

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Vancouver Senate Ad-hoc Committee on Academic Advising Issues relating to a Culturally Diverse Student Body

c/o
Enrolment Services | Senate & Curriculum Services
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1 April 2008

To: Vancouver Senate
From: Ad hoc Committee on Academic Advising Issues relating to a Culturally Diverse Student Body
Re: Reporting Deadline

At the 16 May 2007 meeting of Senate, the Ad Hoc Committee on Academic Advising Issues relating to a Culturally Diverse Student Body was struck. Since that time, the committee has had the opportunity to meet with many interested groups from across campus, and offers a progress report for your information (attached).

In order to fulfill its mandate, the committee respectfully requests that you consider the following motion:

Motion:

That the reporting deadline of the Ad hoc Committee on Academic Advising Issues relating to a Culturally-Diverse Student Body be extended from April 2008 to October 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Elizabeth Dean, Chair
Senate Ad hoc Committee on Academic Advising Issues relating to a Culturally Diverse Student Body

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To: Vancouver Senate

From: Senate Ad hoc Committee on Academic Advising Issues Relating to a Culturally-Diverse Student Body

RE: Progress Report (Information)

AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC ADVISING ISSUES RELATING TO A CULTURALLY-DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Dr. Elizabeth Dean (Chair), Senator, Faculty of Medicine
Dr. George Bluman, Senator, Elected by the Joint Faculties
Ms. Mackie Chase, Director, UBC Centre for Intercultural Communication
Mr. Brendon Goodmurphy, Vice-President Academic, UBC Alma Mater Society; Student,
Faculty of Arts
Dr. Paul Harrison, Senator, Elected by the Joint Faculties
Ms. Janet Mee, Director, Access & Diversity Office
Mr. Raymond Pan, Senator, Elected by the Students At-large
Mr. Walter Sudmant, Director, Office of Planning and Institutional Research
Dr. Robert Tierney, Senator, Dean of Education
Dr. Ronald Yaworsky, Senator, Convocation

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

To identify the factors related to cultural diversity that may affect a student's academic success (including cultural barriers and facilitators), and whether such factors influence help-seeking and resource-seeking if a student begins to have difficulty;

To develop recommendations that can be implemented to assist international and immigrant students, in particular, in accessing and understanding academic policies and procedures, identifying resources that would assist them in understanding policy (in particular when students begin to have difficulty) and that this information and its delivery are provided in a culturally sensitive and competent manner; and

To report back to Senate with recommendations as above by April 2008.

ACTIVITIES:

The committee has convened 5 times since it was commissioned in May 2007. Our mandate was first to verify the best we could whether international and immigrant students disproportionately run into problems compared with other students, and whether these students are disproportionately represented at the Senate Committee on Appeals on Academic Standing and the Senate Committee on Student Appeals on Academic Discipline.



Stakeholders of Interest to the Committee:

International and immigrant students
Student service providers on campus
Faculty members

SUMMARY TO DATE:

- Informal review, due to confidentiality issues, of students who come before the Senate Committees on Appeals on Academic Standing and Student Appeals on Academic Discipline; based on surname alone, concern supported
- Review of student service providers on campus particularly those with a focus on cultural diversity (with respect to ethnicity and language)
- Review of existing data bases – Walter Sudmant, Director of Planning and Institutional Research, UBC; National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)

On 21 January 2008, the committee met with student service providers. Service providers present at the meeting:

Faculty of Applied Science

Ruth Kwok Student Recruiter/International Student Coordinator, Engineering Student Services

Faculty of Arts

Indy Batth Academic Advisor, Transition & Retention, Arts Academic Advising Services

Jessica Harris Academic Advisor, Arts Academic Advising Services

Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration

Jamie Tooze International Student Coordinator, Undergraduate Program, Sauder School of Business

Faculty of Education

Yvonne Brown Manager, International Initiatives, External Programs and Learning Technologies

