

## **A Detailed Response to the Draft Academic Plan (August 16, 2010)**

John Lepage/ English

I hope to capture in this response to the draft Academic Plan (August 16, 2010) my attitudes to the overall sweep of the plan while drawing attention to many particulars.

There is a general disposition in my Faculty (Arts and Humanities) towards disgruntlement and outright anger in that the plan seems to evolve without response to the faculty's concerns and criticisms. I am not particularly negative on that score, but I wonder how long I can continue to be a voice for the making of positive contributions to a process that will prove much richer for such contributions. The plan has evolved too much as a chaotic mixture of serious and important issues and idle thoughts and not enough as the product of active discussion throughout the university.

I appreciate the effort to turn the plan into a grand and important work reflective of the most pressing concerns of our society and the twenty-first century world. This is evidenced in the narratives about the cross-disciplinary themes, in particular the sections on global awareness and sustainability. I hope that the plan will continue to capture our enthusiasms through strong and evocative language. However, the big-picture narrative is not consistent, and the sustainability section in particular threatens to drown out all other concerns. It is, indeed, too hyperbolic – hyperbolic even to the point of implicating faculty in the academic silos as the ignorant obstacles of sustainability. The section imparts a message of such doom and gloom that by the time we have finished reading it we have lost all thought of citizenship and civic responsibility – despite the fact that such responsibility must surely be the source of global awareness and consequent commitment to sustainability. The section on global awareness features a different order of hyperbole, seeming to have been fueled too much by the specific character and interests of the Faculty of International Education. At times, in reaching for evocative language, the document stumbles: “magnificence, beauty, wonder, and contemplation” (p. 12). The magnificent ancient Greek concept of magnificence appears overstated in this context. When the document leaps this far over the top, it is hard to take seriously.

The plan does not in my opinion sufficiently express the importance of learning as an end in itself. It pays too much lip service to a robust regional economy (although much less than most equivalent documents we have seen in recent memory, and for that it is to be applauded).

The plan's thematic ambitiousness leads it unfortunately to programmatic flights of fancy. It is too much to try to exemplify the themes through specific examples in the current program structure: that is to give disproportionate importance to the role to be played, for example, by Global Studies (a small and limited program, for all its worth, which only captures a small part of the theme of global awareness). It would be better if the plan laid out themes in such a way as to inspire consideration of how they might figure (one way or another) in all courses and programs.

This observation leads me to the related point that the document is haphazard in its degrees of generality and specificity. Sometimes it seems too general – even to the point of incoherence; sometimes too specific. For example, the section on evaluation needs none of the present detailed elaboration leading to the strange recommendation that we follow the model of Western Carolina University. Some universities look to Harvard for example; with greater modesty we have turned (unnecessarily) to Western Carolina. It is perhaps enough to recommend that Senate embark on a thoroughgoing study of evaluation so as to implement a structure that will promote the highest quality while being responsive to the distinctive needs of our university community.

The mixture of generality and specificity sometimes gives me the sense that this document is not sufficiently informed by a rich understanding of VIU. In any event, there are too many strange particularities, unsupported by reasoning undertaken in the document. Thus, many recommendations seem like the idle thoughts of individual persons, which inadvertently found their way into the draft.

The need to manage BA programs better than we have done may suggest the benefits of an amalgamation of Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences, but the recommendation is leavened by no such reasoning. Perhaps there are more effective ways of managing the BA – such as by virtue of the active leadership of a Vice President Academic seriously interested in the task. If the issue is that we have too many faculties, the answer is not necessarily to combine these large faculties. While I am by no means against the prospect of such an amalgamation, in my opinion it would be wrong for these important constituencies to be represented on Senate by an elected voice only equal to that of International Education or Management or Education or Trades and Applied Technology – or Science and Technology for that matter.

I cannot understand the thinking behind the recommendation for the Faculty of International Education. Indeed, I cannot imagine what courses or programs in the university could be moved reasonably to that faculty. There should be grave concern about giving a faculty with huge money-making responsibilities additional programmatic responsibilities. There are already faculty-to-faculty inequities in the area of fiscal support for instruction at VIU; it would be a shame to compound them.

Another idle thought idly expressed concerns a faculty of indigenous studies. There is much to be said for committing to a governance structure ensuring the participation of First Nations communities. At present, the recommendation seems too specific and not thought through to a reasonable conclusion.

These and many other particularities make the document seem too busy – too draconian – too vast and all-encompassing. Meanwhile, many important particulars seem to have gone missing. I will confine my remarks to one example. The small section on twenty-first century literacies does not mention reading and writing literacy. This is a glaring oversight. There is no twenty-first-century crisis quite like the crisis of our students' inability to read and comprehend (or impatience with reading and comprehending) single sentences, let alone paragraphs. We have no more important mandate than to assist them

in the task of becoming full citizens by virtue of their capacity to communicate more effectively in the society at large. The section on the Writing Centre is a blank page I would be delighted to assist you in filling.

