

Jan. 29, 2014

Fran Walley, Chair
Planning and Priorities Committee of Council

Dear Professor Walley

In response to your request, the International Activities Committee of Council (IAC) at its January 16th meeting discussed the content and recommendations of both TransformUS Task Force reports, paying particular attention to the assessments and recommendations for international support services and academic programs. In addition to a careful consideration of the content of the Task Force reports the IAC also discussed the TransformUS program prioritization process and timelines.

While the committee members and the committee support staff who attended this meeting recognized and appreciated a number of observations and recommendations made by the Task force reports, concerns were raised about both the review process and the content of the reports. Opinions were divided about the TransformUS process and results.

The listing of issues which follows is based primarily on the issues identified at the meeting. The draft was circulated to all committee members by email so that members could suggest alternative wordings and add other concerns or corrections.

During this consultation process, the committee also received additional input from administrative support staff about possible errors in the task force reports or comments, and the committee suggested that these corrections should be sent by these offices to PCIP directly.

1. Process Issues

The IAC members present at the meeting acknowledged that TransformUS was a concentrated and condensed process with massive amounts of information to be processed in a given time frame and expressed their appreciation of the work done by colleagues serving on the task forces.

The following issues were raised by the committee members:

- There was an opinion from majority that templates did not reflect internationalization activities (joint program, international research, etc.).
- A group of members commented on the way the templates were set up. The unit directors needed to present their own units in the best possible way. This

resulted in a picture of a university as a collection of independent units. The templates did not capture the inter-dependencies between units, and the consultation and collaboration that is already part of the work being done.

- A group of members were of opinion that the Academic Program Task Force (APTF) and Support Services Task Force (SSTF) did not have time to clarify the information they collected, or discuss it with units. As a result, the interrelationships between units and the complex nature of some of the service units on campus were not fully captured in the reports.
- A comment from a member that the TransformUS program prioritization process is a massive undertaking done by colleagues with little experience with program evaluation in general and with the Dickeson program prioritization process in particular, A lack of experience, the scale of the assignment, and the timeline the Task Forces was given, was reflected in incomplete understanding, and apparent lack of appreciation, of the nature and importance of internationalization for the teaching and research missions of the university.
- Concern was expressed by a member that the task force process was not an academically driven process, with a template which focused on value for money rather than academic value, yet what we have done at the University of Saskatchewan might well be a model for other universities who are also looking for a priority-setting process. Academic priorities should be set by colleges and by college faculty, who could set targets or goals for reductions, rather than by a process external to the college faculty and within which the faculty decision-making processes could not participate.

2. Recommendations within the reports related to the internationalization initiatives

The university's second integrated plan – *Towards an Engaged University* – identified internationalization as an institutional imperative. The importance of this seems to have been missed or misunderstood by the Task Forces. The IAC members felt that templates and reports did not invite internationalization discussions. Though comments about international reputation and number of international students were made to support high quintile placements, the international research collaborations of many faculty members, and their joint programs with international research partners were not captured in the reports. The centrality of the language units on campus and the U of S Language Centre to the university's internationalization activities was not understood.

The following issues were raised by the committee members:

- Some committee members were pleased to see the SSTF recognized the importance and quality of the support services provided by the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC) to international students. The SSTF's recognition of the asymmetrical nature of international undergraduate and graduate students needs was also viewed positively by the IAC members. The currently provided support services are devolved to various units depending on the mandate of the unit and the degree of expertise in a particular area. The SSTF's observation that all international support services should be reviewed with a view to identifying opportunities for reorganization and centralization, should only be undertaken within the context of the information arising from other recent university wide undertakings such as the assessments completed as part of the Strategic Enrolment Management Project.

