

Exploring the History of Interdisciplinarity at the University of British Columbia

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Preamble

I'm calling this the launch of what would become a wider and deeper exploration of the history of interdisciplinarity at the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada. This early goal is to establish a foundation, then discover and fill the gaps. Also worth pursuing in future are the short- and long-term costs and benefits of the organizational changes that occurred, lessons that could be of value both to UBC and other universities.

This launch takes an ethnographic approach to focus principally on the stories of 26 interviewed individuals, all with long experience on the interdisciplinary side, as well as to draw on a handful of existing historical records. Collectively, these interviewees and records have created a robust, albeit rough foundation for understanding how the University gave birth, cultivated, and then dramatically restructured support for interdisciplinary research and teaching.

Worth pursuing in future are many more interviews with people not yet reached who can offer even greater depth and richness to this history, and by then reflect from a somewhat longer experience on the actual impact of change. Or as one person put it when attempting to answer the question of how these changes were affecting their work, measured on two critical terms: (1) the support they get, and (2) what intellectual freedom is allowed:

"Ask me again in 15 years."

To provide context for what follows, let me begin with a quick historic summary.

A Brief History

Although all universities, including UBC, over their histories have established what are intrinsically interdisciplinary units, e.g., landscape architecture, chemical engineering, geography, international relations, psychology, etc., most have perhaps more naturally fit into existing faculties, and thus not been immediately labeled "interdisciplinary."

The first visibly identified interdisciplinary unit at UBC was a graduate program in community and regional planning created by Peter Oberlander in 1949 and placed in the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS) only six months after FoGS had been created. His reason for pushing it into this particular faculty, and not one of the existing disciplinary faculties, is that the program drew on subjects from several other faculties, and therefore didn't fit comfortably into any one of those. FoGS, however, had no such limits. Then two years later in 1951, he created the School of Community and Regional Planning, moving it also into FoGS.

Over the next half century, the interdisciplinary research and teaching units in FoGS grew to 30, though over the decades, cumulative totals were even higher given that some units had been moved, combined, or disbanded.

Then in 2004, Vice President Academic and Provost, Lorne Whitehead, began a review of the location of these interdisciplinary units in the same Faculty as the one overseeing graduate education. In 2007, UBC Senate moved the units into a newly created College for Interdisciplinary Studies. CFIS existed for six years, then was closed in 2013. At this time, each of the interdisciplinary research and teaching units was moved into one of the existing disciplinary faculties.

Launching Events and Stories:

The events and stories that I can cover in this early paper include what I learned from talking with 26 of the more than a hundred individuals who have some connection to the launch, growth, and organizational changes at UBC.

But first, let me express my deep appreciation for the time and wisdom they generously shared.

Specifically, our conversations covered people's interpretations of interdisciplinarity, how they came to undertake interdisciplinary research or support such work, what their experience had been in the Faculty of Graduate Studies, how they perceived the creation and move to CFIS and later to disciplinary faculties, and what difference, if any, it had made to their work. A few former Deans and a former President generously offered their thoughts on the changes.

Situating Myself

As my approach to this history is partly auto-ethnographic, and as the reader should be aware of my role in this write-up, let me situate myself.

Back in the early 1960s when I entered UBC as an undergraduate student, the Faculties of Arts and Science were one Faculty. Because I intended to concentrate on the arts side, I filled my schedule with all the courses that interested me, including ones offered by such memorable teachers as George Bowering and Peter Oberlander. However, as this joint Faculty required me to take a course in Science, the only one that fit my calendar in the first year was Zoology.

As this course was taught by one of the most engaging of professors, Ian McTaggart-Cowan, later Dean of Graduate Studies, I wound up graduating with majors in English and Zoology. Years later, I concluded that I was probably a serendipitous-disciplinarian, not an inter-disciplinary one.

A few years after that, however, my early background might have helped me to be hired into the recently created interdisciplinary Institute of Animal Resource Ecology (the word "Animal" being forced on the title by Botany, which at the time did not want to be part of this Institute). As one of the early international units tackling the emerging global issues of ecology, I got to work with Bill Rees, David Suzuki, Peter Larkin (who later became Dean of Graduate Studies, then VP Research), and other world-famous researchers, with the Institute's Director, Crawford (Buzz) Holling, as my boss.

IARE became an internationally renowned centre for the study of ecology, greatly enriched by the student movement of the 1960s, as well as the Viet Nam War in the late 60s and early 70s, which brought some valuable young people and faculty members to Canada to avoid being conscripted into the US armed forces.

In the late 60s, the Institute created an interdisciplinary graduate program in ecology which attracted students from across North America, many of whom went on to do dramatically valuable work in protecting the planet. One of these, Paul Watson, created the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, and later helped to create and for years work on Greenpeace.

Another student in the program who had noticed how narrowly focused were the standard academic disciplines across the institution, commented in the graduate seminar that "UBC was a golf course from reality" – a statement that was embraced enthusiastically by all, and repeated for years after.

It was a wonderfully enriching time.

Some years later I went off to work in other universities and museums, coming back to UBC in 1988 where I did my MBA, worked at the Museum of Anthropology, and did my PhD in the mid to late 1990s in UBC's Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program (IISGP). Soon after graduating in 1999, I was hired by Dean Frieda Granot as Assistant Dean in the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS), responsible mostly for the interdisciplinary side of the house, though also doing research and communications on the graduate education side.

All went beautifully smoothly for the first five years, until 2005 when VP Academic, Lorne Whitehead's scrutiny of the placement of interdisciplinary units in FoGS became highly visible, but created much turbulence. Then in 2006, Dean Granot resigned, creating for the rest of us more instability, for over the two years following her departure, I found myself reporting to twelve different bosses, including one who was there for one day, and another who after ten weeks died in the men's room.

Finally, with the creation of CFIS in 2007, things calmed down, but after a couple of years, I was terminated on the basis of "restructuring," and four years later, the life of CFIS ended.

Given that I was no longer on campus, I have only recently learned what happened to the interdisciplinary units, and their faculty and staff, with the interviews that contribute to this history.

Why Come to Interdisciplinarity?

Why individuals chose to enter interdisciplinary work at UBC varied in interesting ways. The most common reasons offered included people's desires to tackle specific and usually complex environmental, social, or human problems, problems which were not being tackled adequately or at all by the more narrowly defined or tightly focused traditional disciplines.

"As a result of disciplinary boundaries, I was unable to approach ecology from the human perspective. For example, in such disciplines as zoology, human beings were not considered part of nature. But when I received an offer of a joint appointment at UBC between SCARP and Resource Ecology, it fit my interests far more appropriately. So my 'education' didn't begin until after my PhD!"

Others had taken paths that included starting their studies in institutions which offered a wide mixture of disciplinary courses, an approach that then became a natural part of how they would continue in their research and teaching.

"I moved into interdisciplinarity in my undergraduate work at the U of T where I could pick 40 courses from any part of the university. When I heard a faculty member say that 'one had to be disciplinary before shifting to interdisciplinarity,' I heard that as 'wrong!'"

Others learned lessons in their early jobs about constraints and even potential dangers of limited disciplinary knowledge.

"I learned how disciplines can be limited during my early years working on the Apollo mission, which involved all kinds of disciplines working together on the project. As a result, I recognized that even my own discipline was limited."

"My early studies in math led me to work in the mining industry in South Africa where mines were deep and earthquakes were created. So to analyze these problems, mathematics became applied. By working with others over four years, I learned a new and more useful language."

What is Interdisciplinarity?

Exploring the tales that had brought so many individuals to undertake, support, or manage interdisciplinary work at UBC, opened up a deeper discussion of what "interdisciplinarity" is really about. What virtually everyone argued is that interdisciplinary work focuses on complex problems that narrow disciplinary work cannot fully understand and thereby solve. For example, it was not enough to be a fisheries scientist to understand fully how to protect fish in the oceans if they didn't have input from economists who could understand and explain how the industry worked, and what that meant to the problem of fisheries depletions.

By collaborating with economists, fisheries scientists could collectively produce much more valuable work. For some, they eventually even learned enough about economics to not need as intense collaboration with the other discipline. But often a third or a fourth discipline needed to be added to understand, say, international issues of oceans, societies, and fish stock. Collaboration became a permanent approach to dealing with such complex problems.

“Interdisciplinarity has always been strong in solving problems. Disciplines are narrow and easier to research. Big problems are much harder to take on.”

“While disciplines are very important, interdisciplinary projects need a high level of such knowledge to solve problems, but must also be able to interact collaboratively. So it’s better to have more than one researcher writing up the research, or alternatively, one person with knowledge in both areas.”

“No one discipline has the key. But when one opens up across disciplines, the answers come.”

An interesting discovery were the collaborations of Applied Mathematics, a field that touched on virtually every other faculty at UBC given that departments in Arts, Science, and others often needed to work with Applied Math experts to complete aspects of their own research – so perhaps one can say that this is the “most interdisciplinary” or integrated of any of the units.

As an aside, this Institute was created and forced into FoGS in the 1970s because the Department of Mathematics considered itself pure, and rejected any applied version of its discipline.

As an aside, unexpected input from an anthropologist suggests that “they are the only true interdisciplinary discipline – from socio-cultural anthropology and archaeology to linguistics and physical/biological anthropology. This discipline allows us to be economists as well as zoologists (e.g. studying the sexual habits of chimps.)”

Another common aspect of interdisciplinary work was connecting with the community or communities. So ignoring the university’s walls seemed natural. In fact, as one person passionately argued, UBC has three pillars that support its goals – research, teaching, and community – and though the first two are recognized and rewarded for promotion, tenure, and other merit ratings, the last is not.

“Contributing to community is not recognized, much less rewarded. As the university ignores this third strategic pillar by continuing to tie promotion and tenure to narrower disciplinary criteria, it is making a tactical error.”

“Faculty members struggle with the tension of wanting to broaden their work, but remain restricted by watching the rules and regulations for promotion and tenure.”

When asked specifically what the word “interdisciplinarity” meant to each person, many suggested “transdisciplinarity” was a more accurate or meaningful word because it better described integration, though some others hung on to the word because it identified the broad movement and its historic place in this academy. So a fair amount of confusion still exists, though much of it is well covered in the literature on interdisciplinarity (see reference list).

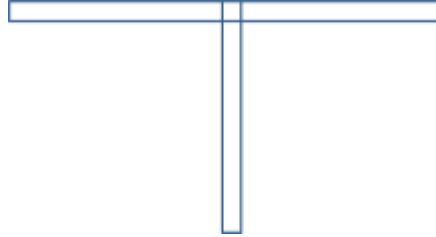
“If interdisciplinarity suggests that disciplines become intertwined, but perhaps remain intact, then trans-disciplinarity would suggest that disciplines come together in a loosely collaborative group, not only with a focus on the spaces between the disciplines but also those outside the collective.”

