

Jan. 27, 2014

Fran Walley, Chair
Planning and Priorities Committee of Council

Dear Professor Walley

Thank you for taking the lead role in coordinating feedback on the TransformUS reports on behalf of committees of University Council. Our members were pleased to know that their thoughts and questions would be entered as part of the consultation process.

On January 15th, members of the Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee (TLARC) engaged in structured discussions of the TransformUS reports, based largely around the questions provided by the Planning and Priorities Committee.

In order to inform the discussion, members were provided with supporting materials. Specifically, tables were prepared that summarized quintile recommendations for clusters of teaching and learning activity in both central units and across colleges. In addition, key themes related to the mandate of TLARC were provided for consideration.

Although the Academic Task Force Report was included as part of the discussion, the primary focus was on consideration of the recommendations made within the Support Services Task Force Report (SSTF). What follows is a summary of TLARC's responses and suggested considerations with regard to the development of an implementation plan.

Reactions and Insights: (Unless otherwise noted, these reactions pertain to the SSTF report)

- The recommendations led TLARC members to the belief that the SSTF did not view the support of teaching and learning as being important.
- SSTF chose to rate almost everything in the units reporting to the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning (VPTL) as well as the VPTL office itself as either Q4 or Q5. We strongly feel that this is the wrong direction for the university to take, however well-intentioned the task force recommendations might have been. We agree that the University would lose a great deal of progress made in the last ten years if it acted on those recommendations. TransformUS is about aligning resources with strategic priorities, and the SSTF recommendations related to teaching and learning units seem to run counter to the University's own strategic priorities. We have seen in the Teaching and Learning Foundational Document, the Learning Charter, and the funding invested by PCIP over the last several years

to build up the University Learning Centre (ULC) and the VPTL that these resources and services are a strategic priority of the University. How then can units like the ULC, Media Access and Production (eMAP), the Centre for Distance and Continuing Education (CCDE) and the Office of the VPTL be considered not to be a strategic priority?

- Academic resources are the technical supports and services used for teaching and learning by students and faculty. The academic resources in eMAP, CCDE, the Library and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) are at risk in the SSTF recommendations. The functions within these units are particularly important for distance education, for example the resources needed by colleges like Nursing and Medicine that offer their program at off-campus sites. Cuts to distance program distribution affects not only the outreach and engagement mission of the university, but also disproportionately affects the learning opportunities of individual in rural and remote communities, including Aboriginal peoples.
- Support services focused on research activity appeared to receive more favorable quintile rankings as compared with services provided to support teaching and learning. It was suggested that these quintile placements reflect the climate of increased research intensiveness and an increasingly complex and competitive research environment; however, it was also suggested that teaching and learning can be nebulous in nature and, in comparison with research grants and journal publications, are hard to quantify. The ripple effect of the work done by ULC/GMTCE to improve teaching and learning is also hard to measure.
- The recommendations regarding teaching and learning support services do not appear to align with or reflect the university's stated priorities. This would include (but not be limited to) such things as the Learning Charter and a number of directions captured within the "Innovations in Programs and Services" focal area of IP3. The Third Integrated plan states "Utilizing investments made in the University Learning Centre, the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness, the office of Institutional Planning and Assessment, in Student and Enrolment Services Division, and the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning over the past two planning cycles will be critical to our success" in innovation in academic programs and services, yet it is these offices which have been identified by the SSTF as targets for reduction or elimination.
- Members of TLARC are confused as to whether the SSTF intended to send a message to the campus that support services (including teaching and learning) are best organized in a centralized model or best delivered in a decentralized model. Both (and sometimes conflicting) messages were detected. Over the last two planning cycles, a number of college-level support activities for teaching and learning have been pulled out of colleges and made available to students across campus through initiatives such as the ULC (writing help, math help, and so forth). These types of initiatives need the kind of specialized staff that centralized units are diverse enough to support. We have similar concerns about university investments in technology, which some of the SSFT recommendations seem to suggest should be decentralized to colleges. Students today expect that the university will provide core services to all students, regardless of their college. The distributed approach will lead to inconsistent and uneven services.

