committee.

The recommendation to create a joint public policy/gerontology course is a good one, and will be explored. We have had Masters students from the Public Policy Program in our graduate course GERO 801 Health Policy and Aging, and our students may take relevant courses from their program. A joint course is more challenging to mount for obvious reasons. Finally, with respect to Independent courses, Directed Studies courses are available to Masters students if a faculty member is willing, but with a relatively small graduate program and small faculty base, we have chosen to offer more graduate classes (a minimum of six per year) and recommend taking these courses at the Masters level.

Diploma in Gerontology

The Review Team felt that while the Diploma in Gerontology (DGT) serves a purpose for students with professional, community or administrative backgrounds who want to further their expertise in Gerontology, it is less valuable for "non-professional" students (those not having work experience). The Department is aware that a small non-representative number of DGT students (who have yet to complete their diploma) voiced such a complaint to the Review Team. We believe that this led to an inaccurate assessment of the value of the DGT, leading to the recommendation that the DGT be discontinued for non-professional students. The Department strongly disagrees with this recommendation for several reasons. The DGT accepts about 15 students per year. About one-third of these take the DGT to raise their knowledge-base in Gerontology in order to apply to the Masters Program, and are a combination of "professional" and "non-professional" students as described by the Review Team. Another third are individuals (usually returning students) that fit the "professional" categorization. The final third are students who want to add specialized knowledge in Gerontology to their degree field for the purpose of increasing their job prospects. We have communicated with many DGT alumni, and we have conducted a survey in the past. The results of these analyses indicate that many students taking the DGT directly after their BA find

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jobs in the field, if they do not choose to further their education. While they do not experience the same employment opportunities as our Master's graduates, they none the less significantly increase their career opportunities in a growing sector of the labour market (health, community services, government, etc.). Restricting the degree to only students previously or currently working in aging-related fields would shrink the program significantly, and would definitely remove employment and further educational opportunities for many students. The Department proposes to: 1) conduct another survey of DGT graduates in order to track their employment paths; 2) increase our marketing of the DGT to prospective employers to enhance its value; 3) use the practicum/internship supervisor to help DGT students gain employment experience in better quality positions; and 4) review the description of the DGT in the calendar, promotional material and web site to make certain that it accurately reflects employment prospects associated with the diploma. We agree with the final recommendation in this section and are in the process of identifying a new faculty undergraduate chair. This has previously been part of the Chair's portfolio.

Minor in Gerontology

The growth and success of the Minor in Gerontology is highlighted in the Review Team's assessment. Our classes are at capacity and could be expanded further with additional faculty. This underscores the mounting interest in Gerontology among students, and reflects the maturation of the discipline, as well as social needs in an aging population. The Review Team noted that our instructors are of very high quality compared to most units, and that we strongly rely on them. They have recommended that a long-term strategy for retention and recruitment of sessionals be implemented, and that sessionals should be more strongly integrated into the Department. We have approximately four courses per year taught by sessionals, comprising about 20% of in-class courses. Proportionately more sessionals teach courses offered through CODE. With respect to the first point, the Department has recently amalgamated several sessional stipends with monies from a faculty member's CIHR New Investigator Award to create a three-year Assistant Professorship that has been filled last September. In addition, the one sessional instructor who teaches multiple courses has been appointed as a part-time instructor. The Department will examine other ways to retain and attract quality instructors, but it should be emphasized that these instructors plan to remain teaching with the Department for as long as possible. Furthermore, we turn away several interested instructors each year, and currently we have 20 Adjunct Professors. With respect to the second point, the Department has immediately adopted a policy to invite sessional instructors to all Departmental meetings, rather than only targeted meetings and events as in the past, in order to better integrate them into the Department. It should be noted that sessional instructors have offices and are involved in many



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aspects of the Department and GRC.

Turning to curriculum and program development, we also agree with the Review Team that a major in Gerontology is premature, and that emphasis should be placed on the development of the PhD Program. A recommendation was made to offer all required courses each year and others within a two year period. The Gerontology Department provided the Review Team with scheduling information (05/06 and 06/07) in Appendix 13, demonstrating that we indeed offer all required courses at this rate. In that two year period, we offered 45 courses (of which 13 were graduate courses); including 18 different undergraduate courses, and eight of our nine graduate courses. We are also developing two new undergraduate courses and four new graduate courses (with the PhD Program) to add this list.