“Disciplines are too narrowly focused. They miss things. While multidisciplinary could be seen as a mosaic where each point is distinct and separate from others, interdisciplinarity became more of a montage or a blend, of once clear points now overlapping with others.”

A number of people described interdisciplinary versus disciplinary work in useful visual ways. One, who in his undergraduate work focused on the environment and health, learned that:

“Most trajectories are ~ ~ ~ ~ , so nothing is straight.”

Another provided this strong image, relevant to his unit as well as in other complex problem solving areas:



“The vertical bar provides depth of knowledge, and is legitimate at the university. The horizontal bar provides breadth, but is not legit.”

Out of this rich perplexity came a thoughtful consideration offered by former President David Strangway who suggested that the word “interdisciplinarity” itself was beginning to sound like a separate discipline. He preferred “integration,” but then added that three Is are even better:

*Intimate
International
Integrated*

“Intimate,” he suggested, describes the drive or passion that individuals undertaking interdisciplinary work bring to their focus on complex environmental, social, and human problems. “International” means that problems to be tackled are not always local, but that looking outside the academy to elsewhere in the world allows these complex problems to be better understood and addressed. And “integration” describes how individuals with their specialized disciplinary knowledge need to work together with those who can contribute other disciplinary knowledge to deal with the complexities of this world.

As the creator of Quest University, a fully interdisciplinary or integrated university in Squamish, BC, where integrated knowledge is introduced to all students in their undergraduate years, Strangway’s version of the three Is might be confidently embraced by all.

Then to contribute further to these three Is, came another person’s suggestion of three Cs:

*Commitment
Cosmos
Collaboration*

With this afterthought:

“... though I’m still working on finding a better middle word to replace Cosmos.”

How UBC’s interdisciplinary work fits into a broader history was explained by Strangway this way:

“In the 20th Century, disciplines started dividing into smaller and smaller pieces, with different disciplines becoming finer and finer, while still remaining as distinct disciplines moving into increasing specialization. The 21st Century is an era of integration of disciplines to solve problems given that no one discipline has the an-

swers. This transition is difficult at universities because narrower and deeper knowledge is needed for deep specialization (e.g., an elbow and shoulder doctor), but also needed is to cross these boundaries. Universities are divided into departments and faculties. The world is not."

The Interdisciplinary (or Transdisciplinary or 3Is or 3Cs) Life in UBC's Faculty of Graduate Studies (FoGS)

As introduced above, life in the Faculty of Graduate Studies for UBC's interdisciplinary units began shortly after FoGS was created in 1949, mere months before Peter Oberlander introduced a graduate program in community and regional planning.

When he looked around to consider where such a program should sit, he soon realized that none of the faculties could properly house a program that drew on subjects from multiple disciplines. As he then noticed that the Faculty of Graduate Studies had just been created, and as his was a graduate program, he suggested it go there. It was accepted by then Dean Henry Angus.

Then in 1951, his program grew into the School of Community and Regional Planning, which Oberlander proposed also be placed in FoGS, a move that President Norman MacKenzie approved. In 2007, not long before he died, Professor Emeritus Peter Oberlander gave a powerful speech entitled "More Than 50 Years of Interdisciplinarity at UBC: Advancing Interdisciplinarity," which describes in lively terms how his School became internationally successful, and how it advanced other programs and units from it.

When asked at his talk how interdisciplinarity became the basis of teaching and learning in his soon to be created Community and Regional Planning program, he responded:

"UBC like most North American universities were bastions of silos (some still are), protected by insurmountable firewalls from the possible infection of related and inter-dependent knowledge, information, and experience. The answer is serendipity, accident, incidence, obstinate individuals, and the essential necessity of solving real-world problems and emerging professional practice – and creating a new profession."

Once he was established in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and started to teach planning to architects, he noted that he got

"full co-operation to all courses and subjects, but subservient to none."

In the years that followed, other interdisciplinary units also moved into FoGS. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Genetics Program, the Institute for Animal Resource Ecology, Institute of Applied Mathematics, the Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program, and Institute of Asian Research were established. In the 1980s, IARE was closed, but then in the 1990s and 2000s came thirteen more, while two former units merged into one. By 2005, the number of interdisciplinary schools, research institutes and centres, colleges, and graduate programs rose to thirty, with 83 faculty appointments and many more adjunct and associate researchers.

Faculty of Graduate Studies Annual Report 05/06

Schools

School of Occupational and Environmental Hygiene (SOEH)
School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP)

Research Units (Centres and Institutes)

W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics
Institute of Applied Mathematics (IAM)
Institute of Asian Research (IAR)
International Collaboration on Repair Discoveries (ICORD)
Institute for European Studies (IES)
Fisheries Centre
Institute of Health Promotion Research (IHPR)
Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP)
Centre for International Relations (CIR)
Liu Institute for Global Issues (LIGI)
Media and Graphics Interdisciplinary Centre (MAGIC)
Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability (IRES)
Centre for Women's and Gender Studies (CWAGS)

Colleges

Green College
St. John's College

Programs

Applied Mathematics
Asia Pacific Policy Studies
Community and Regional Planning
Buddhism and Contemporary Society
European Studies
Genetics
Individual Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program (IISGP)
Interdisciplinary Oncology
Neuroscience
Occupational and Environmental Hygiene
Resource Management and Environmental Studies
Software Systems
Women's and Gender Studies

This growth of interdisciplinary units held within FoGS was supported strongly by Presidents:

Walter Harry Gage	1969-1975
Douglas T. Kenny	1975-1983
George Pederson	1983-1985
David Strangway	1985-1997
Martha Piper	1997-2006

Of these five, Strangway's influence during his term as President brought the most dramatic growth.

These Deans of FoGS were actively supportive of their interdisciplinary units at the same time as overseeing graduate education across the entire university.

Henry F. Angus	1949-1956
Gordon M. Shrum	1956-1961
Frederick H. Soward	1961-1964
Ian McTaggart Cowan	1964-1975
Peter Larkin	1975-1984
Peter Suedfeld	1984-1990
John Grace	1990-1996
Frieda Granot	1996-2006
Ann Rose (pro tem)	2006-2007

Also highly supportive were the members of the advisory board, the first such board set up by Dean Frieda Granot. They very much enjoyed coming from across the country to meetings at which they could learn about the work done by interdisciplinary researchers. These board members also contributed significant donations to FoGS, not necessarily personally but via their broad national and international connections.

So taking account of these Presidents, Deans, faculty members, and board members collectively, the overall statistics, such as donations, grants, and appointments matched or surpassed the top achievements of UBC faculties, particularly over the last ten years.

On the first point – donations – amounts received frequently came in higher than any other UBC faculty, including Arts, Science, Sauder School, and others that were much larger than the interdisciplinary units in FoGS – though less frequently above donations to Medicine. Some of this exceptional intake could be attributed to the relevance to many if not most donors of problem- and/or community-focused interdisciplinary research.

FoGS Advisory Board - 05/06

Dr. Yvan Allaire
Hon. Jacob (Jack) Austin
Dr. Patricia Baird
Dr. Robert Blair
Mr. Donald A Calder
Dr. David Dodge
Dr. David Dolphin
Dr. Peter Y.L. Eng
Dr. Haig Farris
Hon. John Fraser
Ms Nancy Harrison
Dr. Chaviva Hošek
Ms Mary Jordan
Mrs. Nezhat Khosrowshahi
Dr. John MacDonald (chair)
Hon. Roy MacLaren
Dr. John H. McArthur
Dr. J. Fraser Mustard
Mr. Youssef Nasr
Dr. Peter Nicholson, C.M.
Mr. Michael Phelps
Dr. Saida Rasul
Dr. Donald B. Rix
Dr. Jeffrey Simpson, O.C.
Ms Susan Smith
Mr. Frank Stronach
Dr. Hugh Wynne-Edwards

On the second point – grants – even more impressive was that the per-faculty member grant intake was higher in virtually every recent year than any other faculty at UBC, including Medicine.

And on the third point – appointments – there were stories of research stars somewhere in the world who would only take on a role at UBC if it was in FoGS, and not in one of the disciplinary faculties. In addition, FoGS was able to attract the first women into newly created Canada Research Chairs. So apparently there was something positive in how people outside UBC perceived the research benefits offered in the interdisciplinary units in FoGS.

The research undertaken by these faculty members can also be rated first class. One of these, and possibly widest known, was William (Bill) Rees' creation of the ecological footprint, a concept considered one of the world's leading measures of human impact on nature. Other such new, innovative, and brilliant research produced by faculty in the interdisciplinary units must be included in what follows this brief paper.

As already noted above, how people talked about the support they received during these years were highly positive, especially in terms of the support they received from the Deans. Though many Deans received strong praise, as the last Dean in FoGS, memories were easier and the number of faculty who lived through those years was higher.

"Many of those outside FoGS were envious of the whole. It was a great environment."

"FoGS protected the interdisciplinary units from other Deans when collaborations across disciplines sometimes touched on departments in their Faculties."

"The unique nature of FoGS was that people could work on policy and community-related work as well as connecting to audiences across UBC. What made this a different entity was that FoGS had faculty appointments, so not just temporary collaborations."

"If we had any need or any kind of problem, Frieda [Granot] would immediately get to work on finding support to help fix the matter."

"I remember how very successful Frieda Granot was as a champion who set a high bar. It was a time of the best financial and other support."

"Deans such as Peter Larkin and John Grace wrote very powerful arguments in support of the continuation of interdisciplinarity within FoGS when Senate, often driven by the other Deans, demanded justification for this unusual set up."

"Having monthly meetings of FoGS unit directors in Green College was very inspirational."

On the less positive or more challenging side, promotion and tenure reviews for interdisciplinary faculty members relied on collaboration between the various units given that there were not always a sizeable number of faculty members in any given interdisciplinary unit. However, as a result of the high quality of the research of these interdisciplinary faculty, most cases forwarded to SAC were approved.

Another downside or challenge for interdisciplinarity was getting published, especially in long-run, well established publishers. This was not easy for interdisciplinary researchers given that publications had been based for decades on disciplinary topics.

Nonetheless, despite some of these constraints within the structure of UBC and the academic world, UBC's interdisciplinary faculty members were highly successful, including, as noted, being well supported financially by both donations and research grants.

