

MINUTES OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, May 27, 2003

Members Present:

C. Lajeunesse	S. Boctor	F. Salustri
K. Alnwick	E. Aspevig	C. Cassidy
M. Dewson	L. Grayson	S. Williams
T. Knowlton	I. Levine	J. Cook
C. Matthews	M. Yeates	S. Cody
D. McKessock	A. Cross	R. Ravindran
T. Nguyen	G. Meti	A. Kahan
M. Dowler	E. Trott	M. Mazerolle
J. Monro	D. Smith	A. Lohi
J. Welsh	D. Heyd	K. Raahemifar
J. Dianda	D. Elder	M. Koc
D. Martin	G. Inwood	M. McCrae
G. Roberts-Fiat	G. Turcotte	B. Jackson
K. Tucker Scott	J. Sandys	C. Flores
M. Creery	M. Barber	A. Furman
N. Felorzbabihi	A. Pevec	L. Lum
R. Rodrigues	R. Kup	

Regrets:

D. Snyder	C. DeSouza
L. Merali	S. Marshall
B. Yoon	A. Tam
R. Walshaw	S. Sutherland
V. Berkeley	

Members Absent:

M. Booth
R. Dutt
M. Verticchio
P. George
M. Potter

A special meeting of Academic Council was held with the approval of *Learning Together: An Academic Plan for Ryerson University – 2003-2008* as the sole agenda item.

Motion: That Academic Council approve “Learning Together: An Academic Plan for Ryerson University – 2003-2008”, as presented.

Moved by E. Aspevig, seconded by J. Welsh

Vice President, Academic Errol Aspevig presented the following overview of the proposed academic plan:

The document begins with an overview of Ryerson as an institution of applied learning from its beginning in 1948. The overview identifies the theme of deepening and broadening the conception of applied learning from then to today, as we deepen and broaden it to incorporate our university mandate as it relates to SRC and graduate studies.

In the plan, we look ahead to about 2015 to see how we would like Ryerson to be characterized then: as a comprehensive university which continues to be distinctive with its program mix; its focus on societal need as a guiding principle; its purpose-driven curriculum; its leadership in continuing education; and its attentiveness to the career and life aspirations of its students. As we say in the document: “The future for Ryerson will be one in which we bring our traditions and our imagination together in creative new ways, not one in which we force ourselves to choose one or the other”.

Ryerson is a university in a cosmopolitan\urban setting, and draws on that advantage as an entry point for the development of a larger national and international role. It will grow as a vibrant learning community whose core values are intellectual engagement in the continuing pursuit of learning, academic freedom, service; mutual respect and support: a university “sought by students, faculty, and staff because it is known to be intellectually stimulating, professionally rewarding, and personally supportive and caring”. It will further evolve as a university recognized and supported by the larger community for the quality of its programs, graduates, and SRC activity.

The Academic Plan centres on the concept of “the learning community” and the implications of both “learning” and “community”. It addresses key objectives in the context of these concepts and the steps for meeting them. We think that this is really important: we have tried to avoid in the development of this Plan what you sometimes see in others - a sort of elaborate “to do” list, covering the next five years. What we’ve tried to see is an institution which is an organic unity, which has a history and principles of evolution implicit in it – an organic community which will continue to be an organic community as it continues its development into the future. We’ve used the language of ecology, of learning ecology - an ecology of knowledge, of system. The priorities are highly inter-related and we hope that in the Plan, we’ve been able to express that notion of the inter-relatedness of the priorities at the same time as we identify specific elements of them. So as we work out of the conception of the learning community, both in terms of its objectives and steps in meeting those objectives, we focus explicitly on: programming (both graduate and undergraduate); scholarly, research, and creative activity; teaching; faculty;

students; staff; administration; infrastructure and environment including space, the library and IT. The Plan asserts and explains the ways these are interconnected and puts emphasis on synergies and the interdependence among them.

The Plan goes into the mechanics of the ongoing planning process, including review and iteration between the University, in general, and the Faculties and the Departments. It's been our view from the beginning, that we cannot write a plan right now which is going to simply unfold in detail over the next five or ten years. To do that would be to assume a level of knowledge and central control which I think is unacceptable at a university. Instead we have produced a plan for five years, which will be reviewed every year. A plan that will give direction to Faculties and Departments at the same time as it incorporates input from Faculties and Departments. So it is an ongoing, rolling process over several years, which is intended to take advantage of the expertise where it exists. Finally, the plan addresses budget and resource implications.

