

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Vice President Academic and Provost**

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## MEMORANDUM

April 26, 2006

To: Senate  
c/o Lisa Collins, Manager of Secretariat Services

From: Lorne A. Whitehead  
Vice President Academic and Provost

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'LAW', written over the printed name of Lorne A. Whitehead.

Re: **Establishment of the Department of Anthropology and Department of Sociology, to replace the Department of Anthropology and Sociology**

### Recommendation:

**I recommend that Senate approve the establishment of two Departments - the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Sociology, in place of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, effective July 1, 2006.**

This proposal is forwarded to me by Dr. Nancy Gallini, Dean, Faculty of Arts.

### Description:

Establishing these two new Departments in the Faculty of Arts will bring UBC into line with other major research universities in North America. Scholars in these two disciplines work in separate intellectual areas publishing in different journals and competing for research funding in separate categories. As well, students in each field pursue courses with relatively few overlaps, and seek higher degrees in Departments that are almost always separate. While both disciplines have much to offer interdisciplinary research and teaching, faculty at UBC more frequently do this in co-operation with other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences than with their counterparts in either anthropology or sociology. These new Departments will allow members to focus on core issues relevant to each discipline while choosing those opportunities for collaboration that make the most sense from their disciplinary perspective. Furthermore, three of the last four external reviews of the current Department have argued strongly in favour of separation.

Early in UBC's history, Anthropology and Sociology were linked with both Economics and Political Science. In 1955 Harry Hawthorn chaired a newly formed Department of Anthropology, Criminology and Sociology. In 1959, Criminology was included in the School of Social Work and the Department of Anthropology and Sociology then came into being.

### Background:

On March 14, 2006, the Department of Anthropology and Sociology (AnSo) voted in support of a proposal to separate into autonomous departments, a Department of Anthropology and a Department of

Sociology. This majority decision was reached after considerable consultation and discussion among faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students over the past academic year. Furthermore, a majority of both anthropologists and sociologists supported the motion to separate.

Recent discussions leading to the present proposal stemmed mainly from the most recent External Review document. An open forum was held to discuss this review with Dean Nancy Gallini, Associate Dean Peter Ward, AnSo faculty, staff and student representatives held on November 18, 2005. By early January 2006, three options on the department's future had been developed and circulated for review. These options were discussed at the regular Department meeting on January 17 2006. Following this, an open forum for undergraduate students to discuss the three options was held on February 2. An open general forum for all faculty, staff and students in the department, and any interested individuals in the Faculty of Arts was held on February 12. On March 2, the Head met with the Department's administrative staff to review the options. Following these meetings, the Head consulted with the department faculty to determine whether they wished further forum discussion. The Head then met with the department's undergraduate student society, and the graduate student society; both groups indicated that they were satisfied with the consultations to date, and were prepared to register their opinions through the voting representatives to the department meeting. The Department administrative staff sent a joint memo to the Head on March 7, indicating their support of the option to separate into two units.

Following the department vote, a Notice of Motion to divide the department into a Department of Anthropology and Department of Sociology was presented at a Faculty of Arts meeting on March 28, 2006. The vote was overwhelmingly in favour of division.

#### **Rationale:**

The issue of division is not a recent one, and has been a topic of consideration at numerous times in the history of the department. Three External Reviews of the Department have argued for separation:

- April 1981: "... a solution will be enhanced if the Department is in fact divided into two departments, one encompassing anthropology and archaeology and the other sociology."
- March 2001: "Seriously consider the division of the present Department into two: a Department of Anthropology and a Department of Sociology."
- October 2005: "Our committee was also unanimous in the feeling that a split would be conducive to a quality improvement in both departments."

There are numerous scholarly and strategic advantages to separate into two departments, including:

- Anthropologists and sociologists mainly interact in separate intellectual circles, evidenced by distinct professional associations, scholarly journals, granting council categories, etc. Two separate disciplinary units will bring UBC in line with the norm at nearly all other top-flight research universities – Toronto, McGill, Alberta, and Queen's, all have distinct departments of Anthropology and Sociology, as do Berkeley, Stanford, Chicago, Michigan, Wisconsin, Harvard, and Princeton (among many others.). The recent European Commission-Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education ranking shows that, of the top 50 universities in the world, only UBC (ranked 35<sup>th</sup>) has a combined department of Anthropology and Sociology. Also, none of the top 25 ranked North-Latin America universities (UBC ranked 29<sup>th</sup>) possess combined departments similar to the UBC situation.

- The creation of two new units was supported by three External Review committees, at least in part, because these committees thought this would enhance the ability of anthropologists and sociologists to engage in strategic planning that would enhance the quality of teaching, research, and service at UBC.
- The creation of a Department of Anthropology, and a Department of Sociology, will provide a stronger identity and voice for each discipline within the Faculty of Arts and within UBC as a whole. Issues and interests of the respective disciplines will be represented by academic experts in decision-making bodies. It will allow each unit to promote its own candidates for faculty positions, graduate scholarships, etc.—wherever the university or Dean's Office requires a single departmental voice.
- The creation of two new Departments will not impair interdisciplinarity insofar as it is already practiced by colleagues. It will enhance the integrity of the two respective disciplines, who will now speak with individual voices at the same decision-making tables.
- Two distinct departments will produce an efficiency gain, as only issues pertinent to the disciplines will be the focus of department discussion and action. Also, the creation of two units from the existing department will eliminate the complicated present structure that constrains the individual programs from reaching full development.
- Heads of a Department of Anthropology and a Department of Sociology with research and teaching experience in their respective disciplines will be better able to pursue potential hires. They will also be better able to preserve disciplinary integrity during departmental decision-making processes without eliminating important interdisciplinary linkages.

### **Implementation:**

Pending approval from the various levels of administration, the two units would be established on July 1, acknowledging that a transition period will be necessary to fully implement all of the changes. Taking into account retirements and appointments effective July 1, 2006 the Department of Anthropology would have 21 faculty (18.4 FTEs), and the Department of Sociology would have 16 faculty (15.1 FTEs). A committee will be struck to draft a memorandum of understanding between the two new units to address issues of mutual concern (e.g., staffing, curriculum, and building space use.)

It is important for colleagues outside the Department to know that the anthropology and sociology minors, majors, honours, and graduate programs are sufficiently distinct; therefore, no curriculum changes are necessary for the separation to proceed.