Creation of and Life in the College for Interdisciplinary Studies (CFIS)

In 1997, President David Strangway stepped down to be replaced by Martha Piper. In 2004, Lorne Whitehead was appointed to replace Barry McBride as Vice President Academic and Provost. In his first year, Whitehead began contemplating the restructuring of FoGS; then in 2005, he issued a document entitled "Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society: Options for Academic Growth at UBC." (See copy attached.)

The purpose of this document was to

"solicit input from the UBC academic community on an important emerging topic . . . committed to facilitating the integration of teaching and research across disciplines in a manner which honours disciplinarity, creates the best possible learning environment for our students, empowers our professors and serves society" (p.4).

The document proposes four options to consider, each described in detail with extensive advantages and disadvantages offered for each. These four options were:

- Option One: Enlarge a Distinct Home for Interdisciplinary Units
- Option Two: Distribute Independent Interdisciplinary Units
- Option Three: Accept Interdisciplinary Units into Disciplinary Faculties
- Option Four: Central Support for Independent Interdisciplinary Units

What becomes obvious in reading these options is that a decision to remove the interdisciplinary units from the Faculty of Graduate Studies had already been made before the document was distributed for broad university input. And although factors for assessing these four options are listed in significant detail (p. 19), the reader can visualize FoGS as a 5th option, but then become confused about why this was not part of making major organizational change. Also unclear is understanding the role of committee members listed in the document.

The process within FoGS, and perhaps elsewhere, was turbulent. In 2006, a year before her term ended, Dean Frieda Granot resigned. Then a year later, in 2007, UBC Senate created a College for Interdisciplinary Studies (CFIS) and moved all interdisciplinary units into this new entity.

The mandate of CFIS would be to "facilitate and support interdisciplinarity campus-wide, and as part of that mandate, to serve as a place for the creation, development, and dissemination of new and important scholarly activities which advance the interests of UBC as a whole...." (CFIS Annual Report 2006/07, p.4).

The argument made for creating a “College” as opposed to a new “Faculty” is that the University Act only permitted 12 “faculties” to exist at UBC. The interdisciplinary units would have become the 13th.

“The curious part of the creation of a ‘College’ for academic research and teaching units was that the title ‘Faculty’ remained for an administrative entity – graduate education. In other words, why did Graduate Studies not lose its ‘Faculty’ status given that it had no faculty appointees, and instead be named the same way as the University’s undergraduate services? It would have helped to acknowledge CFIS as a true faculty within the University’s limit of 12.”

“As soon as the College was established, we knew it would not last. The title itself and the fact that the ‘Dean’ became a ‘Principal’ made it clear that this entity was low status, not something worth keeping.”

During the next few years as the College was being reviewed and more permanent leadership was sought, there was less than expected support from interdisciplinary faculty members to support CFIS and move things forward. Perhaps as a result of this reaction, or other decisions or uncertainties yet to be explored, the turbulence in CFIS continued for six more years as finding its ultimate role and structure was less than efficient and effective.

Opinions from most sources to this study suggested that they were aware that other Deans were behind this change to FoGS.

“Deans wanted some of the financially and academically interdisciplinary units in their own faculties. What right had FoGS to keep these units to themselves?”

“Working against FoGS was money – they brought in more grants and donors than most faculties, thereby perceived by ‘predatory Deans’ as taking donations away from them. In other words, if all these dollars are going to FoGS, then if FoGS isn’t there and no longer deserving, then those dollars will go to them.”

“Granot often had challenges at the Deans table, where she didn’t have the regular support of other Deans the way other faculties enjoyed.”

“It was Frieda Granot’s success as a Dean in overseeing the interdisciplinary units that moved other Deans to push the Vice President to make this change.”

“Senate agreed to a 5-year review period for CFIS, but did not agree to support it.”

However, the matter of moving interdisciplinarity out of FoGS didn’t simply start with any reaction to Frieda Granot specifically, but had been imposed on Graduate Studies Deans for a couple of decades. Often and even regularly, they were asked to justify the existence of these units in their faculty. In looking at some of the effective arguments these Deans had made, they had obviously won.

Then in 2006, and even though John Grace in 2005, in response to Whitehead’s document, had offered a powerful and detailed argument in support of not breaking up but retaining the interdisciplinary units in FoGS (see attached), an argument that received no response from the Vice President’s office, clearly something had shifted at the University.

Comments that came from people about this period were as turbulent as the transition itself. For example, the organizational change from FoGS to CFIS was judged from perspectives such as:

“Interdisciplinary faculty were seen as ‘fat cats’ for not teaching undergraduate classes – a fact only partly but not fully correct. But it made for a winning argument.”

“The whole process suffered from poor strategic thinking.”

“The restructuring was a waste of time created by unfortunate and unfair politics. CFIS could have been good, but was not built on a good battlefield.”

“The changes involved good ideas, conflicts, animosity, and other contradictory elements in the end.”

“In comparing interdisciplinarians with those in disciplinary faculties: the former were the ‘pirates’, the others, the ‘navy’. So the death of CFIS meant that the ‘pirates were pulled back into the navy’.”

“The changes that occurred were based a lot on personalities. Lorne Whitehead’s restructuring was unnecessary: ‘If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’.”

So although CFIS was judged by the University as a better solution than keeping interdisciplinary units in a Faculty of Graduate Studies, nonetheless on October 1, 2013, six years after its establishment, UBC Senate passed a motion to close CFIS. Its short history is captured in Elissa How’s institutional record, entitled “College for Interdisciplinary Studies” (2013).

The End of CFIS and New Life in Disciplinary Faculties

Now that CFIS no longer existed, each interdisciplinary unit was allowed to choose which faculty they would join. They were encouraged to interview the Deans of any one or more faculties to agree on a collective decision.

Many units made relatively easy or obvious decisions based on where the larger base of their research resided: for example, Fisheries as well as Resources, Environment, and Sustainability moved into Science; Asian Research, Women’s Studies, the Liu Institute, and European Studies moved into Arts; and Health Promotion Research, Human Early Learning Partnership, Occupational and Environmental Hygiene moved into Medicine. Others moved to faculties whose Deans were welcoming.

When asked how these moves into the new faculties affected their work, some said it’s working well, even better in some cases; others were worried about the continuation of their existence, while still others were displeased and even angry about the impact of these changes on their units and their work. A few were still suffering through the turmoil of change, albeit offering better answers when they had a clearer and longer sense of the impact.

These three different types of responses, ranging from positive to negative to uncertain, are summarized here.

On the positive side:

“We were openly welcomed by the Dean and are positively supported in this faculty both financially and in achieving our goals, support that had been put aside in CFIS. All of us have benefited.”

“We discovered that our new faculty actually came to us to help them work with communities as required by UBC’s third pillar, something with which they had limited experience. So our unit’s long experience in working with communities and international groups became helpful to them. I see us growing in the next few years.”

“Since leaving CFIS, our unit is being strengthened and even rejuvenated under our new faculty. Also, in this faculty, no one ‘bugs us’ any longer.”

“Today, I see more integrated work within disciplinary faculties.”

“Physical space is important, so our current juxtaposition with some other units is especially helpful to our research.”

“What happened is not an ‘obituary’, but a vivisection of a developing idea.”

On the negative side:

“Our unit is now dissolved within the faculty despite its critical importance to research. We are now considered bogus with a mixed reputation.”

“If CFIS continued, it should have been reinvented, for example, to rotate people in and out of the interdisciplinary units over 5-year periods when they wanted to work on specific problems. Instead, we killed ourselves; we were not killed by the Deans.”

“In our new faculty, we are simply a cog in a big wheel without much reciprocity.”

“When FoGS existed, some scholarships were available, but not today.”

And on the not yet clear side:

“The faculty welcomed us, but there remain a few issues about the time required to be switched to the work of the faculty.”

“We now have a teaching program, but the disruption produced a lot of anxiety as interdisciplinary became less able at the institutional level to span a range of disciplines as we were able to do in FoGS.”

We don’t know how or if our research freedoms will be limited, whether financial support will continue to support our work, or what effect these changes will have on the receiving faculties themselves over a longer period of time.”

What We Learned, and Where Do We Go From Here

What we learned so far, as noted, is a mixture of positive, negative, and neutral. The broadest, and most consistently and collectively positive is the time of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The broadest negative is the turbulence of restructuring and the creation and brief existence of CFIS which apparently provided little or no support.

In between is a mixture of good, bad, and undecided – in other words, as noted at the beginning by one person’s response when asked how research and viability of the unit had been affected by restructuring, “come back in 15 years and ask me that question again.”

What we have learned at this stage, therefore, may not be enough to say that this was right or this was wrong. The idea that interdisciplinarity needs to be protected in a special faculty remains questionable.

Given the growth of interdisciplinarity launched, many believe, by student movements of the 60s and 70s, might today mean that these problem-focused, collaborative, community-oriented, interactive, multi- and cross-disciplinary, and other approaches to research will keep going and infuse all the traditional disciplinary departments and faculties. As one person suggested:

“What may be the more likely mover of change are students. In other words, change happens from the bottom up, not the top down.”

As a possible example, a recent newspaper article, “Breaking Down Health Care Barriers” (*Vancouver Sun*, October 2, 2015, p. B9) highlights the collaboration of electrical engineering and personalized medicine. As well, the Vice Provost Gavin Stuart (and former Dean of the Faculty of Medicine) presided “over a first-of-its kind meeting at UBC, one in which the deans and directors of our various health-related programs (including Pharmacy, Dentistry, Nursing, Medicine, and Social Work, as well as administrators) discussed how we could work more effectively together.” He then added that “if you think it’s a bit absurd that such a meeting had not taken place before, well, I can’t argue with that. But the good news is we recognize the absurdity. And we’re doing something about it.”

What we still don’t know, but might be worth exploring are the following: What was the financial cost? What has been the reaction of other Deans in accepting interdisciplinary units into their faculties? What are the reflections of former Presidents and Vice Presidents on whether this worked out as they expected? What, if any, impact has this change had on UBC’s international reputation for interdisciplinary research and teaching?

Obviously the cost to the University to undergo ten years of turbulence, study, and change must be high. What is likely also high is the loss of donations that FoGS had managed to attract so successfully. Whether there has been any impact on faculty member successes in attracting grants is unknown. So a deeper study of the financials would be worth undertaking.

Another question to pursue about the fact that restructuring took place when things were working so well might be about the geographic landscape of UBC. As management literature knows well, physical structures influence organizational cultures, as well as operational efficiency, economy, and effectiveness. When UBC was created 100 years ago, it was offered an immense spread of land. Faculties could therefore be put here, there, and elsewhere, with little need to interact with other disciplinary groups.

The question then is, did this physical reality create stronger silos at UBC that have isolated disciplines from each other? For example, if one compares UBC to Simon Fraser, which was deliberately designed to bring disciplines close to one another and which has always had a much more intrinsic interdisciplinary or collaborative style, then the theory of physical impact at UBC might be better understood.