Discussion:

- M. Barber, School of Journalism, asked for clarification of the statement on page 6 – “Trade-offs may be required”. She stated that the teaching format should be left to individual faculty and schools rather than be prescribed. The Vice President, Academic replied that this issue had been discussed at length. It is recognized that studio instruction is very important in some areas and that that is recognized at other institutions as well. It is also known that studio based education, as well as practicums and placements, are often instructor intensive and therefore expensive. It cannot be left solely to individual units to determine how much of this type of instruction should be offered. In some units there have been changes where theoretical lecture courses have been introduced prior to studio courses. This has enhanced the studio experience. There is an expectation that programs will demonstrate to the university that they are being as efficient as possible in their use of studio approaches. In a number of programs studio, clinical and lab forms of instruction are essential. It is not intended that these should be replaced, but there does need to be the best possible mix to ensure both program quality and efficiency.
- D. Checkland, speaking for the RFA, stated that the plan articulates the potential conflicts which will be at play in an institution of this size. There is, however, a tendency for the value of efficiency to be most important. The document could be clearer that the fundamental goal is always educational excellence. Efficiency should not be the first concern. This document will have a life past that of the current administration, whose intent is not in question. The document should also discuss, when it is revisited, the way in which the goal of efficiency might make departments and Faculties competitive with each other. There should be a clear statement that the education priority is first. The trade-offs need to be evaluated. Aside from that, he believes there is much to like about the document and he fundamentally supports it.
- D. Elder, speaking for CUPE, noted that his previous concern had been addressed by the inclusion of instructors in the learning community. He believes it would have been a small matter to mention “part-time and sessional instructors” specifically and made the following motion:

Motion : That “part-time and sessional instructors” be added to the list in section 4.3.
Seconded by E. Trott.

Discussion:

E. Aspevig expressed concern about “unraveling” the document one word at a time. The term “instructors” was intended to include all instructors. Types of faculty were not specifically listed either. The document is trying to be inclusive without being too specific. He requested that the wording be left as is.

Motion defeated.

- T. Nguyen, student in Fashion, commented on the issue of space utilization (Section 4.4.1). The space audit which was done showed that there were many empty classes. E. Aspevig responded that there will be ways of using the space more efficiently. P. Stenton, Director of University Planning, confirmed that Ryerson is at 68% of the COU standard, and that there is a mismatch of space between what we have and future space needs.
- J. Cook, Chair of the Department of English, asked a question on section 4.2.1, Academic Programs. Several student surveys have indicated that students believe that the issues of the individual student are not well addressed at Ryerson. He further commented that on page 6 it is stated that Ryerson will assure “an appropriate balance between theory and practice” and will review the tripartite curriculum “in this context”. This gives the appearance that the tripartite curriculum creates the balance of theory and practice, and that Ryerson will review this. In a further bullet, he notes that schools and departments will review “universal skills and perspectives” and that the tripartite curriculum is not being explored in this context. The effect may be to internalize a critical element of the curriculum to the schools and departments. Ryerson has historically had a more universal concern about these issues, not dependent on an individual department or school. The Vice President, Academic responded that in the past this kind of curriculum issue has been reviewed by the Academic Standards Committee, or sub-committee. This is what is assumed when it is stated the “Ryerson” will review the tripartite curriculum. Each school and department will be asked by Ryerson to address the issues. There will be templates developed to help departments in their review of the quality of their programs as part of the annual review process. Central authority will be exercised through the Academic Standards Committee and the Planning and Priorities Advisory Committee. Central authority and local responsibility will not be disjunctive. There needs to be a centralized academic authority with decentralized academic wisdom. It is not intended to push Ryerson programs toward internalization. J. Cook welcomed the reassurance, but maintained that the language is important in view of a changing of administration. Schools and departments have not included service departments in their curriculum discussions. He requests that the language be rewritten so that the University and its programs, as well as service departments, are involved in the development of universal skills. E. Aspevig again stated that he believes the wording is appropriate and that the language need not be changed. J. Cook replied that it is important that a record of this dialogue be maintained so that the document be interpreted in this light in the future.
- J. Welsh, Director of the School of Nutrition, noted that on page 6 there is a paragraph that protects against programs taking isolated action. All parts of the university will be depended upon. This document allows looking at the tripartite curriculum while looking

at the skills. The move is applauded. As a program director, she feels honored to have the responsibility to ensure the inclusion of the universal elements at the level of the school. It is not the tripartite curriculum that guarantees the credibility of the program. She is in favor of the way this is stated.