- If the presumption is that the university can do without certain support services in teaching and learning or that services can be offered somewhere other than centralized units, then this leads to the conclusion that SSTF believes teaching and learning support work can be returned to colleges, to be done by faculty members themselves. This is the way the university operated twenty years ago. TLARC members question whether faculty have the time and capacity to engage in such things as faculty development work for themselves, their graduate students and their colleagues. If this is the correct conclusion, there are implications for workload.
- Contrary to statements made in the report, there is high demand in some colleges to use instructional development services. As one example, colleges with accredited programs have external professional obligations to utilize learning outcomes in their curriculums and so are using these services intensively when revising their curriculums.
- Regarding the position of the Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning, it is important for teaching and learning to have a voice at this institution. The other missions of research and outreach have similar voices and can advocate for these issues both within and outside the university community. Without the VP TL, there is no voice for teaching and learning.
- There also appears to be a disconnect within the SSTF report. In its comments on the Office of the Provost (030) the task force notes the “huge range and number of responsibilities, many direct reports” of this office, and suggests “reconfiguration at the senior admin level to assign some responsibilities elsewhere”. However, the position of Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning was created three years ago for exactly this reason, to assume some responsibilities and direct reports previously managed by the Provost himself. It should also be noted that it was only in January 2013 that a permanent appointment to the Vice-Provost position was made.

TransformUS process observations:

- The focus of the templates was on individual unit/program functioning, which may mean that the methodology discouraged template writers from speaking to coordinating and collaboration across campus. This means that a separate process must be undertaken to accurately determine whether statements about lack of coordination are as real as suggested in the SSTF report.
- The middle and upper administrative perspective was missing from the SSTF report yet these are often the groups of people who have a solid understanding of the need for teaching and learning support units.
- Although there is reference in the template to the Strategic Directions and the Third Integrated Plan, the university priorities established by that plan were apparently not taken into account by the task force in its recommendations. Concern was expressed that administrative units may have had a false sense of security when completing their templates that the task force would be familiar with university priorities when evaluating services.

Suggestions for consideration in the implementation plan:

- Members of TLARC do not believe that the university can grow its enrolments entirely on the basis of students it draws to the Saskatoon campus. Consistent with the strategy work that has already been set out; distributed learning approaches will be required. In addition, TLARC was not convinced that support for distributed learning could be effectively or successfully provided by a single college or all colleges individually for themselves.
- As part of the reorganization of teaching and learning functions that is likely to emerge from the TransformUS recommendations, we suggest that it will be critical to define common and core services.
- Members of TLARC think it is imperative that appropriate benchmarks be established to guide expectations around the roles of teaching and learning support service providers (e.g., what outcomes do we expect from an instructional designer). Similarly, however challenging, it is clear that better metrics are required for teaching and learning support services in order to effectively demonstrate value and impact.
- A review of the perceived duplication of services or confusion of services between ICT and eMAP should be part of the implementation plan.
- While all administrative offices need to ensure they are useful and effective, it is not realistic to believe that the university can discard the number of academic and administrative leadership positions as the SSTF seems to be recommending while remaining an effective organization.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jay Wilson".

Jay Wilson, Vice-Chair

Cc: Members of the Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee
Brett Fairbairn, Provost
Crystal Maslin, Office of the Provost

Task Force Results relevant to Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee terms of reference

1. Academic Programs Task Force - recommendations relevant to teaching and learning

Aboriginal programming From the time of the first integrated planning exercises, the university has acknowledged the importance of offering a positive learning environment to the increasing number of Aboriginal students seeking post-secondary qualifications ... there are particular challenges in recruiting faculty with relevant expertise, and we are confident that decision-making bodies of the university would take this into account in appraising whether a particular program should continue or how it can be strengthened. As our assignments of programs indicate, some programs focused on Aboriginal issues are flourishing and merit continued institutional support. A number of units have taken innovative steps, and have established instructional and research programs, as well as centres, that confirm that the university is making progress in fulfilling the ambitions it has articulated

Graduation rates and completion times. For a number of programs included in the review, the task force noted a concern with graduation rates in comparison to the headcounts recorded. . . . 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.

Service teaching. Service teaching in itself makes an obvious contribution to the mission of the university by exposing students at both the undergraduate and graduate level to perspectives beyond their chosen field of study. The information about service teaching also gave us an insight into the wide range of activities to which some units are committed, and the basis these activities might create for links across disciplines or administrative entities.

Standardized Central Data. Though the task force had the benefit of extensive and illuminating data in the prioritization process, we suggest that future iterations of the process would be enhanced by continuing institutional strategies to develop standardized ways of reporting and tracking data for such things as instructional activities and research metrics.