When I first started at UBC, all Faculties were highly territorial and isolated. There was no interaction among them. But over time, one began to actually talk about UBC as a whole, not a collection of separate parts.

What influenced UBC to come together was the creation of CFI grants (Canada Foundation for Innovation), which required all project research plans of all universities to draw broadly on disciplines across that university, not just from one area. The impact of CFI, therefore, was on interdisciplinarity across Canada, demonstrating that high quality facilities that won such major awards brought scholars from different disciplines together.

At UBC, it also began to bring people from different disciplines together, and thus had a big impact on changing the nature of this institution.

-- David Strangway

In closing, I look forward to the next stage of filling exposed gaps by listening to additional knowledgeable and experienced individuals, as well as finding additional records.

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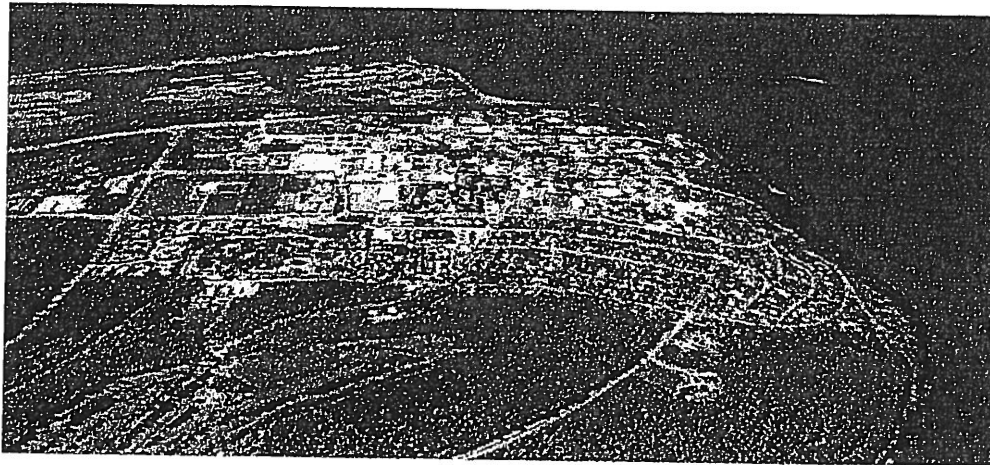
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APPENDIX 1

A Call for Campus-Wide Input:

*Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society:
Options for Academic Growth*



UBC Office of the Vice President Academic & Provost
June 2005

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Office of the VP Academic & Provost
6328 Memorial Road
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z2

June 13, 2005

Dear Colleagues:

A REQUEST FOR CAMPUS-WIDE INPUT

In recent years UBC has become a world leader in studies that transcend ordinary organizational barriers. The Michael Smith Laboratories, the Peter Wall Institute, ICORD and HELP are a few leading examples of the many successful interdisciplinary centres and institutes at UBC. Those who have pioneered the growth in such areas are to be congratulated and honoured.

No matter how beneficial it may be, substantial growth can often lead to potential difficulties, which simply means there is a need for planning. Recently there has been a widespread call for more planning around interdisciplinarity, and in turn this has led to this solicitation for input from you.

The attached paper, "Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society: Options for Academic Growth" is one step in this process. It addresses successes and challenges related to the growth of interdisciplinary activity at UBC and invites input into the planning process from the academic community. In particular, we hope to hear from you about the four basic options presented in this paper. Guidelines for written statements are described on page 19 of the paper. Please submit your written statements as soon as possible, preferably before July 15, 2005.

We will hold a public meeting on this topic in early September, and will announce the date and place later in the summer. On that occasion, time permitting, we may invite some respondents to this paper to give a brief presentation of their ideas.

In the context of our commitment to academic excellence and the Goals of Trek 2010, I can assure you that the Office of the Vice President Academic and Provost considers these organizational issues to be of great importance. We sincerely hope you will share your ideas with us.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lorne Whitehead".

Lorne Whitehead
VP Academic & Provost

Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society: Options for Academic Growth at UBC

CONTENTS

1. The Purpose of this Document	4
2. Successes and Challenges with Interdisciplinary Activities at UBC	6
2.1 Transcending Organizational Boundaries	6
2.2 What are Faculties For?	6
2.3 Models that have Generated Success	8
2.4 Challenges Arising from our Successes	9
2.5 Previous Consultation on Possible New Approaches	10
3. Four Basic Options:	12
3.1 Option 1 - Enlarge a Distinct Home for Interdisciplinary Units	13
3.2 Option 2 - Distribute Independent Interdisciplinary Units	14
3.3 Option 3 - Accept Interdisciplinary Units into Disciplinary Faculties	16
3.4 Option 4 - Central Support for Independent Interdisciplinary Units	17
4. Factors for Assessing these Options	19
5. You are Invited to Participate	20
5.1 Guidelines for Written Statements	20
5.2 Deadline	21
5.3 Public Meeting	21
6. Acknowledgement	22
Appendix A – Membership of Interdisciplinarity Committee	22
Appendix B – Possible Details for Option 4	23
Appendix C – Academic Leadership Council – Preliminary Concept	25
Appendix D – Table for Assessing Options Using Listed Criteria	27

Complementing Disciplinarity and Serving Society: Options for Academic Growth

UBC Office of VP Academic & Provost, May 2005

1. The Purpose of this Document

As the title suggests, the purpose of this document is to solicit input from the UBC academic community on an important emerging topic. We are committed to facilitating the integration of teaching and research across disciplines in a manner which honours disciplinarity, creates the best possible learning environment for our students, empowers our professors and serves society. The vision and priorities described in Trek 2010 emphasize the importance of innovative research and teaching consistent with such integration. In this regard, the key problem we hope to address is that in a large organization like UBC it remains challenging to cross Faculty and Departmental boundaries for all UBC citizens - whether it be the student attempting to take a course in another Faculty on a topic outside of their "degree stream", or the faculty member who is interested in building an interdisciplinary research program or teaching outside their discipline, or an external partner who is interested in having a problem solved but cannot find the right portal into UBC in order to bring our expertise to bear. We seek your advice on this matter.

Significantly, we are already regarded as a world leader in studies that transcend the ordinary organizational boundaries within a University. We have numerous examples of academic units whose individuals transcend with ease Departmental and Faculty boundaries in their research, teaching, and community outreach. Such units at UBC have been very successful, as determined by societal impact, awards and other forms of scholarly recognition, research funding, and the ability to attract outstanding scholars from around the world. The size and scope of such interdisciplinary activities at UBC has grown steadily and dramatically over the years, and is a tribute to the tremendous efforts and capability of numerous pioneers.

However, the proliferation of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary activities throughout UBC has also created a support need in a wide range of administrative units, in which there also remains a crucial need for maintained support of single-discipline-based inquiry. Clearly, any success causes change, and change creates new challenges as well as opportunities. The purpose of this document is to summarize discussions that have taken place over the past ten months, with the aim of understanding some of the issues that relate to the future growth of interdisciplinarity at UBC, and to present and request input on several options that have emerged as possible approaches to this important and complex set of issues.

A brief outline of the paper is as follows: It begins by summarizing some of the successes and challenges associated with interdisciplinary activities at UBC. It describes the way that faculties have traditionally functioned with regard to guiding the academic

enterprise and outlines several methods that have helped to support interdisciplinarity so far. The paper then presents some of the challenges that have arisen from our interdisciplinary successes and summarizes the methods that have been used so far in obtaining this information. The paper reviews four basic options for moving forward that have emerged from this discussion process and goes on to describe these options and briefly outline their advantages and disadvantages. The paper then presents factors that have arisen from consultation to date for comparing and assessing these various options and concludes by inviting all interested persons to provide their feedback in writing and possibly in a public presentation on this topic. The paper also contains an appendix that offers additional details on the fourth option, which arose as a new hybrid approach during these preliminary discussions.

2. Successes and Challenges with Interdisciplinary Activities at UBC

2.1 Transcending Organizational Boundaries

In today's complex environment, most large organizations find it necessary to employ some degree of hierarchical organizational structure in order to keep things running efficiently. In such a structure the organization as a whole is separated into divisions (known as Faculties at our university) and these may be further separated into subdivisions (commonly called Departments or Schools at our university). Later we will discuss some specific functions of Faculties, but at present it is sufficient to say that they satisfy important bureaucratic, management and organizational needs. The difficulty is that for practical purposes we have often attempted to create a correspondence between the organizational structures of Departments within Faculties on the one hand, and the relationships of fields of knowledge, teaching, and research, on the other. This is often problematic. In this section we explore these challenges and the solutions that have been found at UBC so far.

On a different but related note, currently at UBC the Faculty of Graduate Studies carries out several functions that need not be, but presently are, tied together. Only one of these functions will be discussed in any detail in this paper, and that is the manner in which the Faculty of Graduate Studies serves as a Faculty "home" for a number of interdisciplinary centres and institutes. (The other key functions of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, most importantly graduate student matters including recruitment, awards and scholarships, resolving difficulties, and facilitating graduation, are not discussed in this paper; this should not be interpreted in any way as a diminishment of their fundamental importance.)

2.2 What are Faculties For?

As mentioned above, from an organizational point of view it is practical to divide the academic enterprise into discrete pieces, like pieces of a pie, as shown in Figure 1a. This is one way of thinking of the Faculties of UBC, and it potentially could be very accurate as an organizational model. However, as a model for representing human knowledge, teaching, and research, it is fundamentally flawed. No matter what definitions are employed for the "pieces of the pie", such a model will have serious shortcomings if employed to classify human knowledge. There will inevitably be important areas of knowledge and activity that lie outside such categories or fall within two or more. In this regard the sketch shown in Figure 1b may be a more realistic picture:

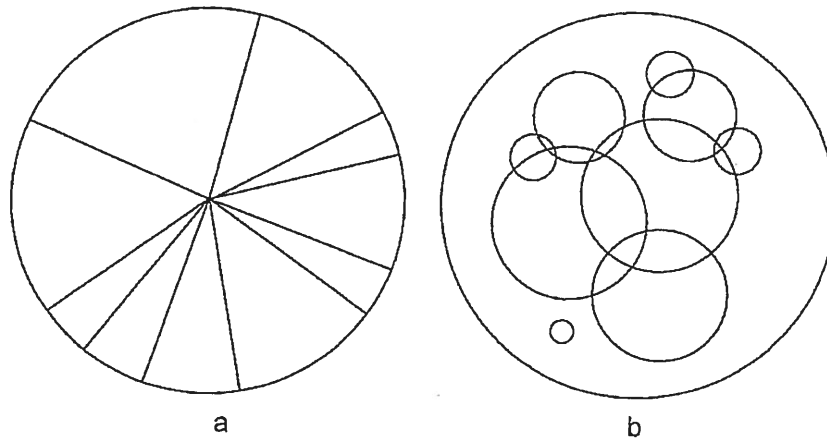


Figure 1 Slicing a Pie vs. Classifying Ideas

One way of describing our goals in this paper is to find a way that Faculties and other academic units on campus can function in their useful hierarchical manner without constraining the relationship to human knowledge itself.