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Here I will move through the document highlighting particulars.

I feel uncomfortable with “the primacy of teaching” (p. 1). I understand the context in which this arises (it is to run counter to the primacy of research), but I still object. For me, the pursuit of learning is primary. Teaching is something we take seriously because we value learning.

I do not – and I hope my colleagues do not – respect all forms of knowledge (p. 3). Nor do I respect them equally. The point is surely that if we value learning we must be open-minded about knowledge. The statement “Respect for all forms of knowledge” has terrible symbolism; it suggests the opposite to the serious discrimination we must bring at all times to the measuring and evaluation of knowledge.

On the matter of the clarification of administrative reporting relationships (p. 4), has there been a problem? The context for this statement seems inadequately established.

The statement about scheduling on the same page (p. 4) is almost incoherent. I think I understand it because I have read further into the document and because I know that some administrators have been calling for a centralized room-allocation, scheduling, and timetabling process for many years (anyway, more than a decade). The academic plan needs to ask the critical questions before offering cryptic answers.

I confess that I am unfamiliar with the provincial mandate language for VIU (pp. 7f.). (Clearly I have been sheltered by the administration from the misery of such knowledge.) Shouldn't there be a cited source for this? I would like to follow this up because I can hardly believe I haven't tripped over the mandate language before.

I have mixed feelings about the vision statement (pp. 9ff.). There is much to admire; some to regret. There is something insufficient about a “visionary goal” of being *trusted*. Being trustworthy is a good thing, but not quite as good as exhibiting leadership – or inspiring (as the first bullet suggests). Why inspire people with a sense of their prospects for the future? Why not inspire them to explore possibilities in the present? While I'm at it, I suggest that the term “visionary goal” is partly at fault, since its terms lie at odds with one another: vision is broad and absorptive; goals are narrow and limiting. The Objectives are uneven. For example, the second bullet seems to reduce the purpose of collaborative relations to optimizing internal needs; this makes our touted relationships with our communities seem disingenuous. The bullet highlighting “transition to the future regional economy” implies that we know precisely what that economy will be. Short of reasoning somewhere in the document (or somewhere – anywhere), it is presumptuous to assume that only multidisciplinary programs will address the future

needs. The second last bullet recommends a specific educational agenda of promoting awareness of global cultures (this is a snow job: who can reasonably object to such a noble objective? Well, without additional context, I do) while overlooking other objectives surely more urgent, without which our campuses will never achieve global awareness. What about promoting skills essential to a healthy society, such as literacy, numeracy, intellectual and mechanical problem-solving, as well as linguistic and cultural skills? (I must admit, however, that I worry about the adjective “healthy,” which is why I have reservations about the language in the proposed vision purpose statement [p. 9], especially “well being”; incidentally, isn’t our more important purpose to support human wellbeing and dignity worldwide? Ours seems like a stingy purpose.)

The whole section needs to be gone through with a fine-tooth comb. As things stand, I have lost sight of any meaningful distinction between a visionary goal and a mission (so much as to justify dumping the present mission and replacing it with a visionary goal), and the document is not helpful in this connection.

The name change to the “Outreach” and “Community Engagement” plan has taken me a little by surprise. The term “outreach,” instead of emphasizing our built-in relationship with our region and communities, has the effect of distancing them from us. Yet again, it makes our sense of ourselves seem disingenuous.

I like the mild forays into philosophy, such as “We work to live, and live well” (p. 12), even though they are not always very meaningful. I’m not sure I understand what “vocational liberalism” (p. 12) is, however. No, let me be clearer: I am quite sure I don’t understand the term. I have already commented on the last sentence in the same paragraph.

The section on dynamic diversity (p. 13) seems a little deep (philosophically) for a planning document. I like the last paragraph in the section.

On the distinction between divergence and the unifying opportunities afforded by our array of kinds of program and the integrating structures and strategies we may have at our disposal (p. 13), I fear the section overstates our advantages relative to many other universities. My experience is that many Canadian universities have been particularly adept at encouraging collaborative and partnership structures – and some have been able to do so much faster than we have. If the difference is that we have cultures that see themselves as “academic” and other cultures that do not, perhaps we can evoke that reality more explicitly. I’m not sure we have been altogether successful in bridging the gulf in mentalities, but this is indeed an area of opportunity.

The section on community engagement seeks to highlight a theme that I believe most faculty at VIU have accepted (and many have actively embraced). I like the philosophical aspect of the section (particularly the statement on intrinsic value – which should be borne in mind when we use such terms as “outreach”), but I wonder where the principles of the section come from. It would be nice to have had them validated either by some scholarly source or by the deliberations of some body at VIU.