Gary Rupert Program Coordinator, Teacher Education Office

Faculty of Land and Food Systems

Joshua Robertson Advising Officer

Faculty of Science

Stacey Simpson International Student Coordinator

Janet Sinclair Student Development Officer

Cathy Tan Advising Clerk

School of Human Kinetics

Fran Harrison Undergraduate Program Administrator

School of Music

Rayne Graham Student Advisor



Themes that emerged related to perceived barriers and facilitators for international and immigrant students in accessing and navigating support systems at UBC included the following principal areas: Language issues, culture shock, being away from family, stigma of help-seeking, availability of academic advising resources, racism, university policy, accent, privacy, appeals system, at-risk students who fall through the cracks, and power issues.

Perceived areas of success related to support systems at UBC for international and immigrant students included: AGSC 100 (a 1 credit course providing students with an Orientation to the programs and learning environment and core values of the Faculty of Land and Food Systems), orientation sessions, tri-mentoring programs, open-door policy, follow-up, faculty members reporting 'red-flag' behaviour, parents' orientation.

Suggestions: Coordination of services for international and immigrant students to help streamline services (minimize gaps and potential overlap), cultural facilitators, ombudsperson, UNIV 101 (for-credit or not-for-credit course designed to help first-year students adjust to the university, develop a better understanding of the learning process, and acquire essential academic success skills), cultural training for staff/faculty/administrators, regular forum for faculties to come together and discuss these types of issues.

On 25 February 2008, the committee met with Patricia Mirwaldt, MD, Director, Student Health, and Michelle Suderman, Associate Director, International Student Development & International Student Advisor, International House. This meeting identified health-related issues seen by student health and international/immigrant students, and enabled us to review the process of admissions to UBC with respect to international students beginning with the pre-application phase, application phase, acceptance, orientation when still at home, orientation on arrival, and on-going orientation. Considerable sensitivity to this issue was apparent.

On 27 February 2008, representatives of the Committee attended a Meeting with the Associate Deans, Students. Common themes emerged: resources for international and immigrant students varied widely, with the perception in some faculties that students whose second language was English but lived in the Lower Mainland seemed less well-integrated and knowledgeable than international students. There was discussion about getting this cohort more involved. Strategies were proposed, e.g., students helping students, more peer supports (same culture and language) for international students and faculty point of contact for all students, even assured annual meetings.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

Student service providers may benefit from an overarching body to optimize their contribution to student needs, to avoid overlap of services, to avoid gaps in services, to share ways and means of making their services attractive and accessible to students in need.

There are considerable differences in the degree to which various faculties and departments support international and immigrant students.

Committee is giving thought to how outcomes of these student academic support services can be captured, so that student needs can be addressed and targeted specifically, and resources duly allocated. In the interest of confidentiality certain types of data that could be very useful in program development are not being collected.



PROPOSED REMAINING ACTIVITIES (IN ANTICIPATION SURVEY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN DRAFTED BY THE COMMITTEE):

That the work of the committee be continued. Most existing members are able and willing to continue to serve on the committee until the fall.

Survey of students – random survey and some focus groups posing the same questions as those in the meetings with service stakeholders to date; i.e., knowledge of services related to academic support; knowledge of access to services; satisfaction of outcome when accessed a service; if not accessed, why (no problem, or some perceived barrier).

Survey of faculty – random survey of their knowledge of student services related to academic support; knowledge of access to student services; perceived role in identifying students at need and directing students to these services; feedback regarding how this information can best be forwarded to faculty.

INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS:

Our intentions is to ensure that as many stakeholders as possible inform the Committee's final conclusions and recommendations resulting from its mandate (students, academic service providers, and faculty and staff), that a mechanism is proposed for coordinating the interests and work of the needs of these stakeholders, that existing and proposed data bases are tapped related to our mandate, e.g., Walter Sudmant at PAIR, and that some agreement is reached that could advance data collection across the service providing agencies/units with a view to better serve the stakeholders and distribute and use resources without compromising confidentiality and privacy.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Dean, PhD (Chair)