It is also recommended that we utilize the latest interactive technology in our distance education courses. The majority of these currently use WebCt. Furthermore, based on this recommendation, the Chair of Gerontology met with CODE staff and a plan is taking shape to have a Gerontology course used as a prototype for a video component integrated into WebCt. This will entail taping faculty keynotes in specialized areas of gerontology that fit into the most populated course (GERO/SA 420 Sociology of Aging) with over 200 students per year. Gerontology also reviewed all distance course offerings with CODE in mid-June to determine updating of courses and new course development for the next five terms.

Research

The Review Team was very impressed with the research productivity of the faculty since the last Departmental review, especially given the small faculty base. They also note that the MSFHR grant supporting the BC Network for Aging Research (one of eight provincial population health networks) housed at SFU Gerontology (two of six Co-leaders are Gerontology faculty) identifies the Department and SFU as a leader in aging research. It also creates opportunities for students and synergies for research collaboration. They also support the involvement of the Department in the development of a Research Data Centre at SFU, and other data linkage opportunities connected with the data warehouse. The principal recommendations made by the Review Team are to continue with current research foci, better align the GRC and the Department, including expansion of the program of research connected to the Living Lab (joint SFU Gerontology/BCIT research facility), leveraging BCNAR resources within the Department, and to be involved in data access issues.

The Department concurs with the recommendation to continue its focus on our major



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research strengths. The newly hired (Sept 2007) Director of the Gerontology Research Centre (Dr. Sixsmith) from the University of Liverpool is a full professor with internationally recognized expertise in Technology and Aging, and is a PI or Co-PI on several major cross-national research consortia studying e-health and assistive technologies for older populations that align perfectly with the mandate and research opportunities in the Living Lab. He will assume a leadership role in revitalizing the research program connected to the Living Lab. The collaborative leadership style of the new Director will play a role in fostering greater integration of the GRC and departmental members, and the fostering of new synergies (also see next section). The new Director will also be appointed a BCNAR Co-leader, joining the Chair of the Gerontology Department on the BCNAR executive. This organizational structure was developed prior to the review and is consistent with the strategic plan of BCNAR.

The Department's role in the RDC has already been established. The Chair of the Gerontology Department is on the SFU proposal for an RDC site, and has been the SFU representative (and Executive member) on the BC Interuniversity RDC housed at UBC. Furthermore, in his capacity as Co-leader of BCNAR, the Chair of the Gerontology Department has been actively working with MSFHR; the BC Ministry of Health; the UBC CHSPR data linkage group and Population Health Laboratory Observatory (PHLO); and the recent health data platform development to form a new Steering committee mandated with health data access and data linkage activities in BC. The Chair has been recently invited to help develop and to sit on this committee. This stems from the BCNAR Annual Conference entitled, Building Health Research Capacity in BC: Utilization, Integration and Access to Health Data held at the Wosk Dialogue Centre in Feb 2007 organized by Dr. Wister. Over 100 university, government, and community researchers and stakeholders from across the province participated at this highly successful conference and dialogue. We have also been working closely with the Faculty of Health Sciences data warehouse group. SFU Gerontology will therefore be well-represented in future health data access activities in the province and within SFU, as recommended by the Review Team. However, the site for a secure data facility will need to be at the Burnaby campus, where construction is in process. The health data linkage activities of PHLO are aimed at developing remote access, which would serve all BC research communities equally.

Gerontology Research Centre

The Review Team clearly recognizes that the GRC is an asset to the Department. The historical development and organizational structure of the GRC and Gerontology Programs has led to some degree of separation, although these units enjoy considerable mutually supportive activities and resource leveraging, and the Director of the GRC is a

departmental faculty member. The main recommendation pertains to increasing the integration of these units.