The cross-disciplinary themes (as identified on p. 16) are all right in themselves, though I have some difficulty with the last one – not because Aboriginal culture does not play an important role at VIU so much as because I feel discomfort in taking it as a cross-disciplinary theme (or a theme at all). Perhaps it would be wise not to think of these themes as cross-disciplinary, but as topics of over-arching importance that the VIU community hopes to galvanize the enthusiasms of the professoriate wherever feasible. Labelling them cross-disciplinary suggests that we will create significant curriculum crossing over disciplines when it is hardly likely we will experience curriculum growth in the next few years sufficient to justify more than one or two such initiatives. A much more realistic prospect is for faculty in departments to embrace the themes in their approaches to their own disciplines. In this connection, I wonder if there isn't an undercurrent suggesting that disciplinary study is bad and cross-disciplinary study good. Silos are not good, but disciplinary focus is not by definition bad. We should advocate for solid general education, but let's not embrace "convergence" to the exclusion of "divergence" if that means not accepting the merits of specialized study as well.

Otherwise, the stated themes have the potential to be inspiring.

I suppose it is too much to hope for the consideration of human (as opposed to material) cultural needs in terms other than "social capital" (p. 17). This term leads to a degradation of the real values of a university. If an academic plan cannot sound appropriate symbolic notes, we might be better off without one.

I would be surprised if our First Nations "partners" did not object to the fourth bullet in the social capital category (p. 13). It is not a fit parallel with the other three.

I am uncomfortable (as I have said) with the identification of a "sustainable future economy" (p. 17). It presumes that we know precisely what to expect of the future. The somewhat comprehensive list is unsatisfying. Why, for example, should we presume that it is proper for us to lead in the transition from fossil fuel dependence? Instead, perhaps we should lead in assessing what roles nonrenewable resources should play in the near and distant futures. Do you see the difference between what we have said and what we might say? I find a bullet on creating jobs for young people, but there is nothing on preparing for the growing and perhaps seriously challenging prospect of an aging society. Of course, that is a much wider topic than relates to a sustainable economy, but it has vast economic implications. It suggests that the very category of a sustainable economy is too narrow to meet our economic planning needs. Sustainability is identified as a key theme elsewhere; let's not have it drown out our other concerns everywhere.

I like the section on citizenship and the civil society (except that I would call it "a" civil society) (p. 18). The emphasis on history is laudable. However, the section does not do sufficient justice to the other characteristics of a civil society: its intellectual capacity, or its capacity for critical thinking or theoretical and applied problem solving, literacy (including reading and writing skills), its capacity for meaningful communication in other ways (which is why "culture" plays such a robust role in university life), and numeracy.

The best of universities regard such capacities as values. There is much more to be said in this section. For example, no where do we say that we will foster a microcosm of society through communities of inquiry, expression, performance, and other forms of human exchange outside the class room. The plan does not mention these important values at all. Strangely, however, there is so much that we could do of a specific nature in such a category that one might have expected some of that specificity to find its way into the plan. We need plans and funding for public events, talks, lectures, performances, debates *on campus*; we need to promote original and experimental culture in all its facets *on campus*. We need even to emphasize individual pursuits alongside the fashionable calls for collaborative teams; the odd academic working in his or her silo might suggest something of the capacity of individuals to contribute to a civil society. These are important aspects of the section; if they are not, they demand some other place in the plan.

Indeed, the section on citizenship and a civil society is so brief (one page) that it is dwarfed by the four pages on global awareness and the five pages on sustainability. It is as if either we don't really care about a civil society or we have taken for granted its centrality.

The section on global awareness is good, though too specific to the history and accomplishments of the Faculty of International Education. Global awareness cannot solely be the product of a central unit of the university; it is an attitude. We have great reason to counter the insularity of many of our domestic students (almost literally, since insularity is an etymological condition of island dwellers). Yet again, this section has too much emphasis on sustainability. Global awareness is not important first and foremost for reasons of sustainability, and yet the text makes it seem not a little that way. There is also something somewhat categorical or dogmatic about the analysis of the "state of the planet" (pp. 19-20), found even in that phrase. The section comes to have the ring of a sermon or a "global warning." To specify the "exemplary" nature of programs such as Global Studies sounds a false note – as if the only ways of contributing to global awareness are through programs whose names confer the global. There is no better way to foster the awareness of a wider world than through languages, and yet the section gives no emphasis to the promotion of the study of language(s). In fact, the study of language(s) is far more contributory to social diversity than any number of workshops on diverse classrooms. I suspect the plan skips over the issue because it is mindful of the problems North American universities have experienced in maintaining language programs. Silence on the matter is inappropriate.

North American culture is fed by forms of insularity that justify considering ways of opening our students to a world of wider possibilities. It is difficult, for example, to find on television or in cinemas international films outside the control and influence of Hollywood. There is a cultural assumption that the familiar is, well, more familiar, and thus more comforting. How else to explain the representation of Vancouver or Toronto as some closer-to-home American city in Hollywood films? What does that say about the Canadian identity within such an insular context? Canadian society has absorbed some of this insularity without much formal visibility even to itself. I don't find that the

section on global awareness adequately represents either the problem of global awareness or the ways in which we may lead in answering the problem.

