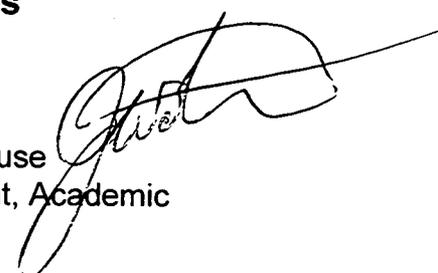


SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Senate Committee on University Priorities
Memorandum

TO: Senate

FROM: John Waterhouse
Vice President, Academic
Chair, SCUP



RE: Report of the External Review of the School of Communication (SCUP 06-43) **DATE:** September 22, 2006

At its September 13, 2006 meeting SCUP reviewed the report of the External Review of the School of Communication, the response from the School, and the response from the Dean of Applied Sciences.

Motion

That the School of Communication and the Dean of Applied Sciences be advised to continue the pursuit of the following as priority items:

1. The School and the Faculty of Applied Sciences should develop an enrollment management strategy, factoring in projected numbers of undergraduate enrollments and the feasibility of adjusting the required GPA for entry to the School. An enrollment management plan should include consideration of faculty resources and course scheduling issues.
2. The School and the Faculty of Applied Sciences, in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies, should continue to manage graduate student recruitment and enrollment, balancing the issues of disciplinary interests with availability of supervision and funding support.
3. The School and the Faculty of Applied Sciences should explore opportunities for program offerings at the SFU Surrey campus, and opportunities for collaboration with the SIAT program.
4. The Faculty of Applied Sciences should continue efforts to ensure equitable resources flow to the School to support enrollment growth and to ensure that the School's capital needs are addressed.

DRAFT
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Senate Committee on University Priorities
Memorandum

TO: SCUP

FROM: John Waterhouse
Vice President, Academic
Chair, SCUP

RE: School of Communication
External Review

DATE: August 20, 2006

I have received the External Review Report on the School of Communication, together with a response from the School, from the Dean of Applied Sciences, and input from the Associate Vice-President, Academic.

The report of the External Review Committee for the School of Communication was submitted on April 6, 2005 following the review team's site visit, which took place in February, 2005. The response of the School Director, Dr. M. Laba, was received on September 27, 2005, followed by that of the Dean of Applied Sciences, Dr. B. Lewis on October 31, 2005. There was general agreement on the recommendations in the External Review from the Department and the Dean, and in the period of time since the reports were submitted to my office, many of the operational issues raised in the review and the response from the School were already underway or have since been addressed.

I concur with the report from the Dean of Applied Sciences that the primary issues facing the School relate to managing growth in order to continue building on the successes achieved to date. I propose that SCUP recommend to Senate that the School of Communication and the Dean of Applied Sciences be advised to continue the pursuit of the following as priority items:

1. The School and the Faculty of Applied Sciences should develop an enrollment management strategy, factoring in projected numbers of undergraduate enrollments and the feasibility of adjusting the required GPA for entry to the School. An enrollment management plan should include consideration of faculty resources and course scheduling issues.
2. The School and the Faculty of Applied Sciences, in consultation with the Dean of Graduate Studies, should continue to manage graduate student recruitment and enrollment, balancing the issues of disciplinary interests with availability of supervision and funding support.

3. The School and the Faculty of Applied Sciences should explore opportunities for program offerings at the SFU Surrey campus, and opportunities for collaboration with the SIAT program.

4. The Faculty of Applied Sciences should continue efforts to ensure equitable resources flow to the School to support enrollment growth and to ensure that the School's capital needs are addressed.

MEMORANDUM
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCES



DATE: October 31, 2005
TO: Bill Krane, Associate Vice-President Academic
FROM: Brian Lewis, Dean, Faculty of Applied Sciences
RE: External Review – School of Communication

This external review tends to collapse together minor operational with fundamental issues in some 40 recommendations. Many of the operational issues have been addressed or are being addressed by the School, and no comment is necessary.

Boiling it down, my sense of the review is that the School of Communication is considered to be one of the pre-eminent Schools of Communication in Canada by measures of student demand, research funding, and international reputation.

The primary issues facing the School are managing its success: whether resources are sufficient to continue to assure quality programs; managing enrollment pressures in the undergraduate program; and planning reasonable growth in the graduate program.

