LIDC External Review Summary

Context of the Review

Six years after its creation and in light of the end of the term of its current Director, Dr. David Kaufman, a review was undertaken of the activities and impact of the Learning and Instructional Development Centre (LIDC) at Simon Fraser University.

The review was conducted, at the request of Dr. Bill Krane, Associate Vice-President Academic, by two external reviewers assisted by SFU's Dean of Library Services.

• Dr. Christian Blanchette, Director, Teaching and Learning Support Service, University of Ottawa (Chair)
• Dr. Heather Smith, Acting Director, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, 3M Teaching Fellow 2006, University of Northern British Columbia
• Dr. Lynn Copeland, Dean of Libraries, Simon Fraser University.

The reviewers relied on a number of sources of information such as:
1) A call for written submissions from the SFU community. Twenty-seven written submissions were received during the process (both before and after the site visit). These written submissions have been kept confidential.
2) A review of key documents describing strategic directions of SFU and a review of key documents illustrating the context, mandate, strategic plan and accomplishments of the LIDC
3) Interviews with key stakeholders from the SFU community from all of its campuses. The list of stakeholders and groups met includes:
   • Dr. John Waterhouse, Vice-President Academic and Provost
   • Dr. Bill Krane, Associate Vice-President Academic and Associate Provost
   • Dr. Joan Collinge, Director, Continuing Studies, Faculty of Continuing Education
   • Ms. Sarah Dench, Director, University Curriculum and Institutional Liaison
   • Faculties:
     Faculty of Business
     Faculty of Applied Sciences
     Faculty of Science
     Faculty of Education
     Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
   • Administrative and Academic constituents:
     SFU Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning
     SFU Learning Technologies Coordinating Committee
     Continuing Studies
     Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines
   • LIDC Administrative units:
     Education Support and Innovation Division
     Applied Research on Teaching Division
     Systems and Technical Services
     Media Design
   • A number of LIDC committees and working groups including:
     LIDC Directors Committee
LIDC Managers Committee
Communication Working Group
Educational Technology Working Group
Learning Technology Working Group
Teaching Enhancement Working Group

Time was set aside for confidential meetings with members of the SFU community;
An open forum with the SFU communities from all campuses.

The structure of the review was designed to be as inclusive as possible and to provide a
confidential process for the expression of SFU faculty and staff views.

Terms of Reference

The reviewers were asked to address seven questions. For each question a commentary and
recommendations were provided. A total of 27 recommendations were made.

Summary

**Question One: Does the LIDC assume a leadership role in creating an outstanding
teaching and learning environment for SFU's faculty and students? Does it employ best
practices in serving the needs of the University community within the areas of its
mandate?**

Both at LIDC and at SFU in general, there are leaders in the area of teaching and learning, yet
few people have a sense of the full extent of LIDC’s mandate.

**Recommendation 1.1: Development of an SFU Vision Statement on Teaching and
Learning & 1.2: LIDC should play a central role**

This should define teaching and learning expectations from students, faculty, and the
administration. SCUTL should lead and LIDC should play a central role in a consultative
process with faculty members, academic leaders, and students. Strategic directions for the
LIDC, faculties, and departments would be defined by an Academic Plan for Teaching and
Learning (Recommendation 1.3).

**Recommendation 1.5: Greater inclusion of faculty members in working groups**

Integrate faculty members in the working groups and in special project teams to respond to
teaching and learning issues as defined by faculty needs. First project: review Faculty
Development Framework.

**Does it employ best practices in serving the needs of the University community within
the areas of its mandate?**

Some of the face-to-face workshop offerings as well as the outreach models which inform the
partnership between the LIDC and the Faculty of Health and the Faculty of Business are best
practices in their areas.

In classroom technology, leading institutions are moving to all fully equipped classrooms
supported at a distance by control systems. The infrastructure at the Harbour Centre is closer to
best practice than the other campuses, which rely more on equipment deliveries to classrooms.
Media Design is as good as any commercial multimedia company in the Vancouver area. The multiple awards won by this unit are evidence of its high level of achievement. In ESI, the development of high end eLearning products of excellent quality merits acknowledgement.

**Recommendation 1.6: That the LIDC conduct a thorough needs assessment**
For a more strategic future direction, a needs analysis, following the articulation of the vision statement, should be designed and delivered.