I do not understand how global awareness will be given additional profile by relocating academic programs in the Faculty of International Education (p. 22), and I reiterate that I can't imagine what academic programs would find a good fit with that faculty. But, since International Education is profiled in the section, I will suggest that the best way of using its infrastructure to promote global awareness is for the faculty to find ways of bringing more of its ESL students as a percentage of its cohort successfully into academic and other programs. To do this, it may have to apply increasingly higher standards in the admission of second-language students and put in place still better support structures for the students it admits as they make their transition into other programs. Otherwise, international students may not contribute in a meaningful way to the expansion of our domestic students' sensibilities; they will remain in the class room and on the campus in their own linguistic and cultural silos.

For the academic plan to embody specific programmatic recommendations (such as a Masters in Global Studies) (p. 22) is completely antithetical to the processes the must inform our curriculum decision-making. It is one thing for the academic plan to drive our decision-making in general ways (such as by requiring program proponents to indicate how their proposals fit with the priorities identified in the plan); it is another for singular courses of action to be sanctified by the plan without regard to the many qualitative and financial factors that enter into assessing program proposals.

As I have said, I like the bold philosophical bent of the document. Even so, the boldness leads from time to time to hyperbole. The section on sustainability is hyperbolic. A few statements stand out: "Humanity is at a turning point" (p. 23); "Our Canadian ecological footprint... indicates we are living as if there were three earths" (p. 23) "VIU is at the forefront of sustainability threat and opportunity" (p. 25); "If something is sustainable, it can continue forever" (p.26; it is statements like this that make me rue the erosion of religion and philosophy in our society; here, sustainability is treated as a capitalistic good leading to something like immortality; dare I say this: "Nothing is permanent." The Epicureans believed that change was permanent; like change, sustainability isn't a thing so much as an acknowledgement of temporal and physical impermanence.).

The list of aspects of sustainability (pp. 23-24) exposes the inherent weakness of the term. The list identifies specific projects related to a narrow understanding of sustainability (saving the environment) and a few others related to routinized processes (such as governance). How are we to measure what will make sound decision-making endure? Many very strong policies may be stronger for the certainty that they will not endure. What if we were to discover that governance structures we once found important and useful were no longer appropriate? The effect of the list is to make sustainability seem a bit of a catch-all term for practices that will ensure the long-term viability of the university. Isn't that what planning is supposed to do anyway – look forward to the future?

The UBC example (p. 24) is not helpful and has no place in our plan.

There is no need to repeat the visionary goal in this section (p. 25). Indeed, lest I haven't made the point already, I would like to take the "s" word out the visionary goal statement.

The statement "as traditional economies fade" (p.25) is presumptuous and subtly implies that "tradition" is by definition an impediment to sustainability and therefore a bad thing. The university's approach to innovation and change must be anchored by a lively sense of tradition. (I might add that many traditions have been maintained by societies precisely with the sustainability of such societies in mind.) It is in this connection that I find the doomsday message of the section most troubling. See my comments on tradition in the student experience section and elsewhere.

Among the specific suggestions in the section is one recommending the integration of sustainability theory into a "first-year requirement" for VIU students (p. 27). The statement seems naïve in relation to the great mix of programs at VIU. I suspect it is meant to apply to university programs in the way that suggestions for first-year university experience courses have done. I want to be supportive of first-year university experience proposals. I think we will find it difficult, however, to mandate broad and general study in the first and second years of undergraduate study (much as I see the merits of such an initiative, and much as I fear the overspecialization of academic disciplines) in the short term.

I like the teaching and research priorities bullet (p. 27).

As I have indicated, I am somewhat troubled by the Aboriginal culture section. I appreciate the effort to ground the section in principle, though I don't think the three stated principles are parallel and equal in weight.

The statement that VIU has two First Nations programs (p. 28) is seriously misleading. First Nations Studies is altogether consecrated to the study of First Nations issues. First Nations Child and Youth Care is a cohort of a Child and Youth Care program with applied and theoretical First Nations elements. It would be more accurate to say that VIU made an early commitment to First Nations education through the creation of an Arts One First Nations program dedicated to assisting First Nations students (primarily but not exclusively) to be successful in university undergraduate study (whatever the curriculum) while strengthening their intellectual and other senses of their own heritage; and through the subsequent creation of degree programs taking First Nations peoples as their primary academic subject. The Child and Youth Care program, recognizing the real and potential demand for its program among First Nations students, created a separate cohort tailored to the specific needs of these students. Indeed, in some ways the Child and Youth Care program has more in common with some of the listed special projects.

The list of special projects is also somewhat misleading (perhaps because of the term "projects"). I would rather the academic plan err on the side of not trying to represent comprehensively what we have done in the Aboriginal sphere. It would be better for the



plan to articulate general planning objectives for the future based on a narrative statement of the roles First Nations education has played at VIU and general societal trends.

