



OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AND PROVOST

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www.sfu.ca/vpacademic**MEMORANDUM**

ATTENTION	Senate	DATE	February 12, 2014
FROM	Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic and Provost, and Chair, SCUP	PAGES	1/1
RE:	Faculty of Environment: External Review Update for the School of Resource and Environmental Management (SCUP 14-06)		

At its February 5, 2014 meeting, SCUP reviewed the External Review Update Report for the School of Resource and Environmental Management within the Faculty of Environment. The report is attached for the information of Senate.

c: G. Myers

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Jon Driver", is written over the signature line.



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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Jon Driver, Chair, SCUP	DATE	January 20, 2014
FROM	Gord Myers, Associate Vice-President, Academic	PAGES	1/1
CC	W. Haider and J. Pierce		
RE:	External Review Update for the School of Resource and Environmental Management		

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Gord Myers", is written over the "RE:" line of the memorandum.

The External Review of the School of Resource and Environmental Management was undertaken in March 2010. According to the procedures established by SCUP, the Unit is required to submit an update describing its progress in implementing the Action Plan, which was derived from the External Review report, in the fourth year following the start of the External Review process. Please find attached this update, together with a copy of the Action Plan approved by Senate.

Based on this midterm report, my assessment is that the School of Resource and Environmental Management has made substantial progress toward implementing the Action Plan, within the constraints imposed by its budget.

REM External Review – Action Plan Update (December 2013)

Introduction

Since the external review of 2010, the School of Resource and Environmental Management (REM) at Simon Fraser University has acted on almost all recommendations made by the external review. If we have not acted in as comprehensive a manner as we would have liked, it is because of the very serious budgetary and staffing situation which has affected the entire university sector of British Columbia, including SFU. Within SFU, the Faculty of the Environment is arguably the most seriously affected unit of the university.

Changes in Faculty Complement of REM

Since the external review, REM has added one new faculty position (Energy and Materials Group), while a second approved hiring process for a terrestrial ecologist was cancelled during the recruitment process at the beginning of 2011. Since 2010, REM has also added a 50% joint position with a privately endowed chair (Liber Ero) shared with BISC, and had one colleague move to REM from another unit within SFU (S. Markey). During the same period, REM has lost one faculty member through retirement (fisheries), and had its associated Tier 1 CRC position withdrawn from our faculty complement. Currently one further retirement and one reduction of workload are under negotiations, while one new Industrial NSERC Research Chair position in avalanche research is in process of establishment.

Update on Our Responses to Specific Issues Identified in the Review

1. The Master's program (MRM)

The MRM program is the core program of the School. Our most recent external review recommended that we 1) consider greater flexibility with course work, and 2) reduce completion times. Since the review, we have modified our rules in order to allow students to take a second 'Directed Studies' course, and have instituted a policy of allowing students to focus the Directed Studies more directly on matters related to their research. Thus we have effectively reduced the amount of non-research-related time they are required to undertake. However, we have not implemented the suggestion of alternative masters' program options (such as thesis or non-thesis alternatives), both because developing new masters programs is currently not feasible given the other initiatives we are involved in and we would like to continue working on bringing more flexibility to our current model. We conducted a study of preferences among current students for thesis/non-thesis options and students were generally negative about that idea.

2. PhD program

The external review recommended changes to the PhD program to 1) reduce what were perceived as rigid course requirements before taking the comprehensive exam, and 2) increase the size of the PhD program as a whole. However, less than one year prior to the review we had just completed a major redesign of the comprehensives and proposal defense process, intended

to address these issues. Thus we have chosen not introduce any further changes until we have a chance to assess the effects of the existing changes.

Since 2010, the number of PhD students accepted annually has increased to an average of five. Increasing the annual intake of PhD students to the suggested 7-10 students might not be possible without more faculty, or more stable funding for graduate students. The larger number of PhD students has already been associated with a more lively 'PhD culture' within REM and other actions have been taken to reinforce this culture. The change of the format in the comprehensive exam has not so far accelerated the rate at which students reach candidacy. However, the majority of students now pass the comprehensives on their first attempt, and delays are in many cases caused by students already working on some aspects of their research.

3. Secure long-term funding

REM continues to rely on the Hakai Network for Coastal People, Ecosystems and Management, the Energy and Materials Research Group (EMRG) and the CFI initiative for long-term funding outside the normal funding mix. The first two groups, especially, provide significant support to many graduate students. Upon successful hire, the new Industrial NSERC Avalanche Research Chair would also secure long-term funding for two or three graduate students. All our members continue to look for long-term funding opportunities.

