

MEMORANDUM

To Senate

From J.M. Munro

Vice-President, Academic

Subject "Planning Directions for
Simon Fraser University"

Date 1980-06-25

Action taken at the June 24th, 1980 meeting of the Senate Committee on Academic Planning gives rise to the following motion:

"That Senate accept the paper "Planning Directions for Simon Fraser University" and direct the Senate Committee on Academic Planning to implement academic planning based on the planning principles outlined in the paper."

This paper was prepared by a sub-committee of SCAP consisting of J.M. Munro, (Chairman), A.S. Arrott, B.A. Holweg, J.W.G. Ivany, K. Okuda, and J. Chase (Secretary). The sub-committee, which was appointed at the January 16, 1980 SCAP meeting, was charged with developing an academic planning document to:

1. Provide an assessment of the state of SFU today, i.e. strengths, weaknesses, other characteristics;
2. Develop a set of institutional goals for the next 4 - 5 years;
3. Suggest a set of guidelines by which academic planning will be undertaken."

In addressing these three issues, the paper does not constitute, nor was it intended to be, an academic plan. Rather, by summarizing important characteristics of the University and its environment, by suggesting future directions for University development, and by specifying planning principles, "Planning Directions for Simon Fraser University" is designed to be a resource in the development of a full academic planning document. In particular, Senate should be assured that the examples of proposals presented in the paper are meant to stimulate interest and discussion and do not reflect the views of SCAP on these particular issues.

Senate approval of the motion proposed above would enable the University to re-vitalize its academic planning process and to address issues in the future development of the University that are of vital concern to all of us.

J.M. Munro
for J.M. Munro

June 13, 1980

PLANNING DIRECTIONS FOR SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

An academically elite student body and a faculty with a pre-eminent international reputation characterize the world's most prestigious universities. Many universities aspire to this dual recognition. None can achieve it quickly. Pursuit of this recognition requires a university to develop and maintain a set of conditions in which teaching, research and scholarship can flourish. Creativity and flexibility in response to changing demands and opportunities and to fluctuations in resources support this pursuit.

Planning for the future should be a continuous process. An assessment of the current state of Simon Fraser University and the provincial and national environment within which it operates is helpful in identifying realistic future directions and providing benchmarks for measuring progress.

This document suggests a set of future directions for Simon Fraser University and a process for their achievement. It is presented only in bare outline; discussion and debate will help to give it structure and, in the process, lead to a common understanding of our problems and a consensus on our future directions.

A CURRENT ASSESSMENT

Migration to British Columbia from within and beyond Canada has produced a public receptive to new initiatives and motivated to achieve. This can be a major strength for our university; it influences both the level of public support for what we do and the quality of our students.

The present student body ranges from adequate, because of admission screening, to excellent, because of chance, to truly outstanding, partially because of deliberate scholarship programs. It is not an academically elite student body, but the best students could compete anywhere.

The Simon Fraser student body is unlike that of most other Canadian universities. On average the students are older. Many transfer from a regional college or enter after a number of years spent in the work force or raising a family. Sixteen percent enter directly from high school. Many come from Burnaby, the Fraser Valley and the North Shore but few live in areas closer to the other two universities or in the interior of the Province. Fifteen percent enroll from other parts of Canada and 8 percent are from outside the country. Most of the students commute up and down Burnaby Mountain.

The trimester system allows students either to accelerate their program and complete it in a shorter period of time, or to interrupt for a semester without the penalty of waiting a full year to re-enter the program. The Co-operative Education Program enables students to apply their academic training in actual work situations. The tutorial system gives students close association with members of the instructional staff in small groups. Through late afternoon and evening courses, students can enroll for degree completion programs while meeting their employment or family responsibilities during the daytime. The Mature Student Entry category admits those who are twenty-three years of age or more, and not eligible for admission under any other category, providing they have sufficiently clear objectives in mind and are judged likely to benefit from university studies. The Distance Education Program provides correspondence courses for individuals throughout the Province who do not have access to either the Burnaby Mountain campus or any of the centres throughout the Province. S.F.U. minimizes program constraints and requirements in the first two years and students can pursue a broad program of study and delay specialization until they have determined their educational goals.