Part of the problem of this theme is that it has two distinct aspects, only one of which may fully serve the institutional planning context. One aspect has to do with the extent to which programs and courses and their professors are culturally mindful of the role of First Nations people in our society. This might justify it as a theme meant to galvanize the interests of the entire university. As such, it seems to me to be a theme closely aligned with global awareness – a form of cultural awareness that it is incumbent on universities not to ignore. The other aspect of the theme applies to the students, faculty, and regional First Nations communities (who) that have direct or indirect connection with VIU. Their interests are not the same as the interests of the university as a whole, and from time to time their interests are radically opposed to those of the university as a whole. From time to time they will react adversely to increased self-consciousness about First Nations issues among the professoriate, inasmuch as that self-consciousness is in their opinions inadequately informed by Aboriginal knowledge. To the extent that this theme threatens to throw together and confuse separate issues, it calls for special care in its development. I don't feel that this section of the academic plan has been carefully worked out.

Since I am at best lukewarm to the First Nations theme, let me confine my further remarks to the following. One of the most perplexing challenges among First Nations communities on Vancouver Island has been the survival of their languages. The plan does not address this issue, despite the fact that VIU has from time to time attempted to do so. When I was Dean of Arts and Humanities, one initiative I thought might have long-term potential was the agreement on community-based languages we concluded with the Cowichan Tribes. We recognized that we would be unable to offer the Hulqu'minum language courses constantly being requested by First Nations communities because of the prohibitive cost (the courses were designed to be instructed by an elder proficient in the language and a professional linguist; that effectively doubled their cost). We initiated a process by which First Nations communities could teach the language courses on reserve and have them accredited by VIU. I thought this initiative might lead to other "partnerships," but I gather from general silence about it that it has drifted out of sight. However, since one of the great demands of the First Nations communities is some form of control of (or proprietary interest in) First Nations education, it seems to me that one avenue for that control lies in accredited community-based initiatives. The plan currently has nothing philosophical (or practical) to bring to the issue. Its mention of a Faculty of Indigenous Studies (p. 31) is short on the reasoning that would justify such a faculty, and I wonder how it would propose to deal with the proprietary interests of First Nations communities.

The section on the learning experience (pp. 33-41) is all right as far as it goes. The remarks on changing conditions in the learning environment do not identify what is meant by "traditional forms of learning" (p.34). I suspect the passage means static lectures before unquestioning audiences. The "traditions" informing the medieval lecture also involved one-on-one tutorials and small-group seminars, profoundly important

educational experiences often sacrificed in the postmodern university. One ancient tradition, the consequences of whose absence in modern education in general have not been adequately measured, is that of memory work. Memory is often dismissed as an unnecessary adjunct of oral societies. I, for one, would like to see greater attention given to memory skills in primary and secondary education. In short, it is not a given that our postmodern needs and our traditions lie in different directions.

While I agree with much of the language in this section of the plan, I'm not convinced it does justice to the differences between the learning experience at an open-access university, by contrast with universities that have exacting entrance requirements. On the whole, the learning experience is more difficult to manage at open-access universities. The relevant bullets in this section are the third and second last ones on page 34. The phrase "principles of universal design" and the ensuing sentence (p. 34) are obscure.

The presence of guiding principles for effective student learning in the plan (pp. 36-37) is inexplicable. I find the section too specific and prescriptive. The little subsection on twenty-first-century literacies (p. 36) does not mention the most important form of literacy, as I have already pointed out. The recommendation arising from these principles features emphases consistent with VIU's general attitude, though they are not in themselves parallel. I suspect all four are commitments (not simply the first), though the last two seem more like conditions necessary to put in place in order to express our commitment to student success and in order to promote a transformative experience. I recognize in the student success section (p. 38) more of VIU's recent attitudes and desires than in much of rest of the plan.

The transformative experience section (p. 39) is very positive. As I have remarked elsewhere, it is not supported by related aspects of the plan, such as the section on citizenship and a civil society (which should place more emphasis on the modeling of societies in the campus society).

The section on the core experience of learning (p. 40) is awkward. We have not had a campus-wide conversation on core values and expectations for undergraduate degree programs (much though I would like to do so), for example. We are not in a position to identify common outcomes for all such programs. Thus, we are not clear on what degree of breadth and depth we wish to expect from such programs. It is one thing for the plan to recommend that we identify the commonalities of degree programs and the common outcomes, and that we define precisely what commonalities we want to build into the first year of the degree program experience, but it is too much to hint in a veiled way at core experiences. It is conceivable to conclude that there are no universal core experiences. Some distinguished universities have done so. I don't favour that approach, but I can't help but think this section of the plan is somewhat presumptuous. This is what happens when an enrollment management committee, working in relative isolation, expresses thoughts but doesn't take those thoughts to the academic community. (Incidentally, in my opinion there are some good things in the section.)

The section on enabling features of the learning environment (p. 41) is, as I have said, awkwardly coordinated with the other relevant sections. It sounds a theme of flexible means of entering the university, achieving credit, and transporting credit. There ought to be a general caveat in this section that the enabling features will be implemented subject to a commitment to high standards. The verdict is not in on all forms of credit achieved through community engagement. The section guarantees access to faculty and faculty mentoring; it does not guarantee other supports, remedial or otherwise. The plan does not identify why access to faculty is so critical (as I think it is). Given the level of detail about other things, this is a conspicuous shortcoming of the document.