4. Maintain and continue to make advances in interdisciplinary, experiential and problem focused education

Much of what REM does is designed to operate in an interdisciplinary, experiential and problem-focused context. Several courses are designed as field courses and others have a strong field or more generally experiential components (e.g. REM 660 by A. Salomon, REM 656 by D. Knowler, REM 670 by K. Lertzman, and REM 655 by M. Rutherford). We would like to offer more such courses and have skilled instructors, but given the current budgetary situation, we can do this on a cost recovery basis only. We are currently exploring to what extent students are willing to accept further expenses for such courses. So far the support through the Collaborative Teaching program through FENV has been helpful in this regard.

5. Undergrad programming:

Since the last external review, REM has developed and offered four new undergrad courses, (REM-475 ***Conservation and Ecology of Coastal British Columbia***, REM-321 ***Ecological Economics***, REM-350 ***Sustainable Energy and Materials Management***, REM-200 ***Introduction to Resource and Environmental Management***), and is about to offer one further 300 level course. REM has initiated and contributed to the design of FENV initiatives such as the Environmental Literacy Minor, and is involved in developing the other new FENV undergrad programs. The total number of enrollment in undergrad REM courses has increased from about 600 in 2009 to 702 in 2013. The REM Minor is now designed and awaiting approval from the university Senate. With three other undergrad programs currently coordinated directly in the

Dean's office (likely starting in September 2014), and the lack of resources it is not feasible to create further undergrad courses within REM at the moment.

6. Aboriginal focus

Research and teaching by the Hakai Network for Coastal People, Ecosystems and Management and expanding research initiatives by faculty on the west coast of Vancouver Island and in Haida Gwaii have added significantly to REM's Aboriginal focus. A group of REM students and alumni have begun an initiative to review aboriginal content in the REM program. A number of courses currently have significant First Nations components, such as Introduction to Forestry, Resilience of Social-Ecological Systems, Parks and Protected Areas, Co-Management, and several planning courses. Our goal of hiring an additional faculty member focusing on Aboriginal topics (part of the REM priority list) has not been possible due to lack of funding for new positions.

Summary

REM will attempt to continue playing a leadership role in the education and research of environmental and resource management issues within FENV and SFU. However, given the scarcity of human and financial resources, it is important to acknowledge that any further expansions come at a real cost to our ability to sustain existing programming, as the Dean of the Faculty of Environment has already indicated upon the completion of the review in 2010: *"... I believe that the majority if not all of these recommendations can be accommodated in a timely matter and that REM is fully committed to doing so. All of that said it must be acknowledged that REM faculty are already fully engaged so that further commitments will come at a true cost unless there is some adjustment to their faculty complement."*



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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Wolfgang Haider, Director, School of Resource and Environmental Management	DATE	November 7, 2013
FROM	Glynn Nicholls, Director, Academic Planning and Budgeting	PAGES	6
CC	John Pierce, Dean, Faculty of Environment		
RE:	External Review Update for the School of Resource and Environmental Management		

In 2004 the Senate Committee on University Priorities endorsed procedures for reviewing a unit's progress in implementing the recommendations approved by Senate as a consequence of the previous external review (which takes place normally once every seven years). The last review of the School occurred in March 2010. This is to advise you that the External Review Update for the School of Resource and Environmental Management is due at this time.

Please provide a **one to two page** progress report by Monday, December 16, 2013 on the actions that your School has taken in accordance with the Action Plan (copy attached), which was approved by Senate on November 1, 2010.

Please contact me at 26702, gnicholl@sfu.ca or Bal Basi at 27676, bbasi@sfu.ca if you have any questions or concerns regarding the external review update process.

Thank you.

Attach.

EXTERNAL REVIEW – ACTION PLAN

Section 1 – To be completed by the Responsible Unit Person e.g. Chair or Director				
Unit under review REM	Date of Review Site visit March 10-12, 2010	Responsible Unit person, Frank Gobas, Director	Faculty Dean John Pierce, FENV	
<i>Note: It is <u>not</u> expected that every recommendation made by the Review Team needs to be included here. The major thrusts of the Report should be identified and some consolidation of the recommendations may be possible while other recommendations of lesser importance may be excluded.</i>				
External Review Recommendation	Unit's response notes/Comments (if any)	Action to be taken	Resource implications (if any)	Expected completion date
1. Master's Program Maintain existing Master's program and keep it a high priority. Consider greater flexibility with course work or chose a more demanding thesis with fewer courses. Completion times remain an issue and balance with PhD program .		REM will maintain existing Master's program and the Masters program will remain the flagship of the REM program. During the retreat several options for improving the Masters program were discussed including a (i) Thesis option; (ii) current program with reduced course load; (iii) change of current program to thesis format. REM GSC will consider these two programming options and gather data to present to REM EXEC in the Fall.	None	September 2011 for implementation
2. PhD Program Recent changes may not be enough. Lesson demands of comprehensive exam/ coursework. Options : Holling model (no required courses) with problem based	While we agree with the overall nature of the External Review's concerns about the PhD program, we disagree with some of their specific prescriptions for solutions – and have	To address these concerns REM changed PhD. program requirements last year. REM would like to see the changes through before making significant new changes. PhD Handbook will be revised to provide better guidance to students and faculty about the requirements for the comprehensive exam and thesis proposal defense.		Sept. 1, 2010