2. Support Services Task Force - quintile scores and recommendations

Overview of Quintile scores for activity within teaching, learning and academic resources

Unit	Function	Q	Comments
CCDE - USLC	Part Time ESL	2	
Medicine	Instructional Support – Postgraduate Medical Education	2	
Medicine	Distributed Medical Education	2	
WCVM	Dean’s Office – Instructional Support	2	

CCDE - DOC	Distance Development – Degree Credit Class	4	CCDE could be the campus leader for distance delivery ie a central support unit, working with academic units to deliver courses. However, CCDE mandate would need to be reconsidered to ensure it is meeting the needs of academic units. Revenue sharing model should be reviewed.
CCDE - DOC	Distance Delivery – Degree Credit Class	4	See above
CCDE - DOC	Off-Campus Delivery – Degree Credit Class	4	See above
CCDE - PDCE	Community Education	4	Some very popular and valuable programs associated with this service, but it needs to be determined which ones should be delivered by the university and which by others eg the private sector, community groups, academic units. Should be evaluated and prioritized against all other outreach activities of the university to determine value and effectiveness
CCDE - USLC	Certificate – English for Academic Purposes (Full Time 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?
eMAP	Equipment Services	4	Further investment in dquipping classrooms with technology may reduce costs of mobile technology delivery.
eMAP	New Media (websites, etc.)	4	An important service. More of the activity perhaps could be outsourced. Fee-for-service model restricts access to service.
ULC/GMCTE	Undergraduate Student Support and Development	4	Is there a role for the College of Education here?
Medicine	Instructional Support – Undergraduate Medical Education	4	Service would be better classified as academic overhead. Make better use of technology. Reconfigure to improve outcomes for medical graduates
Nursing	E-Learning Support Services	4	Need to maximize interaction and sharing of services with all units on campus engaged in distance learning delivery

ICT	Supporting Teaching and Learning	4	This service needs to be considered when the mandate, etc of units reporting to the VPTL are reviewed.
VPTL	Executive Office – VPTL and Project Position	5	Functions and authorities be reviewed in conjunction with clarification of the mandates and review of the funding models, eg operating budget vs fee-for-service, of the units that report to this office (EMAP, CCDE and ULC/GMCTE) The goal would be to eliminate overlap, duplication, and competition among these units and with other units on campus (colleges, ICT) hence improving efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and enhancing accessibility to services. It is not clear that creating a senior administrative position to oversee these units has resulted in better outcomes..
CCDE	Executive Director's office	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. All support services – HR, IT, facilities – also should be integrated. 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. The task force recommends a review of the structure, mandate and funding model of all units reporting to the VPTL with a view to reducing overlap, duplication and costs
CCDE	Unit Support (e.g., Financial, HR)	5	Better integration of this service with those of SESD and other administrative units on campus is recommended

CCDE	Marketing and Communication	5	Better integration of this service with those of SESD and other administrative units on campus is recommended
CCDE-DOC	Administration	5	Serves mostly undergraduate students. A valuable service for small academic units engaged in distance delivery. Should revisit delivery model ie what is the role of the department in distance education? How is revenue used?
CCDE-DOC	Certificate – Adult and Continuing Education	5	See CCDE general comments.
CCDE-DOC	Certificate – Teaching English as a Second Language	5	Is an example of a unique, high quality program that should be able to cover all of its costs, including overhead. What, if any, is the role of the College of Education in provision of this service?
CCDE-DOC	Certificate Level Programs – Prairie Horticulture	5	Few if any students nos in PHC. Concept is good but certificate programs would benefit from a stronger link to academic home. Ladder certificate programs into degree programs.
CCDE-PDCE	Administration, Registration	5	Seems to be duplication with ESB and HR. Could this service be provided by other units at the university or outsourced?
CCDE-PDCE	Other Programs	5	See CCDE general comments
CCDE-PDCE	Professional Development (e.g., Leadership)	5	Important service with respect to community engagement but is it CCDE's role to deliver this service? Apparent overlap with ESB. Should be evaluated and prioritized against all other outreach activities at the university to determine value and effectiveness.
CCDE-USLC	Administration	5	See CCDE general comments
CCDE-USLC	Other Languages (casual study of Spanish, etc.)	5	Need to review with respect to fit with university priorities, value as outreach instrument, and potential for greater revenue generation.
eMAP	Director's Office	5	It is recommended that the structure, mandate of and services delivered by this unit be reviewed to improve integration and reduce overlap and competition with units on campus offering some of the same services eg CCDE, ICT,