In this regard, it will be helpful to summarize six important roles of Faculties from an organizational point of view; we can then discuss how these roles would apply to interdisciplinary units in various possible models. These six roles are as follows:

- A. Financial Management:**
Financial and bureaucratic administration.
- B. Promotion, Tenure, Merit, Awards:**
Faculty committees and the Dean play a key role in promotion and tenure process, bridging between the Department level and the Senior Appointments Committee. Their role in assigning merit and governing awards is also important for encouraging success.
- C. External Champion:**
The Dean acts as communicator with society, a champion, a promoter, and a fundraiser.
- D. Unit Head Reporting Relationship:**
The Dean of the Faculty is in charge of the head of each unit with regard to hiring, performance appraisal, general guidance and approval of decisions above a defined level of importance or size, including capital projects and space allocation.
- E. Strategic Planning:**
Coordination, visioning and benchmarking of research and teaching initiatives at the graduate and undergraduate level.
- F. Resource Allocation:**
Recommendation, to the Office of the Provost, on the allocation of faculty positions and other resources among the various units in the Faculty.

2.3 Models that have Generated Success

Let us now consider three different ways in which interdisciplinary activities at UBC have been able to flourish while transcending organizational boundaries.

2.3.1 The Independent Researcher Model

There are numerous examples at UBC of researchers and teachers within disciplinary units who would generally be considered to be carrying out interdisciplinary activities. As described later, they may have faced numerous disincentives to pursuing their interdisciplinary activities, but have had a sufficient level of persistence, and excellence, to be able to succeed and make great things happen. Generally, the level of success they have been able to demonstrate to society has resulted in the independent verification of the value of their activities, and the existing structures within the university have, sometimes perhaps reluctantly, allowed their pursuits to flourish.

An excellent example is the success of Dr. John Steeves in building the multi-disciplinary ICORD (International Collaboration on Repair Discoveries), a spinal cord injury repair research group at UBC, which has taken a full spectrum (cell to society) approach to improving the prospects for victims of spinal cord injury. There are numerous such examples and they all have one thing in common: they required a performance level exceeding the level of excellence of most of our top faculty members and they also required help from one or more influential and sympathetic supporters outside UBC. Most of the pioneers with whom we have had contact agree that while this model works on occasion, it is not a model naturally conducive to success – researchers need university support to pursue activities that do not fall neatly within Faculty boundaries. The independent researcher model does not provide such support in a consistent, predictable, or coordinated fashion.

2.3.2 The Extra-Faculty Unit Model

This model brings together faculty members who retain their Faculty affiliations but who come together to pursue collaborative initiatives, with dedicated support from upper administration. A good example is provided by the Michael Smith Laboratories (previously known as the Biotech Laboratory) which was created in recognition of the fact that numerous critical important discoveries in technology required intense collaboration of interested experts in electrical and mechanical engineering, microbiology, chemistry, and several other fields. Dedicated continuing university resources were assigned to the Biotech Laboratory with the various faculty members retaining partial appointments in the various administrative units mentioned above, but having a common purpose within the Biotech Lab, as well as a common location. This required a specific “top down” initiative by the Provost Office and it required allocation of significant dedicated resources.

Support by the Provost in a situation such as the creation of the Michael Smith Laboratories can thus be highly effective. It should also be noted that similar initiatives have occurred and can be expected to occur even without direct support by the Provost. For example, a group of Deans could potentially come together, recognize an important collaborative initiative, provide resources to fund such an initiative from within their Faculties, and design an approach to managing such an initiative, without any involvement by the senior administration. Currently, an early example of this approach is UBC's Proteomics initiative.

It needs to be emphasized, however, that a significant factor in the success of this model lies in new funding, which almost always implies a reallocation of equally significant resources from other university priorities.

Section 3.2.2 will elaborate on management approaches for such extra-Faculty units and the ways in which the six administrative roles of Faculties are fulfilled in these contexts.

2.3.3 The Faculty of Graduate Studies Model

A successful approach to nourishing interdisciplinary activity at UBC is found within the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Years ago, it was decided that even "extra Faculty" units can benefit from a Faculty home, and since the Faculty of Graduate Studies has no particular allegiance to any one field, it seemed like a natural place to house interdisciplinary units. At present, approximately sixteen interdisciplinary institutes, centres or schools, two colleges and eleven graduate programs are housed within the Faculty of Graduate Studies. This approach creates an effective way of providing such units with the administrative benefits of a Faculty, without the disciplinary constraints.

It should be noted here that the activities within the Faculty of Graduate Studies go well beyond a narrow definition of interdisciplinarity. Many of the Centres and Institutes within the Faculty of Graduate Studies would prefer to view themselves as "issue based units" rather than "interdisciplinary units" because their reason for existence is primarily to address profound social needs from an academic perspective. The optimal academic pursuit of such issues naturally leads to a wide range of different disciplinary approaches that must be coordinated and blended synergistically, but such interdisciplinarity is a by-product, rather than a starting point, for a more important endeavour. Clearly it would be unwise to pursue a path at UBC that might degrade the positive impact of the Faculty of Graduate Studies in such areas. We wish to build on this success.

Compared to other faculties, the Faculty of Graduate Studies has a smaller role in the strategic planning of teaching and research, relative to discipline-based activities at UBC, simply because there is no strategic planning body bridging the divide. We will return to this question later.

2.4 Challenges Arising from our Successes

As a result of the success of the pioneering efforts described above, interdisciplinarity is now pervasive across many units at UBC. It would be tempting to assume that this is entirely a good thing, but it is only natural to find certain challenges associated with any

growth. One such challenge, as will be described later, is associated with the need to better plan, coordinate and integrate undergraduate and graduate disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs (within and across schools and departments) and such coordination has proven difficult with the current models.

Perhaps more significantly, there is a growing problem with the magnitude of the interdisciplinary enterprise. When it was small, certain minor difficulties could simply be ignored for the benefit of the greater good. However, as interdisciplinarity has grown this has become more difficult. For example, the Faculty of Graduate Studies currently has about eighty interdisciplinary faculty members under its auspices, as a result of a sustained high growth rate over the past two decades, which shows no sign of slowing. There has been a corresponding impact on fundraising, program development, graduate student recruitment, attraction of excellent faculty, competition for research grants, etc. Given that the activities within the Faculty of Graduate Studies often overlap, at least to some extent, with other activities within disciplinary Faculties, it is not surprising that these developments have spawned some serious concerns, as further described in section 3.1.4.

It is therefore appropriate to consider whether new, modified organizational structures could continue to nurture interdisciplinarity while providing better coordination with the disciplinary Faculties.

2.5 Previous consultation on possible new approaches

In September 2004, discussion with the President, the Vice President Research and the Dean of FoGS led the Provost to establish a committee to consider long term planning for interdisciplinarity at UBC. The preliminary mandate of the committee was to consider possible changes to the structure of FoGS such that excellence in all aspects of graduate education would be maintained and enhanced, and multi-and inter-disciplinary research nurtured and appropriately promoted. Membership comprised senior researchers, senior administrators and members of the GSS (please see Appendix A for committee membership.)

The committee met in September, October and January, and discussed existing models for nurturing interdisciplinarity alongside disciplinary efforts within UBC and at other universities. At its last meeting in April, the committee reviewed feedback from other parties (listed below) and supported the recommendation to develop this position paper to launch a more extensive consultation process.

In addition to participation on this committee by the Deans of Arts, Science and Graduate Studies, the full Committee of Deans has been involved in discussions throughout 2004-2005 concerning various possibilities for moving forward. At the beginning of March 2005, the Committee of Deans devoted a mini retreat, facilitated by the Dean of the Sauder School of Business, to considering alternative approaches to the strengthening of interdisciplinarity. There was a strong consensus for change and a variety of views, some along the lines of a possible new approach described later in this paper as "Option Four." Such discussions have in no way precluded the consideration of other options during the next consultation stage.

In April, at the invitation of the Dean of FoGS, the Associate Vice President Academic Programs attended the morning session of the FoGS Annual Retreat, and shared with the participants the ideas for change that had come from the above consultations. In response, participants at the Retreat emphasized the need to maintain the values and benefits to interdisciplinarity made possible by the FoGS structure, and asked for more clarity on the rationale for change, closer examination of alternative options, and a greater participation by the community in the process.

One form of such consultation prior to the completion of this paper was a meeting in May with Directors of Schools and Heads of Departments, and a significant number of cross-appointed faculty members, to seek advice on the desirability of change and ways in which change could be of optimal benefit to these constituents. The feedback received during the meeting and through some follow-up e-mail provided clear support for the need to reconsider the current structures and to improve planning of disciplinary and interdisciplinary activities across campus. Strong support was also expressed for the idea of creating inclusive mechanisms to advise the Provost on the issues of resource allocation for both interdisciplinary and disciplinary endeavours in synergistic rather than polarizing ways.

3. Four Basic Options:

The initial consultation process as described above has resulted in the development and preliminary consideration of four possible organizational models that are not mutually exclusive, but are decidedly different from one another. It should be noted that some combination of these options could be warranted and additional options may still be devised.

3.1 Option One: Enlarge a Distinct Home for Interdisciplinary Units

The interdisciplinary activities currently housed in the Faculty of Graduate Studies have been growing in scale and number. For this reason the status quo (that is, the current size of the activity within the Faculty of Graduate Studies) is not really a viable option. If we want to continue with “business as usual” we must anticipate considerable growth of the current interdisciplinary mandate of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. This option has substantial merit, as it builds on success, but it also has certain disadvantages.

3.1.1 How does this option work?

The Faculty of Graduate Studies, which is not aligned with any specific discipline, nevertheless provides the administrative functions of a more typical disciplinary Faculty. It has faculty members appointed (or cross-appointed) and it offers some interdisciplinary programs.

Apart from a few details, the operational model is very straightforward, and so would be its anticipated growth.

A version of this option could involve separation of the graduate student and interdisciplinary mandates of FoGS by creating a new “Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies” separate from the Faculty of Graduate Studies. This would be a significant organizational change requiring Senate and Board of Governors approval, but would have little effect on day to day operations.