It is laudable that the plan has a section on academic values (pp. 43-47). Even so, it is not altogether clear, in context, why the given values have a place in the plan. The list of values is not perfectly coordinated but I am largely happy with it. I reiterate my objection to “Respect for all forms of knowledge,” a standard simply not in keeping with academic excellence, ethics, citizenship, or scholarship. Intellectual open mindedness is an appropriate academic value. The capacity to discriminate without prejudice is a value.

I don't think recognition is a value as stated (p. 43). We value academic excellence and we value achievement, and we need to have the courage to acknowledge special achievements above and beyond the high basic standards we may have set for faculty in general. I think of this as part of the discriminatory and evaluative responsibility of academic faculty. Because we do not and should not have equal respect for all forms of knowledge, we need to persist in making discriminations even when it might bring social discomfort to us.

On the matter of rank and tenure (p. 43), which I cautiously support for the obvious reason of its mirror relationship with our evaluation of students (and our evaluative role in general) and for the practical reason of linking VIU to practices at the vast majority of other Canadian universities (and many, perhaps most, colleges), I don't think they are necessary for the promotion of academic excellence or critical judgement, and they often put a strain on collegiality. There is an argument that rank and title are evidence of institutional accountability (as identified in the citizenship category). I think accountability is another way of getting at our responsibility to discriminate. Indeed, I wonder whether citizenship isn't the wrong title, and whether the category wouldn't be better called “responsibility”; the more I think about this, the more I am convinced this category embraces the kind of intellectual discrimination I have been stressing, and that the discrimination comes first while promoting effective citizenship. My understanding of citizenship has nothing to do with toeing the line and everything to do with social responsibility. Much as I value citizenship in connection with our educational responsibility for students, it seems odd in this setting.

The last sentence in the paragraph on collegiality (p. 44) has no place there. Collegiality has no relationship with external partnership relationships.

The paragraph on ethics (p. 44) overlooks its essential point and smuggles in unrelated statements. Openness and tolerance may impinge on ethics but they are not to be

confused with it. Global awareness, sensitivity to Aboriginal ways of knowing, and commitment to sustainability should likewise not be confused with ethics. Ethics here conforms rather more closely to the concept of responsibility I have mentioned above. Ethics implies high standards of fairness, academic, professional, and personal integrity, and thoughtful application of legal and other standards generally applied in the university or the world at large. It may not prohibit actions of personal conscience at odds with legal and other standards, even when the university may act in its own interests by censuring such acts. I think ethical responsibility has an important place in the university, but this is a delicate matter. For example, instructors who willfully undermine the academic standards of the university by choosing not to evaluate their students are acting unethically (ignoring standards which were in place when they were hired and which they accepted when they accepted their offer of employment). I'm not sure whether I am prepared to entertain a category for ethics as distinct from one on professional responsibility.

Scholarship is an academic value. I don't like the ruminations on scholarship (p. 45) and their thinly veiled criticism of tradition as if there were no place for tradition at VIU. A truer way of representing scholarship is that it is much broader than is often credited. It is the life of the mind that informs the class room and the campus setting, and not simply a quantification of publications. It is a wide range of forms of study, contemplation, professional interaction, conversation, expression of ideas, expression. We should not be so presumptuous as to think that we are the only university facing the reality that research grant funding and academic publication are not the only or the best ways of measuring scholarship. The crisis of hiring and promoting committed faculty who are intellectually generous – and therefore generous to their colleagues and students – who contribute in meaningful ways to the wellbeing of the university, as opposed to those who are intellectual selfish and consumed by their own research programs, is a crisis being experienced at the foremost universities of the world as well as at VIU.

The quotation from the Lyall report (p. 45) is more than ten years out of date and has no place in the plan. The circumstances in 2010 are dramatically different from the 1990s, about which the Lyall report voiced concern, and research now enjoys a high profile. VIU has been unable, however, to translate its evaluation of *scholarship* into workloads that enable faculty to study as well as teach. It is in danger of replicating the actions of universities that have rewarded publication and not the intellectual life.

The subsection on the challenge of scholarship (p. 46) begins well enough in the first paragraph. It slips, however, when it turns to the object of informing the VIU community (in the third paragraph) rather than seeking consensus. There seems to be an embedded assumption that VIU faculty have no idea what scholarship is and so nothing to add to the process of describing it.

While I have no objection to Boyer, I see no reason to embed Boyer only in our definition of scholarship (p. 46). I like the proposed steps related to scholarship (p. 47).

The section on faculty evaluation is too detailed. I don't think it is appropriate to comment on the ad hocery of VIU's past in the days before strategic planning (p. 48).

