

APPENDIX 2

October 12, 2005

To: All Faculty members

From: Lorne A. Whitehead
Vice President Academic and Provost

Re: Public Forum – Discussion Paper, *Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society: Options for Academic Growth*

I have received the report from the Ad Hoc Committee charged with advising me on the structure and format of the public forum to follow up on the feedback received in response to the “Complementing Disciplinarity” discussion paper and to further discuss possible options of advancing interdisciplinarity at UBC. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of this committee: Graeme Chalmers, Sîan Echard, Brett Finlay, Herbert Rosengarten, and George Sawatzky, for their thoughtful consideration and recommendations. Although the committee’s initial mandate was focused on the design of the forum, the forwarded recommendations addressed additional aspects of the consultation process which I am pleased to accept.

The Ad Hoc Committee recommendations addressed three specific issues:

1. **The desirability and means of sharing the input received through the consultation process.** In this regard, the committee recommended that “the Provost encourage faculty members who have submitted written comments on interdisciplinarity to share their thoughts with their colleagues. It is not felt to be appropriate for the Provost’s office to carry out this dissemination, as the input was sought without a request for publication. However, individual faculty members can do this and they may even wish to set up a web site or list serve to expedite such sharing of ideas.” I fully concur with this recommendation.
2. **Establishment of an Advisory Committee on the future of interdisciplinarity at UBC.** The Ad Hoc Committee recommended that this committee be “made up of senior researchers familiar with the issues surrounding interdisciplinarity but not likely to have their views unduly influenced by administrative priorities” and representing “different areas of the university, all with a strong and demonstrable interest in interdisciplinary research (including at the undergraduate level).” The Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the Advisory Committee be established prior to the forum, so the members could be provided with the feedback received in response to the “Complementing Disciplinarity” paper beforehand and could attend this event as their first item of business. This would enable the discussion at the forum to inform the Advisory Committee’s work. The Ad Hoc Committee also suggested that, while it would be helpful for me to interact with the newly established committee, I should not be a member. The Ad Hoc Committee

recommended that the Chair of the Advisory Committee submit its report to me by December 31, 2005.

I am pleased to accept this recommendation and will commence appointing members to the Advisory Committee. I have received several comments stressing the importance of a balanced, inclusive representation on such a committee, and I am in full agreement with that view.

3. **The focus, format and timing of the forum.** The Ad Hoc Committee recommended that the forum be focused on: “Models of Interdisciplinarity: Future Growth of Interdisciplinary Research at UBC.” While I am comfortable with this recommendation, I would like to extend the scope of the forum to also include “Interdisciplinary Teaching.” The forum will have a facilitator (ideally a respected academic administrator currently not serving in such capacity at UBC), who will convene the meeting. The meeting will consist of three parts:
 - a. an introduction by the Provost outlining the feedback received in response to the “Complementing Disciplinarity” consultation paper;
 - b. presentation by the facilitator of invited speakers “who will discuss the model of interdisciplinary research with which they are familiar, including goals and achievements, administrative organization, and possible concerns or difficulties. Specifically, they should mention what their experiences have taught them about the issues currently under discussion, and suggest what should happen next”; and
 - c. a question-answer session chaired by the facilitator, with concluding remarks provided by the Chair of the newly constituted Advisory Committee.

These recommendations will guide the preparations for the forum, with more specific information about the contributors and the timing of each of the forum components to be provided closer to the event.

The Ad Hoc Committee also recommended that the forum be held in late October or early November, and plans are underway to finalize a date that will be announced shortly.

Once again, I would like to thank all who have contributed so far to this important consultation process and I look forward to the upcoming forum as the next important step in this exchange.