3.1.2 How “Faculty functions” are provided:

Referring to the list of Faculty administrative functions in section 2.2, it is evident that FoGS is able to perform many of the functions performed by the disciplinary faculties. Function “B”, regarding promotion and tenure is shared with disciplinary faculties in the case of joint appointments. The only slightly problematic function is “E” – the strategic planning of teaching and research. The challenge is that much of the relevant teaching (particularly at the undergraduate level), falls under the authority of the disciplinary Faculties, with which FoGS has only a weak administrative connection.

3.1.3 Advantages:

Clearly, the FoGS model has advantages which have greatly benefited the cause of interdisciplinarity. Not only is the model able to provide for the administrative needs of interdisciplinary units; its Dean has been a tremendously effective advocate for

interdisciplinarity, and the result has been sustained, substantial growth. The combination of a “champion Dean” and a strong sense of community within FoGS has helped to attract excellent world class researchers into FoGS units, which in turn has helped to support productive fundraising to build further success.

A crucial benefit of the FoGS model is that it has been able to provide powerful methods for nurturing young interdisciplinary faculty members, especially with regard to a fair and appropriate set of procedures concerning promotion and tenure, as well as the allocation of merit and PSA awards. Within FoGS, it is common to find faculty members who felt insufficiently recognized within their previously disciplinary homes, and who now feel very positive about the level of understanding, respect, and support offered to them within FoGS.

Based on these outcomes, it is imperative that any future models for further improving interdisciplinarity at UBC should maintain and build on the strengths that are abundantly evident within the Faculty of Graduate Studies. One possible means of doing so is to establish a separate Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies that would maintain and enhance all the advantages listed above. Such a step could occur with only limited changes to existing staff positions, beyond some individuals having a dual report, as required.

3.1.4 Disadvantages:

At a deep level, one of the concerns is the separation between interdisciplinary units and their associated disciplinary counterparts. There is a need at UBC for a fully inclusive, comprehensive, and coordinated strategic planning process of both discipline based and interdisciplinary activity, and this should relate to both teaching and research programs, university wide. There are critical resource allocation issues associated with such strategic planning, but the separation of disciplinary from interdisciplinary activities promoted by the current FoGS model means that at present there is no fair and effective mechanism to carry out analysis of such issues. Interestingly, the current FoGS model already incorporates one portion of a solution – the high rate of cross appointments often minimizes barriers for individual faculty members. It is the administrative Faculty barrier (which of course is not unique to FoGS) that is a primary challenge for interdisciplinarity.

Another concern is that the FoGS model may create the false impression that interdisciplinarity is “owned” by one Faculty. Other Deans feel very strongly that they are fully able to nurture interdisciplinary activity within their faculties as well as the more “issue-based” activities characteristic of those within FoGS, and there are numerous examples of this being the case.

A further challenge with FoGS is that faculty members within this Faculty are, to a large extent, much less involved with undergraduate teaching than their colleagues outside FoGS. Of course, there are also highly research-oriented faculty members outside FoGS who do little undergraduate teaching - it is just the overall average that is different in FoGS. This difference, as well as the very name “Graduate Studies” itself, creates a perceived asymmetry which some feel is detrimental to the overall sense of fairness at UBC. While this issue does not directly relate to interdisciplinarity itself, it is nonetheless of significant concern regarding the current FoGS model.

The same issue contributes to discontinuity between undergraduate and graduate programs at UBC. It is highly desirable for us to explore interdisciplinarity with regards to programs at all levels, and this is currently impeded by the present arrangement wherein interdisciplinary undergraduate programs reside within Faculties other than FoGS and interdisciplinary graduate programs are primarily associated with FoGS. Furthermore, given current Faculty boundaries, it is very difficult to coordinate discipline-focused undergraduate programs with interdisciplinary graduate offerings.

At a more mundane level, as mentioned earlier, it is important to recognize that FoGS overlaps in its jurisdiction with many other Faculties in a way that is normally avoided between Faculties, leading to competition for donors, advisory board members, research grants, etc. Establishment of a separate Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies would not address such concerns; indeed, it might exacerbate the problem by adding another level of competition for the same resources.

3.2 Option Two: Distribute Independent Interdisciplinary Units

This option relates to existing examples where units exist independently and lie outside any Faculty. Such “extra-Faculty units” function well without the framework of a Faculty of Graduate Studies. An example is the Michael Smith Laboratories. Some have speculated that at this stage in UBC’s history it may now be workable to move all the inter-disciplinary units out of the Faculty of Graduate Studies in a model along the lines of the Michael Smith Laboratories.

3.2.1 How does this option work?

This approach shares a common characteristic with the FoGS model, where faculty members are often jointly appointed with existing disciplinary units. However, it is important to note that most of the units within the Faculty of Graduate Studies are considerably less well endowed than the Michael Smith Laboratories, so that particular example may not be directly applicable. It should be noted that there are a number of different schemes along these lines which are currently in place at UBC and elsewhere, with various different detailed management schemes.

3.2.2 How “Faculty functions ” are provided

Referring to section 2.2, let us consider how the six listed administrative roles of a Faculty can be fulfilled in this model in a specific example. For the Michael Smith Laboratories, Function “A”, bureaucratic administration and approval, is provided by a specified Faculty (in this case the Faculty of Science). Function “B”, support of the promotion and tenure process, is provided in part by the Deans Committee and in part by the home Faculty for each of the joint appointments. Function “C”, communication with society and fundraising, is performed partly by the leader of the Michael Smith Laboratory, partly by the Dean of Science and Chair of the Dean’s Committee, and partly by the Provost. Should this model be directly duplicated on a large scale, this level of complexity would probably not be sustainable.

Function “D”, unit head reporting relationship, is somewhat ambiguous – the director reports in some ways to three places - the Chair of the Deans Committee that oversees the unit, the Dean of the Faculty which provides the above referenced administrative support, and the Provost. (At present the Dean of Science is in both of the first two positions, but this situation changes from time to time.) Theoretically the Deans Committee for the Michael Smith Laboratories fulfills Function “E”, strategic planning, and its connection with the rest of the university, but such advice has been rather limited.

Finally, Function “F”, resource allocation, is largely unaddressed, but there is an ongoing assumption that the Provost’s Office, which supported the original creation of the Michael Smith Laboratories, would be sympathetic to consideration of further essential resource needs. Again, while this proves to be a workable model in a fairly isolated case, this level of reporting complexity could be very problematic, and possibly unmanageable, with multiple units operating on the same basis, each requiring its own Committee.

3.2.3 Advantages

Although there are some complexities with this model, there are also substantial advantages. For example, the perceived disadvantages intrinsic to the FoGS model would be reduced. Another advantage is that the creation of extra-Faculty units is able to occur from a bottom up approach, which is highly favoured at UBC and seems to have considerable merit. In other words, senior administration would have primarily an approval role for initiatives developed by the Deans and/or Heads or Directors.

3.2.4 Disadvantages

There are serious disadvantages with this model, most of which stem from the fact that most interdisciplinary units, especially at their inception, are small and modestly funded. It is highly unlikely that a small, minimally funded, interdisciplinary unit would have the level of resources required to ensure success along the lines of the Michael Smith Laboratories.

Many units currently housed within FoGS fear that the Faculty support and leadership functions currently provided by FoGS would not be effectively replicated in the extra-Faculty model described in this second option. Even if each unit were provided with a Deans Committee to help it function, in analogy to the Michael Smith Laboratories, there is doubt about the effectiveness of such committees. At present every interdisciplinary unit within FoGS has such a committee to help with strategic planning, but these committees are largely ineffective, providing little meaningful input or guidance, primarily because the Deans do not have time to become deeply involved with every small unit. Furthermore, there is no positive interdependence between the Deans’ responsibilities within their home Faculties and their roles on the Committees supporting extra-Faculty units.

Thus, the likely outcome of this option would be the substantial loss, of Functions A through F currently provided by FoGS. In addition, this option would likely be somewhat disruptive to the nature of existing jobs and would require serious reconfiguration of support functions.

3.3 Option Three: Accept Interdisciplinary Units into Disciplinary Faculties

A number of challenges described above associated with the current structure of the Faculty of Graduate Studies could be addressed by Option Three. In this model, the FoGS function would be limited to the graduate students mandate and each of the interdisciplinary units currently within FoGS would be absorbed into a disciplinary Faculty which best suits the individual character of each particular unit.

3.3.1 How would this option work?

In this option, the interdisciplinary FoGS units would be invited to join one of the existing Faculties and share the benefits of administrative support residing with the Faculties. This would not change the nature of the joint appointments of individual faculty who are affiliated with more than one unit. Additional cross-appointments could be made in the future and the existing arrangements could be maintained, intact, indefinitely.

3.3.2 How “Faculty functions” are provided

The need for Faculty functions is very simply solved in this model, as each unit that was previously within FoGS is now housed within Faculties that are automatically able to provide all the functions listed in section 2.2.

3.3.3 Advantages

Because of the provision of functions through the disciplinary Faculties, this alternate model avoids most of the disadvantages of options 1 and 2. Additionally, it has the advantage of organizational simplicity and cost effectiveness. However, these advantages could possibly be diminished by the mechanisms needed to ameliorate the disadvantages described in the next section.

3.3.4 Disadvantages

Although interdisciplinarity is now significantly more accepted and has become a part of the mainstream practice within many Faculty-based units, there is still enough misunderstanding and even scepticism about its value to have a negative impact upon interdisciplinary research. As a consequence, we could expect many faculty members to be profoundly disturbed at the notion of being returned to disciplinary homes from which they so happily departed when joining FoGS. It also needs to be recognized that some of the faculty members recruited to FoGS joined UBC to benefit from placement within a “designated” interdisciplinary space and would feel constrained by the traditional Faculty boundaries. Furthermore, from the perspective of existing employment opportunities in FoGS, this model would require some re-adjustment and re-allocation of positions. In short, this approach is troubling, and to many, prohibitively so.

3.4 Option Four: Central Support for Independent Interdisciplinary Units

The following fourth option was not explicitly under consideration at the start of the information gathering process that led to this paper. This is a hybrid approach that attempts to combine the advantages of the previous three options in a manner that increases the potential to satisfy most of the needs of most of those concerned, while avoiding most of their disadvantages.

3.4.1 How does this option work?

The basic idea is to consider the six Faculty roles listed in section 2.2 and to group these into two sets: a first set, (A,B and C) that will be primarily provided in a central unit, possibly called the **Office of Multi-Faculty Studies, reporting to the Provost**, and a second set (D,E and F) are provided through a distributed arrangement of **Academic Leadership Councils**.

