

Academic Plan – October 15, 2010

Anonymous Feedback

Thu 10/14/2010 10:57 AM

Email Address:

Suggestion: I am impressed by the comprehensive focus, the commitment to anticipating and meeting the needs of the larger community, the emphasis on celebrating diversity in various ways (including the recognition of flexible definitions of literacy). I am glad to see that there will be a clear process for evaluation of faculty and that there continues to be a commitment to teaching. I would like to see more opportunities for research time for faculty balanced by the commitment to teaching.

Thu 10/14/2010 1:20 PM

Email Address:

Suggestion: This latest version of the draft Academic Plan is a huge improvement (massive) over the earlier ones. The plan is ambitious but doable and I look forward to helping this move forward in whatever way I can.

Thu 10/14/2010 1:23 PM

Email Address:

Suggestion: Sorry, me again. Maybe the Academic Plan is not the correct document for this comment but the area of retention still seems to be lacking. Perhaps it is covered under the broader picture of the work to be done with Student Services. Enrolment management has been well covered, as is the subject of recruiting but while we can get the students here, hopefully have the classes available, how do we keep them here?

Fri 10/15/2010 11:04 AM

Email Address:

Suggestion: Page 9- The Purpose and Visionary goal both use the term 'learning' awkwardly. I don't believe we provide quality learning (maybe learning experiences). Also, we don't promote 'excellence in learning', I think what many strive for is excellence in teaching.

Page 21-Several literacies are mentioned in the 4th bullet point of action item #19; however, physical literacy (incorporates physical activity, nutrition, and wellness) is not included. Physical literacy is an important factor in people's quality of life (see 4th point on page 10 'Student learning, engagement and success') and is increasingly being supported in the scientific literature as a marker of academic achievement and life satisfaction. I think we have programs (SHAPE, RecTOUR, RMOT) and services (Campus Rec, Outdoor Rec, Health & Wellness centre) that are dedicated to increasing physical literacy among students and faculty.

Fri 10/15/2010 12:25 PM

Email Address:

Suggestion: This is a very spiffy looking document, but as for the content, it reminds me of grade ten planning class. In other words, there are a lot of choice words that make you feel like something is being done but you're not quite sure what it is. Sustain! Develop! Promote! Enhance!

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Maintain! I also think that while you want the profile of the University raised, if the emphasis is on open as compared to competitive access, the profile of the University will aspire to one with a mediocre education standard if you are not careful. If it is easy to get into any program it makes sense that they won't be as cutting edge as a program that you need to be competitive and REALLY WANT to get into.

Fri 10/15/2010 3:56 PM

Email Address:

Suggestion: I arrived at the meeting a few minutes late today and you may have already addressed my question.

Item 5. p. 14.

My question is why experiential learning has been highlighted under its own point. By doing so, could this imply to the reader that experiential learning at VIU has more significance over other models or methods?

Could bullets from Item 5., p. 14 be incorporated in 'Student learning, engagement and success' Item 2., p. 12?

Thank you.

Fri 10/15/2010 3:57 PM

Email Address:

Suggestion: There needs to be a consultation process with individual Departments regarding programs. There have been instances where programs have been threatened to be cut, or cut, with great unfavorable outcomes for students enrolled in the program or wanting to enroll, and for the Faculty who design and invested in the program, who might have been in the predicament of having to inflict on themselves serious burdens to save or try to save their program for the shake of their students and the protection of their academic work.

The negative financial, and personal impact on that Faculty member's life, and the negative repercussion on their academic profile needs to be examined. When a Faculty member has had to be sacrificing financial compensation, and academic advancement in order to make compromises to "save their programs", there should be a process to study ways of compensation for the Faculty member. Not only for fairness shake, but also in order to not demoralize, students and Faculty, who have invested in the program and find themselves all of a sudden forced to make serious sacrifices and decisions to continue on.

There needs to be a process where several ways of compensating an employee are examined, and the employee should have the option of applying for that compensation.