- The committee discussed that it was difficult to identify whether members of the SSTF were aware of the important role that several central support service units play in linking the university and its students and faculty members to external organizations with whom we have a range of agreements and partnerships related to collaborative research and graduate student training, faculty and student mobility, study abroad and a host of other activities that support research, teaching and external service missions.
- A group of members noted that the inward-looking nature of the task forces, which was also a feature of their reports, did not provide an opportunity to explore the more outward-looking imperatives that drive the internationalization mission and other university missions. All of the U15 institutions are looking to the global context to assess their performance; to remain focused on internal processes and relationships, and not to recognize our transition to national stature does a disservice to university. The committee agreed that we need to include this perspective in our discussions about prioritization.
- The IAC members discussed the process of institutional priority setting and the complex relationship between institutional level priorities and those of academic units and individual faculty members. Some concern was expressed about the potential of the TransformUS process to subvert the now well-established integrated planning process and other decision-making processes at the level of the academic units.
- Regarding international students, a committee member noted that some statements made in the APTF report about retention and time to completion for international students were incorrect; these should be re-examined prior to implementing any new retention initiatives because at the undergraduate level, international students are doing well. Completion rates for international graduate students are equally high at above 85%. Increased coordination of the student recruitment functions performed by SESD, CCDE, the University Language Centre, and CGSR would be welcomed, as would re-examining some of the graduate administration processes. The Recruitment Leadership Team and the Strategic Enrollment Management project recommendations, currently being implemented will go a long way to addressing these concerns. However, IAC members felt there was a lack of understanding regarding ISSAC office - it is not experiencing disinvestment as stated and has undergone a significant review and reorganization based on assessment of student and institutional needs.
- A committee member suggested the data about international students completing degrees could be misleading because of fall-back opportunities, which allow students likely to fail in one program an opportunity to graduate with a lower level qualification (such as 3-year degree as opposed to 4-year, PGD as opposed to M.Sc., M.Sc., as opposed to Ph.D.). Failure to complete the program one registers in is not recorded as failure in such circumstances, which could affect success rates.

3. Conclusions

The IAC members disagreed about how to respond to the concerns expressed. Broadly speaking, there were three points of view advocated during the discussion:

Some proposed that the Task Force reports be rejected and a vote of non-confidence in the TransformUS process be passed. It was felt that the fundamentally flawed and limited nature of the process rendered the results invalid and potentially damaging to the integrity of the university's programs and reputation. Concern was expressed that by accepting the process, even with reservations expressed about the analysis and assessments, the use of the process would be legitimated at other institutions.

The majority of IAC members felt that despite its limitations, it was most appropriate to express those concerns clearly and candidly with the understanding that the reports of the Task Forces are but one component of a decision-making process that allows for further input and assessment prior to decisions being taken. In this viewpoint, it was felt that although TransformUS was seriously flawed, a more specific and targeted response, focusing on internationalization, would be more beneficial than summary rejection. There were concerns about the constraints imposed by the templates, and the task forces' failure to understand the information provided in the templates. There was a particular concern that the templates neglected internationalization by failing to solicit information about international impact. The committee agreed that its goal was to ensure that internationalization and our global context are taken into consideration when making decisions.

A third point of view was expressed by a member that despite its drawbacks, TransformUS task forces were led by faculty members, and that a wide section of faculty around campus will agree with the recommendations, particularly as they relate to support services. Although there were procedural limitations and the constraints imposed by the template formats would have created challenges in understanding the contributions of various administrative units, this view expressed the belief that the members of the task forces were faculty members who understand how the various support services help them further the university's goals and who were able to make informed decisions despite inadequacies in the process.

Attached for reference is a summary of the task force recommendations that were noted as relevant to the international activities of the university. A number of international activities and initiatives were not identified as such by the task forces, such as exchange agreements, dual degrees, and international research partnerships; The comments in the summary are from the task forces, not from the committee.

Yours truly,



Gap-Soo Chang, Chair

Cc: Members of the International Activities Committee
Brett Fairbairn, Provost
Crystal Maslin, Office of the Provost

Task Force results relevant to internationalization and international activities

1. Academic Program Task Force

The following observations may affect internationalization and /or contain suggestions affecting international activities

General observations:

Graduation rates and completion times. ... the number of programs with low graduation rates (or in the case of graduate programs, long completion times) was a cause for concern for many obvious reasons, including the additional burden placed on students with extra time in program and the extra resources required to support them.