**Recommendation 1.7: That an environmental scan of best practices at comparable universities be undertaken to serve SFU’s long term needs**
LIDC should dedicate resources to an environmental scan of best practices at comparable universities. This will provide insight into how other teaching and learning units utilize resources to meet their institutions’ needs.

**Question Two: Are the resources available to the LIDC being employed efficiently and effectively? Are there areas which require attention and improvement?**

Though no budget was received by the review team, there were perceptions that the LIDC had a sizable budget, with speculation that the budget was not being put to the most effective use possible.

**Recommendation 2.1: An assessment of the LIDC budget be conducted**
The new Director of the LIDC should conduct an assessment of all components of the LIDC budget, in collaboration with LIDC staff, to determine whether the financial resources available to the LIDC are being used efficiently and effectively. Managers should be responsible for their budget lines (Recommendation 2.2).

**Recommendation 2.3: That ESI focus on the eLearning portion of its mandate**
ESI has the dual mandates of eLearning and faculty development. Many members of the community have praised the quality of the work delivered by ESI while questioning the profile given to faculty development within the LIDC. To better use its human and financial resources, ESI should focus solely on eLearning development.

**Recommendation 1.4, 2.4, and 3.1: Create a faculty development division**
This group, solely devoted to faculty development, should bring together those with direct experience in faculty development from ESI, Administrative Services and Applied Research in Teaching, (ART would then be dissolved). It should also integrate as associate members the two faculty developers (in Health and Business).

This unit must include faculty members who can work with the LIDC as part of their service requirements or as faculty associates (similar to the plans of the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines).

Internal reallocation of funds to support this division can be found, in part, with a movement of resources away from the Applied Research in Teaching unit.

**Recommendation 2.5: A long term vision and plan be developed for classroom technology.**
There is a sense that Classroom and Technical Services, especially at the Burnaby campus, is significantly under-resourced. A long term vision and plan should be developed for classroom technologies.
Recommendation 2.6: Review of the cost recovery model associated with Media Design and other LIDC units.
Media Design operates under a corporate business structure with a cost-recovery financial model to provide university-wide services. They also have targets for revenue generation.

Does this financial model unduly direct the actions of this unit toward revenue generation as opposed to focusing on teaching and learning projects?

Media Design is not the only the LIDC unit funded this way – there are other similar LIDC activities at Harbour Centre and at Burnaby. There is a need to review the impact of the cost-recovery model on SFU core activities. Some of the services with price tags might not be accessible to certain SFU units.

Recommendation 2.7: Change the physical location of the LIDC
The location of the LIDC serves to undermine many of the efforts undertaken by LIDC staff. It’s in a labyrinthine location. The front office space is unwelcoming; the need to be escorted into the LIDC space was regarded by some as an impediment; there is a perception that the LIDC is “in the basement”; and the space allocation for workshops and staff is limited. The LIDC should have a ‘storefront’ location that is easily accessed and subject to foot traffic.

Recommendation 2.8: Establish an SFU Internal Ad Hoc Review Committee on LIDC staff satisfaction
Part of the low morale in the LIDC is a reflection of the constant structural changes. Part of the issue is also a sense of insecurity about jobs and a sense of little value attached to the work that they do. Concerns were also expressed regarding the transparency of budget and hiring processes.

We recommend that an SFU Internal Ad Hoc Review Committee of faculty and staff, supported by Human Resources be struck and be tasked with the development of a plan that is based on the best practices of team building in support of LIDC staff.

Question Three: 3. Is the mandate of the LIDC appropriately defined relative to other Canadian centres of teaching and learning? Should the LIDC's scope of activities be broadened or narrowed relative to this norm? If so, what changes in mandate, function, and organization would be implied?
"The Learning and Instructional Development Centre (LIDC) was established to provide support to the University community with respect to teaching enhancement, pedagogical innovation, instructional media development, and learning technology applications". At this time, the LIDC is not meeting this mandate, particularly in the area of teaching enhancement.

The LIDC is currently seen as a technology, rather than a teaching and learning group. Within the LIDC there are units that do not have explicit teaching and learning mandates.

Recommendation 3.2: Re-branding of the LIDC
It is necessary to re-brand the LIDC. All units should tailor their activities and visions to a shared vision of their role as a unit at the heart of the promotion of teaching and learning excellence

Recommendation 3.3: Reposition the LIDC Managers’ Committee as its main administrative body
To counter some of the morale issues and to enhance communication in the LIDC, the LIDC Managers’ Committee should be the main decision-making entity, rather than the smaller LIDC Directors’ Committee.