There is also a need to understand and promote programs which might have been cut, neglected or undervalued, due to incorrectly assuming the value, significance and promotional advantages that such programs could bring to the institution if properly heard and supported.

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There needs to be more and better dialogue mechanisms for employees to access their V.P., without fearing possible negative assumptions or implications. E.g.: That there is a process or mechanism in place that would allow employees to request meetings with their respective Vice President, they might be more inclined to request such a meetings without fearing misreadings or misinterpretation of such a request.

Regular meetings between Departments and their Vice Presidents should be encouraged. Departments might feel more empowered, resourceful and uninhibited discussing items with their Vice President, rather than having to go through their Deans or having to be with their Deans in the process, for many diverse reasons.

Open communication lines with Faculty is a must.

Faculty needs to feel heard, connected with and integrated in the institution.

There are feelings of disconnection, and of lack of mutual understanding with their Senior Administrators in many areas.

There needs to be a process in place, when a Faculty member or other employees, might address their V.P., without fearing repercussions from their Senior Administrator, or Dean.

Fri 10/15/2010 12:08 PM

To the Members of the Academic Planning Committee,

The October 5th draft Academic Plan demonstrates a thoughtful consideration and implementation of the feedback provided on the initial draft. We were pleased to see that virtually all of the concerns/comments we raised have been addressed and/or dropped from the October 5th draft. This draft represents a significant improvement. There was one issue of concern raised in our initial response that we believe requires further consideration for explicit inclusion in the Academic Plan. This issue should be reflected in the discussion on the 'Academic Community'. The draft Academic Plan provides some detail on proposed approaches to Faculty Evaluation, but is silent on approaches to the assessment of the leadership, management and administrative roles charged with the responsibility of creating the environment and providing the means that allow Faculty to execute their responsibilities. This is a significant flaw which seriously compromises any effort to develop a valued and meaningful approach to Faculty evaluation.

Only one new issue of concern was identified in the October 5th draft. This is in section 2 of 'Student Learning, engagement and success'. The second bullet refers only to the undergraduate curriculum, when it should refer to both the undergraduate and graduate curriculums. The MBA program is a significant program for both the Faculty of Management and VIU and would also warrant this type of review. This second bullet also refers only to the 'BA and BSc programs'. A reference to the BBA, MBA, MEd, etc. should be added or change the reference to 'the degrees offered at VIU'. We also feel strongly that the services provided by International Education should be included within the scope of the review of student services that directly support the learning experience referred to in the 5th bullet of section 2. IE plays a significant role in learning experience for many of our BBA and MBA students.

Respectfully,

The Chairs of the Faculty of Management

In addition to the items below, I would add Powell River Campus input as follows:

Recommendation 17: add to second bullet: recognizing the diverse range of activity at our locations throughout the region

18: Action: The Senate Standing Committee on Planning and Priorities is requested to provide guidance to maintain a sustainable mix of quality programs -add - in each of our locations.

Community Engagement: it is assumed that our regional presence is included in all statements that refer to VIU. The absence of any specific language pertaining to the region outside of the Community Engagement section of the document could be interpreted as focusing the role of the region on engagement alone, ignoring its many other functions (related to learning, discovery, achievement, diversity, and celebration). Community engagement is an important priority in Nanaimo as well as the other VIU communities, and it is not viewed as the primary function of the region.

Recommendation #23: is silent on the presence/role of regional campuses, as key assets that are strategically placed to help facilitate capacity building and partnership development.

Many of the recommendations call for working groups. How will we address the capacity needed to support this work? Will faculty and staff working in the region have opportunity to participate?

30. Communication: can the vision statement be summarized into a brief statement that we can use to communicate it effectively out to the world.

Thank you!

Fri 10/8/2010 11:44 AM

Subject: Academic Plan Response

There are a couple of items I would like to respond to in writing on the final draft of the Academic Plan;

Recommendation #7: Will capital projects be considered for campuses other than in Nanaimo? The wording infers one campus only as requiring attention to improve student life. I would suggest that this is a priority across the region, and that the investment should be appropriate to the size and scope of activity at our various locations.