The Academic Leadership Councils provide strategic guidance for interdisciplinary units in analogy to existing Deans Committees for interdisciplinary units, but with a key difference: in this model, councils would be constructed to include representatives from areas of campus not directly related to the subject matter at hand, and would also include acknowledged leaders in interdisciplinarity. The plan would be to have a small number of such Academic Leadership Councils (perhaps five) in place of the many relatively ineffective Deans' Committees currently in place for interdisciplinary units.

Because this hybrid option is new, it is essential to review the fuller description in Appendices B and C in order to formulate an opinion regarding its possible merits.

3.4.2 How "Faculty functions" are provided

The central Office of Multi-Faculty Studies would continue to provide the key central role for Financial Management, Promotion & Tenure, and Championship (items A, B, and C in the list in section 2.2 above). The other activities - Unit Head Reporting, Resource Allocation, and Strategic Planning (items D, E, and F in the list in section 2.2 above) - would be provided by the Academic Leadership Councils. Importantly, there would be significant communication and likely some personal overlap between the Academic Leadership Councils and the Office of Multi-Faculty Studies, to allow synergy in all of these areas, especially Strategic Planning and Championship.

3.4.3 Advantages

The basic advantage of this option is that it enables greater synergy between interdisciplinary units and disciplinary units that have research and teaching interests that overlap or have other natural connections. This allows for greater cooperation, and helps to reduce barriers to the creation and movement of units both within and outside of what is currently FoGS. At the same time, the critical nurturing characteristics of what is currently FoGS could be maintained and made available to all units or even individual faculty members for whom this is appropriate, reducing existing resentment and providing fair treatment for all.

This model addresses most of the challenges associated with the current FoGS structure with the added advantage of creating opportunities for other units on campus to benefit from the new organizational arrangement. For example, small Faculties that are seeking administrative and academic synergies, could find an Academic Leadership Council to be very helpful in this regard.

Very importantly, the Academic Leadership Councils could also provide important strategic advisory capacity to the Provost's Office in a manner sensitive to both disciplinary and interdisciplinary interests, and create incentives for Deans, Directors and Heads of interdisciplinary units to see their respective roles and functions in a more synergistic fashion. The Councils would have an additional advantage of being able to nurture and strategically support efforts that cut across Faculties, Schools, and Centres and Institutes and address specific research and programmatic needs, such as inter-professional education, or the needs of new, emerging meta-disciplines.

With regard to employment opportunities, individuals currently associated with interdisciplinary activities within FoGS could likely carry on within an Office of Multi-Faculty Studies, possibly with a dual report to FoGS in some cases.

3.4.4 Disadvantages

One disadvantage of this plan is that it is unproven at UBC – at present we have no units that are managed in this particular manner (although there is quite a diversity of arrangements), and consequently there is a degree of risk that despite the best planning it may not work well, especially at first. However, other universities (notable Duke) have employed models including an Office of Interdisciplinary Studies reporting to the Provost; at least there is some degree of precedent for such an approach.

A related potential concern is that the hybrid nature of the structure proposed in Option Four may be difficult at first to understand, giving rise to confusion, or even suspicion about the Administration's intent. This is a significant communication challenge. Appendices B and C are provided to give more detail on possible specific arrangements.

This option would also generate the need to amend selected university policies and procedures to enable effective functioning of the new model. For example, the guidelines regulating submission of cases for promotion and tenure to the Senior Appointments Committee would need to be revised to allow for the Chair of a promotion and tenure committee under the Office of the Multi-Faculty Studies to bring the cases forward. Similarly amendments would be required regarding the pre-Senate approval of programs and curriculum changes proposed by the extra-Faculty units. Likely several other changes along these lines would also be necessary. Such changes would require care and effort, but are unlikely to be insurmountable obstacles.

Considering the four options described above, it is very important to re-emphasize that all of these options may evolve further as discussions take place, and in fact one or more new possibilities may arise in the upcoming public involvement process. No decision has been made at this point.

4. Factors for Assessing these Options

As an aid to making progress in this area, our initial consultation has included the identification of possible criteria for assessing options consistent with the mandate and focus of this exercise. It is not suggested that the list below is fully exhaustive nor that the suggested criteria are of equal weight. However, we believe that the following may provide a helpful framework for consideration of the options.

The selected option should:

- 1 enhance academic freedom, mutual respect and cooperation in an open, civil academic society, consistent with the goals of Trek 2010;
- 2 demonstrate appreciation and respect for the successes in interdisciplinarity at UBC;
- 3 create an inclusive and open environment for future development of interdisciplinarity in a context that maintains the current respect, throughout UBC, for our disciplinary research and teaching;
- 4 reduce barriers between Faculties and interdisciplinary units across campus and improve collaboration and integration across organizational boundaries;
- 5 effectively nurture and encourage interdisciplinarity, in particular with respect to promotion and tenure;
- 6 ensure continuing effective “championing” of interdisciplinarity across campus, including sustaining and expanding development activities related to interdisciplinary research;
- 7 provide for a stronger connection between interdisciplinary research and interdisciplinary teaching across campus;
- 8 create conditions for continuous planning and implementation of interdisciplinary academic programs at undergraduate and graduate level;
- 9 create an effective collaborative mechanism for providing strategic advice to the Office of the Provost on allocation of resources within the academic enterprise;
- 10 avoid disruption to the everyday functions of faculty/staff members, units and programs;
- 11 be simple, practical and economical to implement at this time at UBC.

5. You are Invited to Participate

The purpose of this paper has been to provide a context for seeking input on this topic from the UBC academic community. It is important to stress that no decisions regarding adoption of any of the presented options have been made to date. We want to emphasize the importance of this consultation, and to encourage active community participation in this process. We welcome comments on the presented options as well as suggestions from all stakeholders including Deans, Heads of Departments and Directors of Schools (who are requested to discuss this matter widely within their units); the FoGS Advisory Council; experts on interdisciplinarity within and outside of FoGS; and students through the AMS and GSS representatives. We also welcome direct comments from anyone else within the academic community wishing to contribute their voice to this important discussion.

Once the community feedback is received and considered, a final plan will be put together and presented to the UBC Executive, Senate, and Board of Governors. The timing of these next steps is not certain, but it is hoped that implementation of the final plan will commence in early 2006.

5.1 Guidelines for Written Statements

Statements should focus on the issues raised in this paper. Please make your statements legible and concise, and submit them on 8.5 by 11-inch paper, or as an electronic document configured for printing on paper of that size. All ideas will be considered, but we are especially interested in your thoughts regarding the likelihood of success, the feasibility, and the general appropriateness of the four options outlined.

One suggested format of response is provided in Appendix D. It is hoped that respondents employing such a table would also provide written comments elaborating on their reasoning.

We look forward to your personal observations but we also welcome references that you may wish to make to any organizational models existing elsewhere that you feel have not been considered but should be. Along with your statement it would be helpful if you provided the following background information:

- Name, e-mail address, phone number
- Department or Unit and Faculty
- If you are involved in research, would you consider some of your research to be interdisciplinary?
- If you are involved in teaching, would you consider some of your teaching to be interdisciplinary?

5.2 Deadline

Please mail or e-mail your statement as soon as possible. We would like to conclude the collection of feedback to this paper by July 15, 2005. Please send your comments to:

Kate Carr
Office of the VP Academic & Provost
6328 Memorial Road
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z2
E-mail: kcarr@exchange.ubc.ca

5.3 Public Meeting

The purpose of the public meeting will be to further gather public input and responses to the issues described in this paper. The meeting will take place in early September 2005, with the date and place confirmed later in the summer. First priority for presentation will be given to authors of written responses (as described above) and to guest presenters invited by the Provost's Office. If you wish to participate, please call or e-mail Kate Carr (604-822-1288 or kcarr@exchange.ubc.ca) to schedule a time; unscheduled speakers may also present as time permits. As a courtesy to others who wish to speak, please keep your presentation brief, not exceeding 5 minutes.

6. Acknowledgment and thanks

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all who have already contributed to the initial consultation process and whose vision and advice have aided in the drafting of this paper. The feedback received so far has been diverse and at times contradictory, but it has always been provided with the best in mind for the university and has been instrumental in articulating and revising the options presented in this document. We are indebted to the UBC Executive; all Deans; Directors of Schools; Heads of Departments; members of the Committee on the Long Term Planning for Interdisciplinarity; as well as individual faculty members who have already engaged in this discussion, especially our colleagues in FoGS and other UBC units whose interdisciplinary research and teaching experience have given them an especially clear perspective on the successes and challenges that this paper addresses.

Appendix A Membership of Committee to Consider long term planning for interdisciplinarity at UBC

Max Cynader, Director, Brain Research Centre;

Joshua Caulkins, Vice President GSS;

Bob Evans, Economics and Director Population Health CIAR, CHSPR;

Brett Finlay, Michael Smith Laboratories, Distinguished Professor, PWIAS;

Nancy Gallini, Dean of Arts;

Frieda Granot, Dean of Graduate Studies;

John Hepburn, Dean of Science;

Phil Hieter, Director, Michael Smith Laboratories, CMMT;

Carey Hill, former President GSS;

Anna Kindler, AVP Academic Programs;

George Mackie, AVP Academic Planning,

Pitman Potter, Director, Institute of Asian Research;

Indira Samarasekera, former Vice President Research,

Lorne Whitehead, VP Academic & Provost.

Appendix B Possible Details for Option Four

This Appendix summarizes some possible features for Option Four, as they have been considered to date. It should be understood that specific aspects of this option would be further refined and revised as a function of the received feedback. Consequently, detailed feedback regarding the model described below will be especially appreciated.