Recommendation 3.4: Creation of a new Associate Director, Faculty Development
This individual should be a faculty member seconded from within SFU or hired from outside of SFU. The eLearning and technology units would report to the present Associate Director.

Question Four: Has the "outreach" model employed by the LIDC been effective in establishing solid working relationships with SFU's departments, schools, and Faculties? Has the LIDC developed useful collaborations with other University administrative units?
The outreach model is supported by a newsletter and an effective website. Through specific partnership agreements, it has met the needs of the Faculty of Health and the Faculty of Business through the cross-financing of faculty developers. LIDC leadership has also been praised for establishing rich partnerships with administrative units.

The Writing Intensive Learning Office was very successful in connecting directly with faculty members and establishing long-term relationships with them by pairing a faculty developer with professors.

LIDC’s outreach model did not generate wide acceptance of its role and actions on teaching and learning issues. Faculty members repeated that they did not feel connected to the LIDC for their faculty development needs.

Recommendation 4.1: Expand the model of embedded faculty developers to the other faculties.
A larger number of embedded faculty developers would create direct services effective in fostering long term teaching transformations. These faculty developers should be connected to the new LIDC Faculty Development Division to ensure coherence in actions and ensure practices are shared.

Recommendation 4.2: Integrate faculty associates in the various LIDC committees and in its new faculty development division.
The presence of faculty members facilitates the identification of needs and to adapt service offerings to the disciplinary context.

Recommendation 4.3: Create clear links with the Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines
The establishment of the Institute is an opportunity to enlarge faculty development activities at SFU. A renewed outreach model should clearly articulate LIDC collaboration with the Institute. It would also enable the LIDC to concentrate its effort on faculty development and service offerings while maintaining the connection with scholarly activities related to teaching.

Question Five: Are the professional development programs and events delivered by the LIDC effective and well-regarded?
The numerous, diverse offerings held by LIDC are indicative of a group sensitive to a spectrum of needs and trends in the field of faculty development. A number of events seem to generate limited participation. Workshops focus a little too much on technologies.
Participants in LIDC activities commented positively about these events and services. Numerous comments were also heard about how such programmes should be expanded.

Negative comments were heard more about what should be done and about what is “seen as” faculty development activities serving marginal needs. We should be careful of discrediting the accomplishments of the group. Some of the opinions expressed illustrated lack of knowledge of the programs. Some faculty countered negative comments by describing some very good events held by the LIDC.

Recommendation 5.2: Establish annual survey of users and non-users of LIDC services. Coupled with formal participant evaluation of events (Recommendation 5.1), an annual survey will show programming strengths and weaknesses. Consultation and surveys of non-users could also provide the LIDC with more direct understanding of new directions: new information that may enrich its conversations with SFU academic leaders on new areas of action.

Question Six: SFU has three major campuses: Burnaby, Vancouver, and Surrey. Are all three receiving a high level of service from the LIDC?
Instructors at the different campuses experience a different level of service at each of the campuses.

Recommendation 6.1: The LIDC should establish annual needs analysis at each of the campuses.
This is to ensure that LIDC’s service model and offerings meet the specific needs of these very different communities. It should include both “users of services” and non-users.

Recommendation 6.2: Develop an LIDC service plan for each of the campuses. SCUTL can help develop a service plan. It should be based on the needs analysis and include discussions with key stakeholders on each campus.

Question Seven: SFU will soon undertake a search for a new Director of the LIDC. What characteristics should the new leader possess? Comment on the merits of an academic secondment versus a professional staff appointment.

Recommendation 7.1: The new director of the LIDC be a faculty member
A faculty member is recommended over a staff member to foster credibility both in terms of interaction with faculty members and to dispel the perception of LIDC’s technology-heavy orientation.

Recommendation 7.2: Characteristics of the new Director of the LIDC
The new director should be a faculty member with a history of teaching excellence, a commitment to and record of the scholarship of teaching and learning, have proven administrative and teaching & learning leadership provincially or nationally, change management expertise within similar units, a collegial management style, demonstrated abilities to establish partnerships to reach common goals, and should have a clear understanding of university culture.