

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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March 27, 2006

To: All Faculty Members

From: Lorne A. Whitehead
Vice President Academic and Provost

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Lorne A. Whitehead.

Re: Optimizing Interdisciplinarity at UBC

As you know, for some time now a consultation process has been underway with the academic community with regard to optimizing interdisciplinarity at UBC, including the possibility of organizational changes. This process has resulted in a report by Dr. John Gosline. A summary of the process leading to this report follows.

A document entitled "Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society: Options for Academic Growth" dated May 2005, together with a Call for Input, was distributed widely last summer. Many responses were received offering a variety of points of view and containing much thoughtful advice.

In September 2005, an *ad hoc* committee, chaired by Dr. Herbert Rosengarten, was established to review the information received and to advise on how best to ensure that all points of view were considered in a fair, effective and transparent manner, and on the most appropriate format for the Public Forum that had been announced in the Call for Input. The committee's recommendations were summarized in my memorandum to all faculty dated October 12, 2005. Among the recommendations was the establishment of an *ad hoc* advisory committee on the future of interdisciplinarity at UBC.

The Public Forum was held on November 15. It was moderated by Dr. Howard Brunt, Vice President Academic and Provost at the University of Northern British Columbia. The presenters included:

- Dr. Margery Fee, Professor, Department of English; Director, Canadian Studies; Director, Arts One; Director, Intercultural and Community Programs; Graduate Advisor, Centre for Research in Women's Studies and Gender Relations
- Dr. James Frankish, Associate Professor, Institute of Health Promotion Research; Department of Health Care and Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine

- Dr. Kersti Krug, Assistant Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies (Dr. Krug read an address prepared by Dean Frieda Granot, who was unable to attend the Forum due to an unavoidable travel commitment)
- Dr. Philip Hieter, Director, Michael Smith Laboratories; Professor, Department of Medical Genetics, Faculty of Medicine
- Dr. Rabab Ward, Director, Institute of Computing, Information and Cognitive Systems (ICICS); Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Dr. Jeff Young, Professor and Head, Department of Physics and Astronomy; Materials and Process Engineering Laboratory (AMPEL)

The Public Forum was attended by all members of the newly established *ad hoc* Interdisciplinarity Advisory Committee, chaired by Dr. John Gosline.

Dr. Gosline has now provided me with the Report of the *ad hoc* Interdisciplinarity Advisory Committee, dated March 2006. This report is available online, along with the relevant background documents at <http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/>, that include this memorandum, and appendices consisting of (1) the document “Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society: Options for Academic Growth”, (2) my memorandum dated October 12, 2005 including the recommendations from Dr. Rosengarten’s *ad hoc* committee, and (3) the Report of the *ad hoc* Interdisciplinarity Advisory Committee, March 2006, chaired by Dr. Gosline.

I will now take this material to Senate for information and discussion. Dr. Gosline has kindly agreed to attend the April Senate meeting and speak to the Report of the *ad hoc* Interdisciplinarity Advisory Committee.

At the Committee of Deans meeting last week, the Deans undertook to bring forward to Senate any further comments from their Faculties. Consequently, I encourage faculty members, students and staff to provide any further comments via your Dean. However, I would also certainly be pleased to receive further comments directly.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Gosline and the members of his committee for their comprehensive and thoughtful report, which will be carefully considered. At the same time, I would like to emphasize that no decisions with regard to the specific recommendations of the report have yet been made. This report will now be considered in the context of the academic, financial and organizational parameters of the University.