In his role as Acting Director of the GRC for the last several years, the Chair of the Gerontology Department has taken an active role in addressing the recommendation to align the units. Gerontology received departmental status in 2004 and has created a Departmental constitution in which certain GRC activities are linked to the Department. For instance, post-doctoral hires (even those funded through the GRC), visiting professors and researchers in residence, are now vetted by the Department and coupled with Departmental supervisors or collaborators. Furthermore, as noted above, the arrival of the new GRC Director in September provides an opportunity for organizational change as well as a shift in the culture of the Gerontology unit as a whole. The new Director's collaborative leadership style is consistent with the Chair's, and will support the mutual aim to further enhance an intellectual community that coalesces Departmental and GRC research and educational goals. It should be noted, however, that some GRC activities are unique, such as community outreach, and other direct involvement with seniors, and more applied research activities.

The retiring of a prior research associate in educational gerontology afforded an opportunity to replace this research foci with one in Culture and Aging, which the GRC and Department feel is needed. The last hire was a PhD with expertise in housing issues of Asian older adults, and we are currently interviewing for a second post-doctoral position also in the area of Culture and Aging. Also, we are leveraging funds within BCNAR to jointly fund a third post-doctoral research position that would focus on data linkage opportunities connected to the Dementia Clinic with other sources. The most recent hires areas being considered to teach sessional courses in the Department, and future hires will be provided similar opportunities, given their expertise. These developments will also attract further interest in post-doctoral and academic visitors to the GRC and Department.

The GRC constitution delineates a decision-making structure that originally included all Deans of faculties at SFU, but was subsequently replaced by the current Gerontology Steering Committee. Currently, it is chaired by Dr. Robert Gordon, with members from various departments across the university. Since the Gerontology unit has become a department, it is necessary to re-examine the need for a Steering Committee comprised of only members not in the Department. This is especially timely given the difficulty in recruiting Steering Committee members from across campus. The Review team has recommended that we dissolve the Steering Committee and form an Advisory Board comprised of community stakeholders, government representatives/health authorities, as well as university representatives. This organizational structure may not solve the underlying alignment problem. BCNAR currently has community and government

representatives on its Advisory Board, making the recommended structure of the SFU Gerontology Advisory Board redundant. In order to better address this issue, the GRC and Department recommends that a meeting be organized that includes the new GRC Director, the Chair, and the current Steering Committee to discuss several options with respect to the dissolution of the latter or its replacement, as well as any necessary changes to the constitution of the GRC. One option is to add Gerontology faculty to the Steering Committee as members along with members from other departments with interests in aging research. With respect to reporting structure, as stated in Policy 40.01, the GRC reports to the Dean of FASS as a Schedule "A" Centre. We are confident that an organizational structure will be agreed upon that will serve the needs of the Department and the GRC. Having said this, it should be noted that there has never been a major organizational problem stemming from disagreements between the GRC and Department to date.

The recommendation that the GRC library holding should be turned over to the Belzberg library and that the Information Officer (IO) discontinue library functions is not supported by the Department or the GRC. The library houses a large number of publications that have been donated by faculty or purchased through the GRC endowments, including the *Imperial Oil Gerontology Research Collection*. Some of these are "grey" publications not available in university libraries. A total of 485 new books, reports, government documents and videos were acquired over the last year, representing a 140% increase from the previous year, and representing 5,247 items. Among the new acquisitions were: 66 new titles on CDs in PDF format; 14 VHS and DVD videos to the newly reorganized AV collection which now has 109 titles (a newly donated DVD players allows teachers and students to view the collection in the Centre; 77 new pamphlets, reports, bibliographies, reprints of articles categorized by subject of field; and 112 journal issues and 70 newsletters. These are catalogued by the IO using ProCite bibliographic software and uploaded to the BRS database of the SFU library catalogue system on a regular basis to make the GRCIC catalogue available online. The library holdings are used by community, faculty, and students. In addition, the IO provides a variety of services to fill information requests. In the last year, there were 922 in-person, email, and telephone requests for information handled by the IO (an increase of 17% over last year). These included: 705 SFU researchers; 132 students; and 85 community, government, business, media and other external users. The IO conducted 1,000 searches of electronic data bases such as AgeLine, Medline, PsycInfo, etc delivering information directly to requestors. In addition, the GRC library is a hub of activity for students to work on research projects, essays and other projects. Furthermore, our faculty shares information resources by housing them in a centrally located and easily accessible area with rapid library support from our IO. The moving of the GRC holdings would significantly disrupt these resources, services and functions. The Department and GRC are in the process of reviewing all library holdings in an



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effort to remove outdated publications and to increase its utility.