Possible features of Option 4:

- a) The interdisciplinary units currently located within the FoGS, as well as other units that would benefit from an extra-Faculty location, would move to an “interstitial space” within the UBC organizational structure or perhaps, in some cases, to an alternative location, as appropriate. It is important to note that they would not be required to align with any single discipline nor any single Faculty, but rather they would gain the freedom of an alternative placement.
- b) FoGS would continue to exist but would no longer house interdisciplinary units. This would allow the Faculty to focus on its key role of supporting the needs of graduate students and programs and improving the services that it provides in this respect.
- c) The roughly 20 existing Deans Committees currently associated with interdisciplinary units would be replaced with about 5 Academic Leadership Councils, which would be selected to consider the academic needs of the institution as a whole and to handle the academic management of the extra-Faculty units. Suggested membership and terms of reference of the Academic Leadership Councils are provided in Appendix C.
- d) Each extra-Faculty unit would be associated with a primary Academic Leadership Council (in analogy with the current use of Deans Committees) and would receive strategic and management support from that Council as elaborated upon below.
- e) For the purposes of enabling strategic planning, it is recommended that each Academic Leadership Council have a designated “vantage point”. (Examples of suggested “vantage points” are listed in Appendix C.) It is understood that many units within UBC, especially interdisciplinary units, could be approached from multiple vantage points and the proposed structure does not preclude consideration of issues relative to each unit from a variety of vantage points. It only suggests selecting one, most relevant Academic Leadership Council for accessing the distributed administrative Functions “D, E and F” described in Section 2.2 (unit head report, strategic planning and resource allocation recommendations to the Office of the Provost.)
- f) The remaining management infrastructure support currently provided by FoGS, Functions “A, B and C” in Section 2.2, would be provided to all extra-Faculty units under the Office of Multi-Faculty Studies. This office would

report to the Provost's Office, just as FoGS does now. It would focus on development and activity support and operation of an interdisciplinary Promotion and Tenure committee to assist with interdisciplinary cases. This committee would provide an alternative for all UBC faculty members regardless of their affiliation should they wish to have their cases move forward partially on the merits of their emphasis on interdisciplinary research and teaching. The Chair of the Committee, appointed by the Provost on a rotating term, would be a non-Dean member of at least one of the Academic Leadership Councils and would serve as a "champion" of interdisciplinary tenure/promotion cases, presenting them to the Senior Appointments Committee. In addition to promotion and tenure, it would probably also be appropriate for the Office of Multi-Faculty Studies to play a role with respect to Merit and PSA. The nature of this role might vary from case to case, depending, for example, on the degree to which a given extra-Faculty unit is aligned with one or more Faculties.

- g) As suggested earlier, this option creates a possibility for some units currently within Faculties (e.g., Schools) to migrate from their home Faculties and become extra-Faculty units, if appropriate, under the auspices of this new Office. It should be emphasized that such a move would be fully optional, and Schools would have the flexibility to remain in their current home Faculties.
- h) Figure 2 below is a rough conceptual view of the relationship of academic leadership councils to Faculties and extra-Faculty units. In the figure, a sample academic leadership council and its members are highlighted, as are the academic units most closely associated with it. The larger circles represent Faculties, and the smaller represent extra-Faculty units. Units closest to the centre have connections to the largest number of disciplines, while those near the rim have a narrower, more focused, disciplinary character.

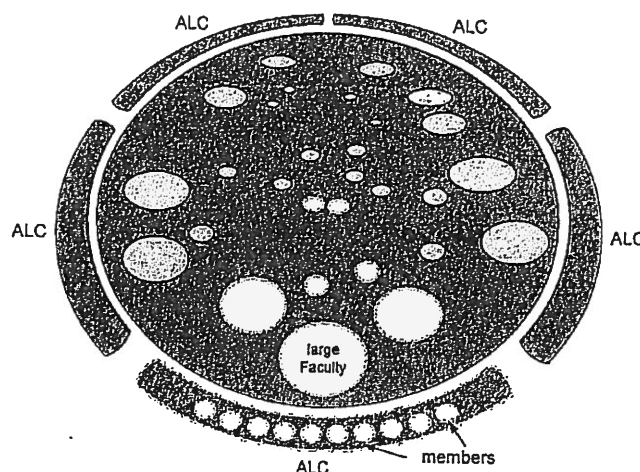


Figure 2 Depiction of the "Vantage Point" of a sample Academic Leadership Council (ALC) with respect to the Academic Community of UBC

Appendix C Academic Leadership Councils – Preliminary Concept

1. Membership of Academic Leadership Councils:

Each of the Academic Leadership Councils would have a defined “vantage point” on the academic enterprise, and would have the following categories of members:

- selected Deans of Faculties aligned with the “vantage point” of the particular Academic Leadership Council in question;
- interdisciplinary “champions”;
- selected appointed Heads/Directors of extra-Faculty units associated with the “vantage point” of the Council;
- selected appointed faculty members at large (with or without other administrative responsibilities) with research and teaching focus consistent with the “vantage point” of the Council;
- selected appointed faculty members at large (with or without other administrative responsibilities) with research and teaching focus peripheral to the “vantage point” of the Council;
- Appointed member of the Office of Multi-Faculty Studies;
- Provost, AVP or a Provost’s designate (Chair).

A co-Chair would be appointed by the Provost from among the non-Dean members of the Council on a rotating basis. (The rationale for the Chair being a non-Dean is two-fold: first it does not place one Dean above another; second, it allows each Dean to maintain an appropriate level of focus on the well-being of their own particular Faculty.) The co-Chair would be the direct contact and point of reporting for the Heads and Directors of units not residing within Faculties. The co-Chair would report directly to the Provost on matters related to all the individual units under the auspices of the Council as well as on matters that cross the boundaries of units and relate to the “vantage point” of the Council.

The Council would operate largely through task forces which would consist of a subset of committee members plus additional members selected for each task force in order to provide the required expertise and community representation for the task at hand.

2. Proposed terms of reference:

- To address the academic strategy of the university as a whole and provide relevant advice to the Office of the Provost;
- To facilitate discussion about strategic priorities with regard to both disciplinary and interdisciplinary activity of the university;
- To provide advice to the Office of the Provost on resource allocation needs, establishment and retention of Centres and Institutes, academic positions, programs, etc. from the respective “vantage points”;
- To provide guidance to the Office of the Provost on UBC’s relationship with professional organizations and the community at large from the respective “vantage points”;
- To provide strategic support to the associated extra-Faculty units;

- To offer guidance to the Office of Multi-Faculty Studies to ensure adequate administrative support for the extra-Faculty units;
- To provide a structure of efficient reporting lines, with Heads and Directors of extra-Faculty units reporting directly to the Councils' Co-Chairs.

3. Suggested "Vantage points" for Academic Leadership Councils:

- Health;
- Science and Technology;
- Arts and Culture;
- Environment;
- Commerce and Law.

Appendix D – Table for Assessing Options Using Section 4 Criteria

5 = very good

4 = good

3 = neutral

2 = poor

1 = very poor

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Criterion 1				
Criterion 2				
Criterion 3				
Criterion 4				
Criterion 5				
Criterion 6				
Criterion 7				
Criterion 8				
Criterion 9				
Criterion 10				
Criterion 11				
Sum				

July 12, 2005

To: Lorne Whitehead, VP Academic and Provost
From: John Grace, Professor and Canada Research Chair

Re: Input with Respect to "Complementing Disciplinarity" Document

I have read this document with interest, from the standpoint of someone who has been involved in a number of inter- and multi-disciplinary units at UBC, some inside and some outside the Faculty of Graduate Studies, as well as having responsibility in 1990-96 for the FoGS units which are the object of much of this report. In response to your request for campus-wide input of June 13, 2005, here are my comments:

1. The primary purpose of administrators is to foster and maintain academic excellence. On any basis of accomplishments per core dollar, a number of the FoGS units in question must be at or near the top of the heap in terms of their accomplishments at UBC over the past 30 years. Given that, there would need to be very serious problems to make drastic changes. There have always been contentious issues, linked to heterogeneous structures, joint appointments, differentiated expectations, fund-raising, etc., but this report is unconvincing that the gravity of these problems is such that one must make wholesale changes of the kind advocated. Individual units have moved to (e.g. journals), or from (e.g. ISIS), FoGS in the past, and this could be done again now if some other reporting relationship would be more appropriate for particular units.
2. The report does not even mention any of the FoGS units by name, or provide any sense of what the accomplishments have been. If there can be two appendices describing option 4, there surely could be one giving details of what units are being talked about, when they were founded, and some of their principal achievements.
3. If FoGS units (or indeed other units on campus) are no longer successful or relevant, they should be closed down or changed. However, the early stages of this report appear to assume a kind of "zero-sum game." This is unfortunate. The entire campus benefits when one activity is successful. Impeding or diminishing successful FoGS units is not the way to build other units/faculties.
4. While the connection between some of the FoGS units and graduate students is tenuous, other units are very closely tied to graduate students. Green College and St. John's College are obvious examples. As graduate colleges, they clearly belong in the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The Individual Inter-disciplinary graduate program is another unit that surely should continue to reside within FoGS, whatever happens to other entities. Titled graduate programs that truly span disciplinary faculties (like

Genetics, Resource Management, and Women's Studies and Gender Relations) also, in my opinion, belong best in FoGS, given that these programs are for graduate students coming from several discipline Faculties. FoGS, with its campus-wide perspective, appears to offer the natural home base for such programs. Whatever changes are made to the reporting arrangements for other centres and institutes, the above colleges and graduate programs should, in my opinion, stay within the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

5. I have some significant concerns about Option 4:

- a) It would be unfair for faculty members in these units have their cases taken to the Senior Appointments Committee by a non-Dean, when all other cases are taken by a Dean. (Incidentally, the word "champion" is unfortunate, as it implies that all cases will be supported, whereas only worthy cases should be supported.)
- b) When I was involved in the recruitment of the first Directors for the Institute of Health Promotion Research (IHDR), the first Director for the Sustainable Development Research Institute (SDRI) and the first Principal of Green College, we were able to recruit three high-profile world-class academics. Each was attracted, among other factors, by UBC's unique approach to interdisciplinary units. I cannot imagine having persons of such quality and accomplishment accept a position at UBC if they were being recruited by, or to report to, an "office".
- c) There are innumerable other matters where again the head of an "office" would carry insufficient weight to go to bat effectively for these units.
- d) The overall structure seems very cumbersome. Five such huge "Academic Leadership Councils" are unlikely to engender much interest among busy members, especially when meetings are infrequent and the roles unclear. Only one of the seven proposed terms of reference in Appendix C relates to academic quality of the unit itself, the rest all being administrative in nature.
- e) The five suggested "vantage points" fail to recognize the cross-cutting nature of some of the units in question. Moreover, Law, for example, should relate to all of the others, and not be limited to its relationship with Commerce, commercial law being only one area of law. The Council idea is a good one, but only if there is a single interdisciplinarity Council which addresses common issues encountered everywhere (graduate/undergraduate, research/teaching) when one tries to cross disciplinary boundaries in an institution largely based on disciplinary structures.

This University must encourage breadth as well depth in scholarship. As Peter Larkin recognized in an excellent report relating to the inter-disciplinary units several decades ago, ways must be found to nurture and accommodate a variety of different entities, in the interests of excellence. Administrative structures can no doubt be improved in many areas, but it would be regressive to force units that are, despite limited resources, finding ways to be successful, into a mould that would lead to their weakening. Excellence should be applauded and supported, where it exists. If there are problems, these can be addressed without venturing into a cumbersome new structure which seems likely to stifle, rather than encourage, quality.