I cannot agree more that now is an important time for us to assess what are the key responsibilities of faculty (p. 48). They have clearly changed over the years. Even so, the identification of a set of formalized Criteria for Faculty Evaluation, as set out in the plan, seems to imply that these criteria already exist rather than that they need to be created. It is a matter of emphasis, and I think the emphasis of the plan should be on making recommendations to Senate for a general review of instructional assignments. Despite my personal sympathies with the ideas in this section, as it is the plan suggests a preconceived structure of evaluation in which faculty make multi-year professional development plans in conjunction with their chairs (p. 48), which will be assessed by some other body, and so on and so on. This is too much and an arrogation of the responsibility of Senate and the faculty community at large.

The two pages of guiding principles (pp. 49-50) may be useful for the consideration of Senate, or a Senate committee, but they are out of proportion and inappropriate to the plan, as are the recommendations and the next steps (pp. 50-51). I might go so far as to support the first clause of the first of the next steps (p. 51): "Strike a committee" [and hope not to face a strike committee].

The section on recognition (pp. 52-54) incorporates an agenda for rank and tenure that in its detail goes too far. It makes the point that rank and title need broad discussion (p. 52) and perhaps it should leave it at that. As sympathetic as I am to the spirit of the mitigating conditions it attaches to its recommendation (that Senate be invited to create a subcommittee on rank and title), I think those conditions should remain the province of Senate, drawing on a full consultative process that has yet to take place.

The following sections are largely descriptive of programmatic activity. It is a matter for discussion in what the academic plan should feature such description. I have little comment. On the subject of program mix (access and array) (pp.56-57), I suspect that we have not done justice to a category fitting poorly with both access and array: remediation. It is typical for universities to ignore the need for remediation, even when it is glaring. We have an opportunity to build remediation into our open access structure as an essential support for student success.

The material on research derives from VIU's research plans. Added to that is a section on knowledge transfer, a technical term that detracts from the underlying purposes of research. This, along with research production and knowledge production, is a widely used term that we would benefit from avoiding if we are really going to tie our research ambitions to scholarship. The section unnecessarily repeats aspects of the vision statement from earlier in the plan. The reference to "intellectual and vocational capital" (p. 67) is also poor symbolism for identifying the values and activities of the university with economic gain, and because it forces together unrelated classes of terms ("intellectual" and "vocational"), which makes it difficult to understand.

The non-inclusive list of issues (p. 67) nevertheless suggests a range of types of issues, and there are notable gaps. There is no mention of the fact that Vancouver Island is one of Canada's retirement capitals, or that activities and care for the aged will be important regional preoccupations for the future. There is no mention of the primary tourist industry on Vancouver Island and the need for VIU to lead in supporting that industry. If the plan is to contain a list, this should suggest a wide field of possibilities.

By the time the reader gets to subsection D of the section on programs (p. 68), it seems clear that the term "Programs" (p. 55) is loose. Even so, it seems difficult to imagine "organization" or "decanal structure" as a program of the university – or even of the academic plan. If the newly crafted vision statement is to play a role in the determination of administrative and faculty structures, it will have to be, as I have said, much stronger than it is. I admit that there has been much reflection in the last two or more years as to what constitutes a faculty, and the identification of principles related to faculty organization speaks to an important subject for the future. Does such rumination belong in the academic plan at this time? The section presumes that VIU will undergo a wholesale rethinking about its faculty structures, and that must come as a surprise to the academic community as a whole. This is a vivid instance of how the academic plan is too ambitious – trying to solve all the problems anyone might imagine.

The specific recommendations are surprising, off-the-wall, and overly ambitious. They are not buttressed by reasons or reasoning. The first recommendation (p. 68) implies that the VIU faculty structure will be largely unchanged, but subsequent recommendations suggest among the most far-reaching changes in the history of VIU. The first recommendation should be summarily dropped. I have commented already on the fusion of Arts and Humanities with Social Sciences. The recommendation that ABE, Literacy, and Access programs be relocated in the Faculty of Education addresses problems not stated outright in the plan. I agree that the status of Adult and Continuing Education as a faculty is challenging, but there are many ways of responding to the challenge and perhaps the least likely among them is to move these programs to Education. I can't help but imagine that another issue is being addressed: the number of faculties and their relative size. If such concerns are to be a part of our academic plan, they should be made explicit. If the concern is over a faculty with a mixture of base funding and money-making programs, similar concern should be identified with respect to the plan to move academic programs into International Education (p. 69). I have already expressed my concerns about a Faculty of Indigenous Studies (p. 69). I don't think the academic plan should make any of the specific recommendations found in this subsection.

I don't understand how the administrative structure with respect to deans and chairs differs from current practice (except in the last bullet, which is not elaborated on). Is this meant to be a descriptive subsection? If so, the language should not be prescriptive.