1. A major issue is the ratio of students to faculty, certainly the highest in FAS and among the highest in the University. This is being addressed. In addition to authorizing two CRC chairs, regular faculty renewal appointments, and a lab instructor position, I have authorized two new tenure-track positions in the School since the review took place. The real dilemma is that incremental base FTE funding has not necessarily followed actual student demand in FAS, or in the University, because it has been largely targeted to DTO areas, growth in Surrey and the FHS. Looking forward, the very high quality and the very high student demand for Communication programs indicates that this School is an appropriate area for undergraduate and graduate FTE allocation, as the University expands its base. The allocation of incremental FTE funding for Communication is one which I will re-visit with the Vice-President Academic, given student demand and the continued excellence of the programs.

2. Enrollment management. The situation should continue to be monitored and adjusted, as it has been in the past. An academic unit is best positioned to determine an appropriate entrance GPA for a major, weighing factors which include the likelihood of a student succeeding in a program, and the ability of the program to support a quality experience for the students. Although becoming more restrictive in admissions works against the goal of achieving University enrollment targets, enrollment management is a tool which can be used to protect the quality of the programs, if it is found that resources are being stretched too thinly.

3. Capital budget and teaching labs. Every unit in FAS has suffered from insufficient funding to support undergraduate teaching labs. To this point, Communication has been remarkably successful in building very good labs. As all other units, they have had to rely on external funding and one-time allocations from the Dean's Office. I am committed to maintaining the laboratory courses of the Communication program, and I will continue to support capital needs as required, through internal allocations and fund-raising.

4. The report suggests an increase in graduate student enrollment, and I generally support this recommendation, particularly an increase in the number of PhD students. This would respond to many pressures: graduate applicants are consistently outstanding and many outstanding candidates cannot get in; some faculty feel they do not have enough graduate students to work with and support their research programs; some students feel there are not enough graduate course offerings on a regular basis; the large undergraduate program can use more TAs. However, increasing the number of students could stretch the ability of the School to fund them farther, resulting in a large number of minimally and un-funded students. The School reasonably suggests going slowly here. If, as foreseen, the Provincial Government begins to fund graduate FTEs once more, the School of Communication will be a top priority for this Faculty. At the same time faculty members have to continue to aggressively apply for external research support in order to fund a greater number of students.

5. The Committee reported complaints of an inequitable distribution of graduate students within the School. The School has worked continuously to address this problem, and I am satisfied that there has been improvements, as described in their response.

Brian Lewis

Brian Lewis
Dean
Faculty of Applied Sciences

BL/lc

cc: M. Laba, Director, School of Communication



**RESPONSE TO THE
2005 EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

(titled "External Assessors' Report")

- I. INTRODUCTION
- ii. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS
 - A. Summary: Primary Recommendations
 - B. Undergraduate Programme:
Planning and Management
 - C. Tutorials
 - D. Laboratories
 - E. The Graduate Programmes:
Graduate Courses and Completion Times
Graduate Admission: Recommendations
 - F. Governance:
Overview
Junior Faculty Recommendations
The School and FAS Recommendations
- III. APPENDIX:
 - A. General Corrections
 - B. Response to the External Review Section on the Graduate Program

School of Communication
Simon Fraser University

September 2005

RESPONSE TO THE 2005 EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT
(titled "External Assessors' Report")

School of Communication
Simon Fraser University
September 2005

I. INTRODUCTION

The period under review (1999–2004) has been one of the most significant in the history of Communication at Simon Fraser University. The School marked its 30th anniversary in 2003 as the recognized leader in the discipline in Canada, and as one of the most prominent, influential, and renowned programs internationally. The period is marked by a particularly ambitious agenda of renewal and expansion, including: faculty renewal initiatives; the appointment of two Canada Research Chairs; a major undergraduate curriculum review and revision; the development of research programs with some of the highest levels of grant support in the University; pedagogical innovation and excellence; the design of new laboratories and other technical facilities; teaching and research presence and participation across all SFU campuses; numerous international initiatives and collaborations; planning toward the first significant move of the entire School to a new building on the Burnaby campus; extraordinary enrollment increases; and more.