The core of this University lies in the strength of its Arts and Science programs. The undergraduate programs in Kinesiology, Criminology, Communication and Fine Arts are unique in British Columbia. The Faculty of Education provides a teacher education program that is recognized as a model of how to combine theory and practice. Most departments offer graduate level education leading to masters and doctoral degrees. Graduate professional degrees are offered in Business Administration, Pest Management, Resource Management, Clinical Psychology, and Education. Students can develop their own special graduate programs encompassing two or more disciplines.

Simon Fraser is much more than a teaching institution. It contributes to local communities, the Province, Canada and the world through scholarship. Often termed "research", this contribution can be more effectively defined as the creation and re-creation of knowledge and criticism. The University, from its beginning, has aspired to prominence as a research institution and provides facilities and resources to make this possible. The best faculty are pre-eminent in their disciplines and the entire faculty is a major provincial resource. Their achievements have been more substantial than is recognized by the general public.

During the 1960's, when all new universities were in competition to hire the best, the geographical advantages and newness of Simon Fraser University helped attract many outstanding faculty. The present faculty is mostly tenured and has a mean age around 41; this mean is increasing by about 0.5 years annually. We are not hiring as many faculty now as in earlier years, but the geographical advantages of our location continue to be helpful in recruiting faculty. While the University is no longer new, many of our programs are and we generally are able to offer prospective faculty opportunities that are equal to those available at any Canadian university.

Simon Fraser University has developed effective academic services to support its teaching and research programs. Our Library collection is a vital contributor to the University's academic quality. Many departments benefit from the excellent Computing Center for assistance in their teaching and research.

Through its Library, Athletics program, events in the Performing Arts and Continuing Studies programs, Simon Fraser University maintains strong ties with the surrounding community. The Library's collection is accessible to the general public and, via inter-library loan arrangements, to students and staff at other universities, colleges and institutes throughout the Province. The public is encouraged to attend inter-collegiate football, basketball, soccer, swimming, track and field and many other athletic events. The Centre for the Arts offers a series of public concerts, plays and guest appearances throughout the year by international and Canadian artists. Continuing Studies offers distinctive community education programs dealing with important public and social policy questions.

Financial support for individual students and for organized student activities is extensive. Simon Fraser's direct support for scholarships is the highest, proportional to size, of the three B.C. universities. The counselling and medical services are comprehensive. Student organizations and student participation in the governance of the University are encouraged.

Opening in 1965 with an enrollment of 2,500 students, the University grew to 6,300 students by 1970. With slower growth in the 1970's, enrollment totalled 8,300 by 1976 and has remained relatively stable since. To many, the current size of Simon Fraser is one of its most attractive features. It is large enough to offer a variety of well-developed academic program opportunities at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels. At the same time, its relatively small size encourages a degree of flexibility, informality and personal interaction among students, faculty and staff throughout the University.

Simon Fraser University has a record of receptivity to new program ideas. The decision-making structure enables the University to re-allocate resources promptly to new and growing programs.

A balanced assessment must note that there are a number of areas in which the University could do better. Student housing is both insufficient and in a state of disrepair. Campus amenities are clearly lacking. The commuter orientation of the institution erodes efforts to build a sense of community and cohesion. Assistance to students in terms of career planning and job placement is deficient. The University's academic expectations of its students are not sufficiently defined; curriculum and program planning often reflect this.

The general perceptions of the University held by the public are a source of concern. In large segments of the population, Simon Fraser University is viewed as a radical institution frequently beset by labour unrest. Some share the bias that undergraduate programs offered at this University are not as good as those of older Canadian universities. Despite many outstanding contributions made by faculty members, the general public does not fully realize that this is a major research institution.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The preceding section sought to provide a frank assessment of Simon Fraser University. While the accomplishments have been significant, much remains to be done. The following statements identify some directions for the years immediately ahead:

1. Continuing the quest for excellence in all activities - teaching, learning and research - remains the overall goal. This includes:
 - a. Enhancing the research capacity of the University;
 - b. Building an even more challenging academic environment so that highly qualified students will wish to attend Simon Fraser University;
 - c. Furthering development of the intellectual and social community on Burnaby Mountain; and
 - d. Maximizing the effectiveness of present faculty.
2. Maintaining standards that justify confidence in the general public that graduates are:
 - skilled in inductive and deductive reasoning;
 - proficient in both written and verbal communication; and
 - capable of identifying, formulating and answering questions concerning present knowledge and its antecedents.
3. Enhancing the national and international role of the University through attracting the best students we can from other regions of Canada and the rest of the world, facilitating faculty exchanges, and encouraging collaborative research.
4. Ensuring that Simon Fraser University's academic programs are reasonably accessible to people throughout British Columbia.