The full FTE GRC position of Information Officer, requiring librarian training, was created in the original formation of the centre to support the broader community. Over time, the IO has taken on the duties of managing two Newsletters, three web sites, conducting library searches for GRC staff, faculty and students, as well as many other related duties, all of which fall within the domain of knowledge transfer. For example, the IO worked on the first iteration of the Canadian Health Network, and has helped to create the BCNAR searchable research database (RAD). These activities were covered by these grants, therefore reducing the IO's costs to the GRC. We anticipate that there will be an increase in the amount of time that the IO will devote to other knowledge transfer activities connected to BCNAR, given that we have received an additional \$375,000 MSFHR grant (\$1.375 million total) with a significant amount devoted to provincial knowledge transfer strategies. Finally, we have created a sub-committee to examine organization and distribution of the Newsletters.

Department Administration

The Review Team states that "the Chair of the Department has established a collegial atmosphere among faculty and staff who have a sense of enfranchisement and involvement in major decisions." However, suggestions are made to improve administrative efficiency. Most of these have been addressed in the recent establishment of a Gerontology Constitution. Currently, the graduate chair has the authority to make decisions with the support of the Department faculty, as with all decisions. We concur that we need to have the undergraduate portfolio given to a faculty member (previous covered by the Chair due to limited resources), and we have already adopted the recommendation to invite sessionals to all meetings.

Synergies with other Units

The recommendations in this section are consistent with our strategic plans. We agree with the Review Team that Gerontology should remain in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and not be moved into the Faculty of Health Sciences (FH). We concur with the Review Team that FASS provides an appropriate and supportive academic context for the Gerontology unit. Furthermore, movement into a new faculty could disrupt the development of a PhD in Gerontology, and other strategic plans for growth. Additionally, many students seek out our programs (and we are viewed as a unique Department) because of the establishment of a Gerontology Department and the offering of extensive training in this field.

The Review Team also recommends that resources be allocated to the Department to

continue to play a major role in BCNAR. At present, BCNAR is well-funded and SFU intends to play a leading role in extension grants. If MSFHR does not provide funding past the four-years of the grant (until 2010), institutional support may be needed. Currently, we have an ongoing dialogue and collaborations with faculty in FH, that includes collaborating on a recently funded grant (Chaudhury – PI), the RDC proposal, data warehouse activities, etc. We anticipate these synergies to expand.

We also concur that the addition of Dr. Andrew Sixsmith from the University of Liverpool, who has extensive European contacts (new Director), Eunju Hwang who has contacts in Asia (new post-doctoral fellow), as well as new hires will further expand the international collaborative programs of research stemming from the Gerontology unit. Hiring two new post-doctoral fellows. Finally, as noted by the Review Team, we maintain contact and have excellent relationships with our graduate student alumni, tracking their career paths and using them to support practicum and internship placements. The recommendation to formalize this interaction in other ways will be examined.

In sum, the Gerontology Department and GRC are committed to maintaining and further developing our provincial, national and international reputation as leaders in the field of Gerontology. This review has provided an excellent opportunity to assess past accomplishments, and to forge clear paths for the next seven years. The majority of the recommendations articulated by the Review Team will help us to meet the goals set out in our strategic plans. They fully support the development of the proposed PhD Program in Gerontology and related resource requests, as well as current programs. Expansion and more effective use of the GRC resources will undoubtedly occur as the new Director provides us with additional leadership and support within the Department. Our greatest challenge will be reviewing the relationship of the GRC with respect to the Department, and to ensure that synergies are created that allow both to prosper in an age when Gerontology will most assuredly rise in social import and stature.

Respectfully Submitted,



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