			Communications. The fee-for-service funding model for some services in this unit restricts access to core services. The task force recommends a review of the structure, mandate and funding model of all units reporting to the VPTL with a view to reducing overlap, duplication and costs
eMAP	Unit Support (e.g., Financial, HR)	5	Administrative costs seem high given size of unit. Cost recovery model generates administrative costs
eMAP	Media Production	5	Mandate is unclear. Activities should be aligned better with university priorities, with a reduced focus on revenue generation eg external work. Important to better integrate services with activities of ICT and distance delivery activities on campus.
ULC/GMCTE	Director's Office	5	This unit provides valuable and high quality services,. However, demand for services, more so with GMCTE than with ULC, is not commensurate with the resource allocation. The task force recommends a review of the structure, mandate and funding model of all units reporting to the VPTL with a view to reducing overlap, duplication and costs
ULC/GMCTE	Unit Support (e.g., Financial, HR)	5	See ULC general comments
ULC/GMCTE	Curriculum Development and Instructional Design	5	A useful service for smaller academic units in particular. Demand is low relative to resource allocation
ULC/GMCTE	Educational Development	5	Demand is low relative to resource allocation. Multiple programs; are they reaching the right audience? Is there a role for the College of Education here?

Overview of Quintile scores for activity within Academic Advising

College	Function (template)	Q1	Comments
Kinesiology	Student Advising	1	
WCVM	Student Advising	1	
Ag + Bio	Student Services (includes advising)	2	
Arts + Science	Student Advising and Student Services	2	
Dentistry	Student Services	2	
Pharm + Nutrition	Associate Dean Academic (responsible for academic advising)	2	
Edwards S of B	Student Services (includes academic advising)	2	
Law	Dean's Office (Associate Dean responsible for academic advising)	2	
Nursing	Student Advising	3	Resource allocation to advising is very large. Do all off-campus locations require the same level of resources? Do all advisors need to be RNs?
Education	Program Office (responsible for advising)	3	Budget allocation seems large
Engineering	Academic Program Administration and Student Support	4	Consider reconfiguration to improve effectiveness and improve student outcomes, eg retention
Medicine	Student Advising	5	Actually appears to be a counselling service. This service is available from Student Affairs

Overview of Quintile scores for activity within College level IT

College	Function (template)	Q1	Comments
Arts + Science	Information Technology Services	2	
Kinesiology	IT Services	2	
Education	Information Technology Services	3	Opportunity to reconfigure, make greater use of centrally available services, reduce duplication of services available elsewhere
WCVM	Information Technology Services	3	Resource allocation seems large. Should revisit agreement with IT for this service.
Library	Information Services	3	Consider a greater degree of self service, more tutorials and classroom teaching vs. one-on one or small groups

Library	Information technology	3	Consider greater use of IT services available centrally and eliminate any overlap with other library services. Budget allocation seems relatively large
Edwards	Technology Support	4	Budget allocation seems large and recent increase was not explained. May benefit from greater utilization of services available centrally
Nursing	E-Learning Support Services	4	Need to maximize interaction and sharing of services with all units on campus engaged in distance learning delivery
Engineering	Information Technology	4	Have restructured already. Should take greater advantage of centrally-available IT services, website development expertise and data systems.
Medicine	Information Technology Services	4	Budget allocation seems large. What is the explanation for the surplus? Explore an expanded role for ICT in delivery of IT services in the college.
Ag + Bio	Information Technology Services	5	Have already phased out position in college and now contract with ICT for services.

Note: Dentistry, Pharmacy and Nutrition, Law embed IT inside the cluster of “Financial Services - Human Resources – Communication – Information Technology – Facilities – Alumni and Development” and were not included on the table.

Legend of Acronyms:

CCDE – Centre for Continuing and Distance Education
 DOC – Distance Learning, Off-Campus and Certificate
 eMAP – Educational Media Access and Production
 GMCTE – Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness
 ICT – Information and Communications Technology
 PDCE – Professional Development and Community Education
 ULC – University Learning Centre
 USLC – University of Saskatchewan Language Centre
 VPTL – Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning

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