The task force was particularly struck by the low graduation rates for international students and in some instances for Aboriginal students. In recent years, the university has placed a high priority on increasing the diversity of the student body by recruiting higher numbers of international and Aboriginal students. However laudable this may be as an objective, it is our view that the goal is not accomplished solely by admitting students to programs, but will only be achieved when these students are completing programs and obtaining qualifications in proportionate numbers. We did not specifically gather information about the supports provided by units to international or Aboriginal students, and we cannot therefore say whether the supports currently provided are adequate or whether there may be some other explanation for the numbers we have noticed. We did flag this, however, as a somewhat troubling phenomenon, which the institution should be examining in more detail.

The value of strong programs. As a result of our review, we would say that there is much to celebrate in the programs offered at the University of Saskatchewan. We saw evidence in many templates of exceptional student and research outcomes, strong community engagement, national and international reputation, and effective use of resources. In the case of programs that may not have received the hoped for quintile assignment, we suggest that these very strong programs may provide inspiration and guidance for re-imagination or re-conceptualization.

Academic Unit	Field of study	Program	Q	Notes
Languages, Literatures, and Cultural Studies	French	BA (3 year major)	4	Research metrics low. Enrolment, graduate numbers modest. Vice-Dean raises question of sustainability. Little evidence concerning student outcomes.
Languages, Literatures, and Cultural Studies	French	BA (4 year major)	4	Important subject matter, alignment with university priorities. Collaboration with U of R promising. Online courses planned, shows initiative. Low enrolments for program of long standing. Low research metrics, weak faculty inputs. Creation of large technologically assisted classes a promising direction.

Languages, Literatures, and Cultural Studies	Languages	Research	4	Department has long history. New faculty working to establish research focus. Limited focus on research in template, no apparent research plan. Limited research funding.
Languages, Literatures, and Cultural Studies	Modern languages	BA (4 year major)	4	Increasing student numbers, new configuration has had impact. Positive trend. Research metrics a concern. Weak case for alignment with university priorities. Question of whether adequate investment of resources. Strong service teaching at this level.
Political Studies (Interdisciplinary)	International studies	BA (4 year major)	4	Popular program, good Aboriginal enrolment. Graduation rates a concern. Tuition revenue not clear. Little investment of faculty or administrative resources. Strong alignment with university priorities. Modest research profile.
Political Studies (interdisciplinary)	International studies	BA (honours)	4	Program attractive to students. Change in focus suggested is desirable. More resources would be necessary to allow program to achieve potential. Suggest that unit re-consider large number of programs being offered.
School of Public Policy	International trade	Master of International Trade (MIT)	4	Relatively new program. Growing student numbers, suggests demand. Lack of connection with other programs. Little information about faculty inputs involved in program and resources invested. Link of research metrics with program not clear. Cost recovery basis, but cost of program not well reflected in template.
International Centre for Northern Governance and Development - Type B Centre			4	All activities New centre, template really about master's program, does not reveal much about Type B centre.
Languages, Literatures, and Cultural Studies	French	BA (honours)	5	Unsustainably low student numbers in program. Very low research metrics. Strong students.
Languages, Literatures, and Cultural Studies	Modern languages	BA (3 year major)	5	Very low demand, insufficient resources, lack of focus.

2. Support Services Task Force

The following observations may affect internationalization and /or contain suggestions affecting international activities

Summary recommendations:

- Essential to increasing research intensiveness and enrolment goals at the university is the attraction and retention of greater numbers of graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. Current approaches to delivery of graduate student and post-doctoral support, including targeted recruitment, processing of applications, allocation of graduate awards and familiarization of international students, appear to be fragmented and piecemeal. Design and implementation of a more coordinated and therefore effective approach to graduate student and post-doctoral support is recommended.
- Related to the above theme is the level of support available for international students at the university. Support services directed to international undergraduate and graduate students appear to be minimal and, once again, fragmented. The university is encouraged to review the nature, level and quality of support services provided to international students. Only in this way can the university successfully complete for international students.