Recommendation #20: I would ask that we consider including campuses in this, i.e., to encourage collaboration across departments, faculties, disciplines and campuses.

Thank you.

Arlette Raaen
Regional Principal, Powell River Campus

Sun 10/17/2010 11:01 AM

Dear Committee members,

My apologies for sending these over the weekend, I hope it is not too late. Although I attended the October 15 meeting, I'd like to make a few observations in writing.

First, congratulations for narrowing down the Academic Plan to a more manageable and easier to read/guide and assess document.

A p. 10 under Academic Community - second statement - why not write "Maintain *excellence* in teaching? Or some other qualifier that links to our uniqueness - Inclusive?"

P. 10 I strongly support the critique made at the meeting regarding the item "Develop a framework of appropriate identity....." what does that mean? Are we conducting a project of "social engineering"? Who is developing whose identity?

B The following comments/suggestions relate to the diversity of our academic community. While this diversity is our strength it can also be a challenge, particularly when we deal with topics such as "formalizing our statement of academic values" (#8 p. 16) or "formalizing a statement of scholarship" (#10 p 16)

Re #8 and academic values as "including the pursuit of the truth" - if all programs/faculty and students are to be included under the same statement, I don't see how certain programs such as vocational and trades might "be seeking the truth." This comment is not to demean certain programs but simply to express that our objectives in the knowledge we seek and share with our students may not be of the same nature and so the language that we develop under such rubric must either be distinguished based on our diversity or made less explicit.

Trying to lump everyone under false pretenses, will lead to a loss of credibility with our respective communities outside the institution. So the problem, in my view, is whether there is merit in seeking a "common denominator." We are unique and all our parts make up a great whole - but trying to fit all under one single statement of academic values might undermine that diversity.

Re #10 and formalizing a statement of scholarship. "Scholarship" is defined in Webster's as "the character, qualities, or attainments of a scholar." - I think that there is great opportunities and strength in the combination of our various programs - creativity and initiative can develop unique "niches" for our students. However, the idea of developing a single statement of scholarship for programs from hairdressing or carpentry to philosophy or psychology risks undermining either's credibility.

C Re #20 p. 21 "Encouraging collaboration" - given my educational background (study of World Politics/Economics) and my contribution to the Global Studies program, I am evidently fully supportive of such goals. However, there are a number of difficulties with the wording "encouraging"

The wording "Encouraging" collaboration across departments, faculties and disciplines sounds somewhat patronizing/top-down. Such collaboration must happen from the bottom-up and cannot be "encouraged" from the top-down. Such synergies develop through shared interests and even unexpected coincidences found through conversations. Stating that the Senate will be tasked with such a goal (more on top-down nature of process later) might be perceived as an imposition or manipulative process and could undermine this objective.

The word "Support" would be more respectful of faculty's autonomy and abilities to make such connections should they wish to do so.

The wording "support" will also reflect more commitment from the institution and therefore lend more credibility to it. Those who have been involved with academic "interdisciplinary" endeavours of the sort referred to in this section will have recognized the multiple challenges they have in common: maintaining cohesion among students and keeping faculty committed are the two most difficult tasks that do require institutional commitment/support at several levels, be it departmental/recruiting or individual faculty "double-burden" in having to cater to what might be the needs of two different programs.

D. Senate-driven process

My first observation is in support of others, at the Friday October 15 meeting, who questioned the top-down nature of having the Senate responsible for implementing/deciding on the various "actions."

I suggest that the "Action" items be complemented with the phrase "in consultation with faculties" or "pertinent stakeholders." This should be followed-through as the process moves along.

As is, the process makes the implementation of the Academic Plan a top-down process which breaks with the apparent participatory bottom-up process followed up until now. In addition, other aspects of the new VIU governance have been taking place through consultation processes whereby Faculty Councils have an opportunity to voice their views - why not this one given the importance of keeping everyone on board?

Sincerely,

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