The subsection on planning (p. 71) includes a category on "summative" evaluation. The earlier section on evaluation only uses this word once and in that instance it says it "may" be used. While I agree there is a role for summative evaluation in the university (and we already use it), there is a tonal disconnect between this subsection and the earlier section.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, I don't see evaluation as an equal planning coordinate with the other coordinates in this subsection. Nor do I see program review, program development, and course evaluation as equal coordinates. Each of these informs planning, and each may be related in some ways to departmental and other planning processes but it is a stretch to conceive of them as planning coordinates. The same thing goes for the descriptive category "Assessment of Success in Reaching Research Objectives" (p. 72). Subsection "F" suggests a setting for these coordinates.

Subsection "F" (pp. 73-76) addresses a problem that has long been vexatious at VIU: our inability to make strategic decisions particularly in the context of fiscal reduction. This matter does have a place in an academic plan, and it may be an over-arching purpose of a plan to shape institutional directions in such a way as to influence strategic changes and reductions. This is in part why the current draft plan is the occasion of so much stress and anger. The plan is full of priorities that smack of strategic reorganization, but those priorities seem to have come out of the ether. While I agree that this subsection is important in context, it is far too specific, and far too detailed. It precedes, in effect, the deliberations of the Planning and Priorities Committee of Senate. Rather than recommending that Senate or a Senate subcommittee review prioritization processes, it predetermines Senate's conclusions, even to the point of advocating Dickeson's ten-point set of criteria. VIU already has a set of criteria (five, at present); while the work of Dickeson, among other scholars, may be helpful for the future, we are not in the state of doom imagined by the plan of having no criteria to work with.

The section on academic support services (pp. 77-91) begins with a premise that such services are inadequately resourced next to direct instruction. That may be true by the standards of some other universities, but by the standards of those other universities direct instruction at VIU is also underresourced. The bald statement (and the bald statement that they have "fallen far behind" [p. 77]), without reasoning or context, is a blueprint for the reallocation of funds from instruction to support. As presented, this is unacceptable. Direct instruction provides the student FTEs that we need to meet Ministry targets we have not yet met. Direct instruction has suffered significant reduction in the last four years, exceeding the reductions in some service jurisdictions. We are already at the point of contributing to student morale problems – of undermining our central value of student success in the setting where it most counts – the class room. The matter of support services requires further discussion.

I'm not clear on the proposed separation of student services and student life services (pp. 78-79). I assume this has been a problem.

My own experience of the word "research" suggests that it very much needs clarification (p. 81). The sciences often claim it is the production of knowledge. In my experience, knowledge cannot be produced. Knowledge is a complex entity that resists human claims made upon it.

I agree that the library is the centre of the university. I don't think it is the undisputed heart (p. 82). Frankly, however, I enjoy the hyperbole in this section, since it is rare for

the Library to attract overstated claims of any kind. I support a renewed commitment to the Library as expressed in the plan.

The subsection on the Teaching and Learning and Technology Centre (pp. 85-90) seems thorough to the point of being too complex for the plan. The thirty-two recommendations dwarf all other aspects of the plan.

The subsection on the Writing Centre is empty. The Writing Centre is a distinctive support for student success because it involves direct instructional intervention outside the class room and without the pressure of evaluation. The Centre provides one-on-one tutorial instruction in approximately 3,000 individual meetings with students throughout the year. Many of the Centre's users are international students, who depend on the Centre as an indispensable human resource – a setting where they may be given assistance (and remediation) but also where that assistance is given by sympathetic individuals. While the Writing Centre is not an indispensable service for all students, it is an indisputably (you see, I too can hyperbolize) rich contributor to student success. The VIU Writing Centre may be the most distinctive such centre in North America, since it depends highly on the resources of academic faculty in different departments. As well as offering tutorial services, the Centre runs workshops throughout the year for students and faculty, both in the Centre and where programs and courses are offered. It is the central institutional advocate for quality writing in an academic setting. It is a symbolic reminder to faculty of the importance of writing and communication in the university.

The Writing Centre has unmet ambitions for growth. At present, it cannot meet student demand for tutorial services, and, when faced with the prospect of waiting in lines or booking weeks in advance, some students reluctantly turn away from the service. The Centre's real ambition is to expand, drawing on faculty expertise in disciplinary writing from many more jurisdictions than it can do at present. For this, it needs funding from more diverse sources than the routine funding from Arts and Humanities and an annual stipend from International Education. The Centre is interested in exploring projects related to assessment of student writing skills (so as better to determine what services students may benefit from, or so as to assist students in making meaningful choices contributing to their future success).

I have already commented on scheduling (p. 98). Let me add that creating room scheduling efficiencies is not conducive to student wellbeing when those efficiencies mean that they have no access to study space in the buildings where their programs are located, and no social spaces or quiet spaces. Students are accustomed to using empty class rooms for their activities. Completely full class rooms all of the time drive students into the corridors (which are often dark and dingy), put a strain on building maintenance, lead to dirty and uninviting rooms, lead to excessive heat at certain times of year, and altogether adversely affect the student experience. I support scheduling efficiencies from the point of view of improving student choice and access but not from the point of view of introducing efficiencies or from the point of view of meeting Ministry guidelines. Some efficiencies are not efficient.