Observations and themes

Research support: ...More graduate student and post-doctoral fellow support was considered to be the single most important investment that could be made to fuel research intensiveness at the university.

Graduate Student and post-doctoral support: ... improvements are likely needed to admission processes, eg credential recognition, funding structures and procedures, policies underlying a research student's program of studies, student advising and career advising. Student services may be improved and costs reduced if provided in conjunction with the units that provide similar services to undergraduate students. The task force suggests that the university review its graduate student and post-doctoral support services to streamline processes and identify clear accountabilities for each support service involved. It is expected that many services could be performed directly by colleges, schools and/or departments, and others could be transferred to SESD so as to provide a consolidated approach with undergraduate student support services where it makes sense to do so.

International Student Services and Support: Increasing international student enrolment is a priority of the university, yet the task force observed that support services for international student services and support at the institutional level is low, highly fragmented and sometimes non-existent.

...support services appear to be in place to support students preparing for and involved in exchange programs abroad and formal educational trips. The same is not true when examining the services that support incoming international students. International graduate students likely need more tailored support at different stages of their academic career and may struggle to access the appropriate information from the limited information available across campus. For example, templates did not articulate support for policies and procedures to assist students in dealing with unique emergency situations such as natural disasters in their countries of origin or closing of diplomatic services in Canada for their countries of origin.

Additionally, there is no one-stop-shop online or an office for academic emergencies. These needs may be partially met by students' supervisors, student groups and other non-government organizations in the Saskatoon community rather than being provided formally by the university. We expect that greater direct involvement by the university would translate in greater levels of successful completion of a student's program of study.

The task force suggests that the university adopt an all-encompassing approach to international student support to ensure there are clear responsibilities and good coordination of services offered by each unit, without overlap or gaps. This is an area that could be considered for further investment.

Administrative Unit	Office	Program	Q	Notes
College Of Graduate Studies And Research	Office of the Dean	Special Projects/ International/ Recruitment	5	Consider transferring responsibility to SESD International Office, etc for delivery of this service
Office Of The VP Research	International Office/International Research Office	International development and partnerships	5	All internationalization-related services on campus, whether undergraduate student, graduate student or researcher oriented, need to be evaluated for the potential to be integrated to improve efficiency and effectiveness without increasing resource allocation.
	Industry Liaison Office	Commercialization of Research	3	Overall recommendation that Office of VP Research should review all services. Specific recommendation that ILO should be no net cost to university
	Industry Liaison Office	Legal Services	4	Consider merging all legal services on campus
Office of the Provost	Office Of The AVP Student Affairs	International Students and Study Abroad Centre	1	To support attraction and retention of international students. Need to reconsider integration and connection of international student services with other internationalization services on campus, eg International Research Office
Office of the Provost	Office of the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning: Centre for Continuing and Distance Education (CCDE)		5	The services delivered by CCDE are of high quality and many have good demand. Substantial cost recovery with some services appears to subsidize delivery of less profitable and often lower priority endeavours. The mandate of CCDE and its linkage to the rest of the university need to be reconsidered. Better integration of activities such as distance delivery with similar activities in other units needs to be explored.

				... the fit of each service/program offered by CCDE with university priorities needs to be confirmed and most closely tied to the academic work in departments. ...recommends a review of the structure, mandate and funding model of all units reporting to the Vice-Provost to reduce overlap, duplication and costs.
		University of Saskatchewan Language Centre: Administration	5	See comments for CCDE
		Certificate in English for Academic Purposes (fulltime ESL)	4	An important service for international students but needs to be reviewed with respect to cost recovery, whether recruitment is necessary, alternative structure for delivery of service on campus, eg could this service be delivered through an academic unit?
		Part time ESL	2	See comments for CCDE.
		Other languages	5	Need to review with respect to fit with university priorities, value as an outreach instrument, and potential for greater revenue generation.

Quintiles:

Q1 – Candidate for enhanced resourcing

Q2 – Maintain with current resourcing

Q3 – Retain with reduced resourcing

Q4 – Reconfigure for efficiency/effectiveness

Q5 – Candidate for phase out, subject to further review