coursework, or develop fewer PhD exclusive courses.	data to back up our perspective.	REM will expand the Ph.D. program by increasing PhD intake to 7-10 students/ yr. We believe that increasing our PhD student population will have a significant impact on the nature of the PhD culture in REM.		
3. Secure more long term funding for graduate students.		REM will look for opportunities to bring in high-end long term funding, through the Hakai Institute, CFI, and others.		On going
4. Maintain and continue to make advances in interdisciplinary, experiential, problem focused model of education with adaptation to recognize the different needs at the undergraduate, Masters and PhD level.		REM will maintain and make advances in interdisciplinary, experiential, problem focused model of education with adaptations to recognize the different needs at the undergraduate, Masters and PhD level. REM's most important new contribution will be at the undergraduate level. See under undergraduate programming.		On going
5. Undergraduate Programming: Develop a greater role. - Environment One - Literacy Minor - More u/grad 3 rd and 4 th yr courses. - Fill in gap in 2 nd yr courses		REM will create new undergraduate courses in current areas (i.e.: ecological economics, law/policy, energy/materials to support the environmental science undergraduate program and the undergraduate curriculum at SFU. New faculty hires will allow for new courses to be developed. TAs from u/grad courses will help fund grad students.	2 new faculty positions Office space Lab / Research space	On going, and implemented over the next 1-3 years.

- Participate in Env. Science program.		REM plans to develop a REM Minor. REM will develop a larger Undergraduate program committee to work on Undergraduate initiatives (i.e.: REM minor, Environmental Literacy Minor, support of environmental science program). Undergraduate initiatives are considered FENV initiatives rather than REM initiatives REM will support FENV initiatives.		
6. Aboriginal focus - First priority given to "First Nations resources, sustainability and Environment"		New Initiatives include: Hakai, Haida Gwaii REM's current Aboriginal focus needs to be made more prominent and visible. REM will address this through our new website design. Course content is increasing (new course designs) and REM faculty members are currently working on projects with an Aboriginal focus. Hiring a faculty member with an Aboriginal focus remains a high priority for REM.	One new faculty position Office space Research Space	Currently, and developing over the next 1-3 years.
Others: - Play a leadership role in new faculty. - Create a greater public presence. - Planning program – build on current strengths.		We are playing a leadership role in FENV and are committed to continue this role. Our various new initiatives, referred to above, will contribute to improving public presence, long-term, large-scale research programs, and others.	While this isn't likely to translate into a clear call on SFU resources, all of these activities have a clear cost in the time budgets of individual faculty members – and since time is a zero-sum	

- Promote and support the further development of long term large scale research programs.			game, this must be factored in somehow. We are doing more externally at SFU than we ever have before, which means we necessarily are doing less of something else. There are issues of sustainability. Growth of REM's faculty complement associated with implementing new undergraduate initiatives in particular may help alleviate this.	
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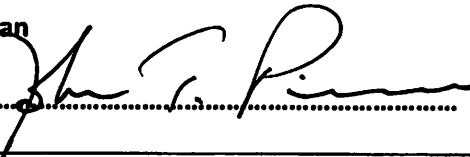
The above action plan has been considered by the Unit under review and has been discussed and agreed to by the Dean.

Unit Leader (signed)		Date
Name <u>Frank Sobas</u>	Title <u>Director REM</u>	<u>August 26, 2010</u>

REM External Review

The external review team (ERT) was impressed by the high quality of the teaching and research as well as the outstanding service contributions made by many faculty to the profession and larger community. The majority of the ERT's recommendations should be seen as relatively minor improvements in programming and/or building upon existing strengths. The most important are as follows: improving completion times for graduate students, introducing greater flexibility in the PhD program, expanding the role for REM in undergraduate teaching, (and associated with this a leadership role in new programming for FENV), developing greater opportunities for experiential and problem based learning and promoting a greater emphasis on aboriginal programming. I believe that the majority if not all of these recommendations can be accommodated in a timely matter and that REM is fully committed to doing so. All of that said it must be acknowledge that REM faculty are already fully engaged so that further commitments will come at a cost unless there is some adjustment to their faculty complement. I will work closely with the new Director to try and ensure the completion of these recommendations and in the process to ensure that REM continues to play a leadership role within FENV.

Faculty Dean

X. 

Date

