OKANAGAN

The University of British Columbia
Office of the Provost

Recommendations: College of Graduate Studies - External Review

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Background

An external review of the College of Graduate Studies was invited for April 21st and 22nd, 2008. The two reviewers, Dr. Mark Dale (U of Alberta) and Dr. Carolyn Watters (Dalhousie University) met with various stakeholders. The subsequent report from the reviewers, who proposed 16 recommendations, is attached. On August 12th, 2008, the Provost met with the UBC Okanagan Task Force to review each recommendation, thereby concluding its advisory work to the Provost. Summarized below are our core recommendations drawn from the consultative process, highlighting the feedback from the Task Force.

Recommendation #1: Strike a sub-committee to examine the renaming of the College of Graduate Studies.

Both reviewers recommended that the College of Graduate Studies be renamed the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The majority of the Task Force endorsed this view. For this majority, this is the viable next step in transforming the graduate studies enterprise at UBC Okanagan. Clearly articulated responsibilities, rights, and accountability will necessarily flow from authority vested in a Faculty, thereby addressing reviewers' recommendations #1-4.

The minority of the Task Force proposed that now is a good time to think of the interdependence of Graduate Studies and Research at UBCO. Changing the name from College to Faculty does not seem as important for the size of our Campus. Instead, we should consider combining the Office of Graduate Studies and the Office of Research Services into an Office of Graduate Studies and Research under the direction of a Director who reports directly to the Provost.

Recommendation #2: Strike a Senate Sub-Committee to guide the transformation of the College following recommendation #1.

The College of Graduate Studies would need to prepare for such a move, as would the entire institution. We therefore recommend that Senate strike a sub-committee to consider that the name change to take place sometime during the time period of 2008-10. We request guidance as to how such a transformation would take place and under what guidelines. It would, of course, be Senate's prerogative if more than one sub-committee was necessary.

Recommendation #3: Establish a Graduate Studies Council

The Task force endorsed the reviewers' recommendation that Senate should approve the formation of a Graduate Studies Council, chaired by the Dean responsible for Graduate Studies. Furthermore, this Council would report regularly to Senate through the Senate Learning & Research Committee. Annually, Senate could also expect a report endorsed by Council on the metrics and objectives met by Graduate Studies. The mandate and composition/membership on this Council would need to be delineated.

Recommendation #4: Provide resources/funding commensurate with our growing graduate program

This recommendation was unanimously approved by the Task Force. The funding issue permeates two levels. First and foremost, our major thrust must be to develop excellence in our programs, and this means attracting and retaining excellent students with adequate monetary support. It also means having supports in place for students in order to help them remain competitive. Second, the Graduate Studies Office needs to achieve an economy of scale while offering the same scope of service as larger institutions. Currently, some areas of support need bolstering (i.e., another staff person) in order to serve our students and keep pace with our development.

Recommendation #5: Appoint a "Coordinator" for the Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies [IGS] program

The reviewers suggested that the functions of the IGS program be explicitly described and more important, that administrative responsibility for this program should be delegated to an arms-length director, not the Dean of Graduate Studies (as is currently implied in the Calendar). The Task Force directed Acting Dean Mathieson to provide advice. She subsequently met with an ad-hoc group of IGS program coordinators, who reiterated this recommendation. Like any other program in the institution, IGS needs a person with central coordinating responsibilities. However, there are resource (workload) implications for this recommendation which need to be worked out along with expectations for the person who assumes this role.

Additional Directives

Several of the reviewers' recommendations are considered directives that need to be spearheaded at the local level by Graduate Studies. These directives revolve around

a) establishing a small Program Committee with representation across teaching faculties to review proposals for new graduate programs and program modifications; this committee would replace the current Graduate Studies Curriculum Committee;

b) developing with the Faculty Deans (formal) communication processes for feedback about problematic graduate supervision;

c) developing and maintaining a branded Graduate Studies website;

d) ensuring that UBC O students have access to scholarships equal to those for UBC Vancouver.

The Task Force also briefly discussed the need for Graduate Studies to review and/or establish with Faculties/programs the baseline procedures common to all thesis defences, versus those that can be varied across programs.