- I. Levine, Dean of Communication and Design, added that he believes this section is balanced, recognizing both a central role and the responsibility of individual professional programs. Sometimes there is a tendency of one department to claim responsibility for one part of the curriculum. Often the core areas fall within a professional discipline. This confirms that the issues need to be considered within a discipline.
- S. Cody, Director, School of Business and Technical Communication, agreed that the wording allows the interposing of “Ryerson” as an entity which allows the process of curriculum review to proceed.
- J. Mars, Director, School of Urban and Regional Planning, addressed Academic Council from the floor. Looking at the tripartite curriculum is not looking at the relationship between service and program departments and the relationship between programs. The silo structure should be looked at to review professionally related courses. He believes there should be some reorganization of programs and departments, as some might be better moved to other Faculties. Professional electives and professionally related electives would be better accommodated. He also questioned whether there can be an accommodation for faculty who are practitioners. Many of these are part-time and sessional. There should be a way to easily implement utilization of such professional expertise in the faculty. This may be a negotiable item.
- E. Trott, Department of Philosophy, questioned the meaning of the word “we” on page 8 of the plan. She also asked for clarification of the phrases “articulate more precise targets” and “sharpen the focus of Certain SRC niche areas”. E. Aspevig commented that the “we” is the University. The sharpening focus and precise targets are in response to the requirements of funding councils who are having an enormous impact on the allocation of funds, particularly in the NSERC area. He reiterated that it is understood that not all research or creative activity is done explicitly in relation to strategic objectives. There is a whole discourse intrinsic to the disciplines that are part of all universities. Philosophy, for example, continues debates begun 2000 years ago. The document takes the SRC legitimacy of such discourse for granted.
- J. Sandys, Associate Vice President, reported that the government is investing heavily in research, and they need to track the impact of their investments. It is hard to collect that information. The plan continues to support the SRC endeavor. There is a need to go beyond peer reviewed articles, and put mechanisms in place for the review of SRC.
- L. Lum, School of Nursing, stated that in a university there needs to be a balance of SRC activities. There is a statement in section 4.3.1 about doubling of SRC. There are associated workload issues. If there are a lot of faculty who are new or finishing degrees, the workload falls to established faculty. Workload patterns need to be balanced.
- R. Ravindran, Department of Mechanical Engineering, commented on item 4.3.2 and the attraction of highly qualified, motivated students. For this to be possible Ryerson needs to be better known. There should be a reference to the publicizing of Ryerson. There should be notice of high-profile visiting faculty. This will help in future funding and attraction of high quality students. He believes the document is lucid, transparent, and commends the Vice President and the President.

- J. Dianda, Department of Philosophy, commented on section 4.2.1 where it is noted that students are getting younger, which will require a wider range of advising. This concept has been seen in other documents. It is hoped that there will be a clear statement as to what is expected to be provided to students. In section 4.3.2, last paragraph, there needs to be sensitivity to the fact that all students are not traditional. This cannot be left to individual faculty. This needs to be a more general institutional sensitivity. He asked for clarification on section 3, which addresses the “diversity” of students and faculty. E. Aspevig responded that there will be more diversity of faculty. M. Dewson, Associate Vice President, Faculty Affairs responded that there is a new equity plan with new personnel developing new voluntary targets tied into new data from Stats Canada. Deans and Chairs have already committed to expanding diversity. This year there have been a broad range of hires.
- K. Tucker-Scott, Director, School of Nursing, commented on section 4.2.1 concerning the counseling for the younger student body. She asked that this not be at the expense of the mature students. She further noted that, related to section 4.3.4 concerning academic administrators, there are more than Chairs, Directors and Deans. There are Associate Directors and Associate Chairs as well. She is concerned about the balance of the workload and that there is no understanding or appreciation of academic leadership. These positions appear to be career limiting and not enhancing. She suggested that academic administrators are involved in a form of SRC activity.
- M. McCrae, Director, School of Fashion, commented that it is good that the area of succession planning will be addressed. She noted that there is nothing stated on the role of advisory committees. E. Aspevig responded that there is work going on concerning advisory committees which will be reported in the next 6 months or so. These are committees used to get advice on the present state of professions and practices. They are not committees to which departments report as boards. He further commented that the positions of Chair, Director and Dean do not refer exclusively to those positions. The concern is that given budget constraints there has been centralization to allow for quick effective decisions. There is a need to reassess the balance between local autonomy and central decision making. There may need to be more authority at the Faculty and department level to make department life and the job of leadership better and make the positions more attractive. The issue of attracting faculty to administrative leadership positions is being faced over the entire university system. M. McCrae asked that the university look at organizational structures of the schools and departments in the review of the roles. E. Aspevig stated that the Academic Administrators meetings had been very valuable and this group will meet more often to discuss these issues.
- J. Welsh suggested that viewing academic leadership as an SRC activity as opposed to service might create more opportunities. E. Aspevig reported that this issue has been raised at national meetings. While administrative work does have a scholarly component, the preponderance of opinion is that the community is not served well by blurring these two areas. Administration is distinct from SRC. There should be opportunities for administrators to engage in research. The amount of research that gets done will not be the same, but there should be involvement.
- S. Williams, Dean of Community Services, stated that the issue is that of valuing academic administration. Excellent leaders choose not to do it because the actual work does not fit any existing category. There needs to be a way to value this activity.

- E. Trott stated that it should not be the point of a university to have outstanding administrators.
- J. Cook expressed concern about section 5.1, which appears to say that plans which contribute to a unit's improvement will be given "enhanced support" while those which do not will have "reduced support". He questioned what the authority of the Chair will be in this area.
- E. Aspevig stated that there will be a revitalization of the Planning and Priorities Advisory Committee of Academic Council (PPAC). It will have a new mandate and a new composition. In the past, this committee responded to the planning and priorities document. It will become a committee that will have a major role on behalf of Academic Council in evaluating the university plan.

Motion approved. The passage of the motion was applauded.

The Vice President thanked Ron Goldsmith, Diane Schulman, Michael Dewson, Laura Selleck, Paul Stenton, Judith Sandys, the Deans, members of the Academic Administrator's Group, members of the PPAC and other participating groups.

The President thanked the Vice President, Academic.

Meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by:

Diane R. Schulman, Ph.D.
Secretary of Academic Council