Great Northern Way Campus

Academic Governance and Administration of Degree Programs

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide description of the principles of academic governance proposed for programs at the Great Northern Way Campus (GNWC) and the administrative mechanisms proposed for their implementation. The institutional context and history of the GNWC are provided to assist readers.

Background

In 2001, four major post-secondary institutions joined together to establish the Great Northern Way Campus (GNWC) in Vancouver. The British Columbia Institute of Technology, the Emily Carr Institute, Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia are jointly co-owners of the 8.9-hectare parcel of land on Great Northern Way, located between Clark Drive and Main Street.

The GNWC institutions are committed to work together, in concert with Provincial and Federal governments, the City of Vancouver, industry and other entities, to build a unique, integrated centre of excellence in teaching/learning, research and entrepreneurship, with program and collaborative research opportunities not available on any one campus.

In 2003, the Senates and Education Councils of the four GNWC institutions considered and approved in principle the Great Northern Way Campus Academic Vision document (with caveats, in one case, about the due diligence required prior to participation in GNWC programs). In 2004, the Academic Planning Committee of the GNWC completed the first Strategic Academic Plan which identified the following program areas for initial development: Urban Sustainability, Transforming Arts + Culture, and Digital Media. It also discussed the range of options for program development, governance and implementation.

Over the last two years, significant progress has been made in each of these three areas. Briefly:

Urban Sustainability: UBC is about to break ground on the Campus for the construction of the Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability, which will house activities of all four GNWC partners. The Learning City Group has offered a number of courses in urban sustainability; courses jointly designed and taught and were “officially” hosted by one of the GNWC partner institutions.

Transforming Arts + Culture: The former Finning welding shop has been converted into a Black Box Studio, which provides a venue for artists to explore the boundaries of their crafts. It has housed a range of activities and art installations; it served as the centerpiece of “Earth: the World Urban Festival” the official arts and culture festival of the World Urban Forum June 21-25, 2006, bringing artists from around the globe to Vancouver to share their stories and experiences, and help build awareness of the role of art in creating livable, sustainable and vibrant cities.

Digital Media: In fall 2005, after completing three feasibility studies, the GNWC decided to proceed with the offering of a joint master’s program in Digital Media with the strong support and collaboration of the local new media industry cluster, represented by New Media BC. In February 2006, in response to a joint request from the GNWC and New Media BC, the BC Government provided a substantial grant to facilitate the offering of the program and the construction of a building at the GNWC to house it, as part of a planned major centre.

As noted above, to date academic programming has been in the form of individual courses hosted by one or the other of the partner institutions. The GNWC administration facilitated the registration and transfer credit for students from the other three institutions and, in some cases, funds were transferred among the institutions to cover costs of instruction. Some modest support was provided by the GNWC itself.

This delivery method is inadequate for the offering of full academic degree programs, and considerable time and effort have been dedicated to development of a workable approach for their initial governance, administration and delivery. The following description, in outline form (for now), is presented for consideration. It is recognized that as faculty members and other employees are appointed and as students are enrolled, the decision-making structures will need to evolve in order to include mechanisms for their participation.

Structure

The four GNWC partner institutions are signatories of the Shareholder Agreement under which they are jointly responsible for major decisions about the Campus, including acquisition and disposition of capital property and appointments to the Board of Directors.

The GNWC Board of Directors comprises three senior representatives from each of the four GNWC partners, the GNWC President and up to three "external" members. The Board's Academic Committee comprises the four GNWC institutions' Vice Presidents, Academic (or equivalent) and one other person from each of the four partner institutions, plus the GNWC President, the Chair of the GNWC Board and external members. The Academic Committee has responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of the highest academic standards for GNWC programs. Its approval is prerequisite to seeking the approvals of the Senates and Education Councils of the partner institutions for GNWC academic programs.

The Academic Committee and Board of the GNWC recommend the following guidelines for offering of programs at the Great Northern Way Campus:

For each Program initiative, a Program Steering Committee will be established; it will report to the Academic Committee. It will have faculty representatives from each of the GNWC institutions, student representatives and external member(s). Each Steering Committee will have responsibly for the operation of its program and thus will serve in a role similar to that of an academic department. The Director of each program will be responsible to the Academic Committee for all matters related to academic content.

Credentialing

The Great Northern Way Campus will not be an autonomous degree granting institution and Provincial base (FTE) funding is not anticipated. Rather, GNWC degrees will be conferred by virtue of the credentialing authority of the four GNWC partner institutions. Recruiting information, websites, transcripts, degree parchments and similar materials will carry the crests of all four partner institutions. Program establishment will require approval by the Senates or Education Councils of the four institutions, consistent with their established procedures. Approvals by the institutions will also be required for substantial changes to the program.

Status of the Director and Faculty Members

Each program's Director will be its academic and administrative leader. Appointment may be at a host institution or may be made under contract to GNWC; in the latter case, it is expected that the Director will be appointed as an adjunct professor at one or more of the GNWC institutions. In either case, appointment will be subject to approval by the GNWC Academic Committee and Board. All regular continuing faculty members in the program will be appointed at one or the other of the four GNWC institutions, following its normal appointment procedures, with input from the program Director. The institution of appointment for each position will be determined by the GNWC Academic Committee. Faculty members will be seconded to the GNWC program and housed at the GNWC, with the expectation of involvement also with the institution at which they are formally appointed - for example, via graduate supervision and/or service on committees. Infrastructure support for research will be provide by the GNWC. It is expected that regular faculty members at the GNWC institutions will wish to be associated with GNWC programs and their participation will be welcomed.

Student Status

Students will be housed physically and administratively at the Great Northern Way Campus. The Campus will take full responsibility for recruitment, admission, registration, fee collection, advising and provision of other services. This will involve creation of a full GNWC policy framework to govern academic matters (admission, grades, etc.), financial matters (fees, etc.), and student conduct (integrity, harassment, etc.). The principles underlying the GNWC policies will be fully consistent with the relevant policies of the four GNWC partner institutions. For essential and appropriate services that cannot be provided by the GNWC, arrangements will be made to offer them to GNWC students through contract services with any of the GNWC institutions, or other appropriate parties.

Staff Status

Recruitment, appointment, supervision and all other human resource aspects of relationships with other program employees - including administrative, professional, technical and clerical staff - will be accomplished via contracts with the GNWC. This will involve creation of a full GNWC policy framework to govern workplace matters including appointment, compensation and conduct.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this proposal will receive approval by the four GNWC partner institutions and that this exciting, unique opportunity at inter-institutional, multi-sector collaboration can proceed to fulfill its potential.