5. Expanding opportunities for lifelong learning in specific disciplines.

While the acceptance of these directions should be tested within the University, it is likely that debate will center more on ways and means. Some specific proposals for action that might be the subject for discussion in academic planning are:

- Limiting undergraduate enrollment in some disciplines, encouraging entry into others, and achieving what may be judged as optimum size for the whole University. Some have suggested a maximum of 11,000 students.
- Maintaining the proportion of full-time to part-time students near its present level. It has been suggested that the ratio of on-campus FTE students to on-campus head-count students, presently .75, not fall below .65.
- Increasing the ratio of graduate to undergraduate students. It has been suggested that the ratio should be greater than or equal to .20; presently it is .13.
- Modifying student/faculty ratios to permit increased emphasis on research.
- Hiring the best of currently available young faculty at a rate sufficient to compensate for the anticipated shortage of highly qualified teachers that will result from the retirement in the 1990's of many of those hired in the 1960's.
- Increasing the proportion of students from across Canada and beyond Lower Mainland regions within B.C. by providing sufficient student housing to guarantee on-campus residence for new students for at least one year.
- Setting standards for admission from high school at a level that would encourage students to be well-prepared for university entrance.
- Encouraging international undergraduate student enrollment with broader and more balanced representation. A possible goal is 10 percent of undergraduate headcount enrollment.

- Increasing efforts in job counselling and career placement services for students.
- Encouraging more faculty to seek research funding from sources outside the University in order to increase the effectiveness of individual research efforts.
- Continuing and expanding degree completion, certificate and diploma program and non-credit opportunities in British Columbia locations away from the Lower Mainland.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The translation of the preceding set of future directions into concrete proposals for consideration and subsequent implementation requires co-ordination. That role rests with the Senate Committee on Academic Planning. The planning principles under which it should operate and the criteria for assessment of academic programs are set forth below.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

1. Planning should be guided by a clear assessment of the present environment. Reliable, comprehensive information about the University, its students, and its community is essential. Anticipating the University's probable future environment is also an important part of academic planning.
2. Planning should concentrate on new academic programs emerging research areas, and building and maintaining academic and administrative facilities and support services. This planning must be linked to available financial resources.
3. Plans should be co-ordinated with those of other post-secondary institutions in British Columbia.
4. The planning process should encourage initiatives from all levels in the University and assure that they receive due consideration. Task forces should be established to deal with particular plans.

CRITERIA FOR PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

It is expected that the identification of the purposes to which Simon Fraser will direct its efforts and energies will encourage and facilitate the development of a number of new and innovative programs. Assigning priorities to various proposals will be a difficult task. Ranking should be based partly on how a proposal is measured against the following characteristics.

1. The program has intrinsic academic excellence and is something this University can expect to do well.
2. The program substantially enriches the existing teaching programs of the University.
3. The program builds upon existing programs and resources in the University.
4. The program anticipates provincial or national needs.
5. The program does not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs at other universities in the Province.
6. The excellence of the program attracts students to the University.

Existing programs should also be subject to periodic review. Such reviews provide an opportunity to assess individual programs and to provide a basis for recommending their expansion, curtailment or discontinuance.

CONCLUSIONS

The generally stated purposes of the modern university are familiar - the preservation and transmission of knowledge, the development of new knowledge, the education of highly qualified men and women and service to society. It is important, however, that universities continually assess their programs and activities to ensure that they respond to the challenges of the present and the future.

Universities with established strengths and recognized reputations need to debate their future directions internally and then decide on the mix of activities which reflects their historical circumstances, anticipated resources, and the scale appropriate for planning their own development.