The External Review Report [Report] identifies strengths and weaknesses of the School of Communication according to a key and overarching theme: the imbalance of enrollments and resources. The Reviewers emphasize that:

- (1) The School of Communication is a site of enormous and ever increasing demand and growth in the University. Indeed, the School of Communication is distinguished as a unit that attracts an extraordinary number of students to its programs each year, and successfully retains these students. It does a remarkable job of addressing demand and ensuring access with its limited resources.
- (2) The quality of teaching in both the undergraduate and graduate programs in the School of Communication is outstanding, and attested to by students in their evaluations, and confirmed by the careers and national and international distinctions of its graduates.
- (3) The research excellence in the School of Communication is irrefutable—its high levels of research funding support and the consistency of this support, the international reputation and influence of its research, its Canada Research Chairs, Tiers I and II, and the demands from around the globe to partner with the School are all evidence of the School's excellent research record, and bode well for its future research performance.

The Reviewers point to two extraordinary and compelling ratio figures: (1) the ratio of Full-Time Equivalent students (FTEs) to "Academic Staff" (faculty members), and (2) the ratio of FTEs to Support Staff. In both cases, there is the recognition that in comparison with other units in the Faculty of Applied Sciences, the School of Communication serves double the number of students with 1/2 the number of faculty and staff. With one of the highest "full course turnaways" in the University and with the 4th highest head count in the University (only the Faculty of Business Administration, the Department of Economics, and the Department of Psychology show greater numbers), the School is in critical need of resource increases and adjustments.

At the same time, the School is, as noted by the Reviewers, "on par with the very best in the field of communications" in terms of research activity, levels of research support, international reputation and achievement, and the excellence of its teaching programs. The Reviewers are concerned with the

ability of the School to continue with its outstanding record in the current imbalance of enrollments and resources. This theme runs throughout the Report.

There are three primary recommendations of the Report within which the remaining 39 recommendations (the majority of which address operational detail) can be situated. These three recommendations, as noted, deal entirely with the imbalance of enrollments and resources. One recommendation calls for more faculty; another for more staff, and the last urges enrollment management mechanisms to handle the current and projected demand for Communication courses.

This document includes a "recommendation-by-recommendation" response, as well as an Appendix with two sections: *I. General Corrections*; and *II. Response to the External Review Section on Graduate Program*. The School notes that the Appendix is necessary because of the number of errors and misrepresentations in the Report, and particularly in the section on the Graduate Program.

II. RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

Primary Recommendations:

A. 1. The present ratio of Full-Time Equivalent students (FTE) to Academic Staff (AS) should be commensurate with the other units in FAS, and with other comparable social science and humanities programmes in the University. The School now services 42.54 students for every academic staff member while other units in the Faculty service 21.79 students for every academic staff member. Two new faculty lines are likely necessary to bring the School in line with the rest of the Faculty of Applied Science.

The School supports this recommendation. The Reviewers have recognized the current extraordinary enrollments and the ever-increasing enrollment demands in the School, and have expressed the urgent and critical need for an increase in resources to achieve a greater balance. With 42.54 students for every academic staff member (while other units in FAS have 21.79 students for every academic staff member), the School has earned a dramatic increase in resources—an increase that would benefit the entire School and indeed, the University. The suggested two faculty lines would be a beginning in the longer process to achieve balance, although it would take 22 more faculty members to achieve parity with FAS.

A.2. The Support Staff/Academic Staff ratio must be commensurate with the other units in FAS. The School of Communications only has .21 Support Staff members for every Academic Staff member while the average in the FAS is .43.

The Reviewers identified the same imbalance in the Support Staff/Academic Staff ratio (.21 in Communication versus .42 in FAS) and recommend the same measures for the same urgent and critical situation.

A.3. A more drastic enrollment management strategy than suggested in the Self-Appraisal Study is needed to limit undergraduate enrollments to a number that the School can handle. (p. 44, SAS) This could be attained by putting a simple cap on enrollments or by raising the undergraduate GPA. Although the GPA requirement was increased from 2.25 to 2.50 for undergraduate majors (effective fall 2004), this appears to have had minimal impact on the current numbers of students being serviced.

Certainly the School has been struggling with enrollment numbers and the remarkable demand for access to Communication courses. Courses are filled to capacity, and our full-course-turnaways are among the highest in the University. With the University engaged in a major campaign to attract new students to its programs, and with recent projections by the Registrar with regard to

increasing competition to attract and retain students across B.C. universities, limiting access to one of SFU's most successful programs is ill advised. However, with Communication ranking 4th in the University in terms of head count, a number of enrollment strategies are being considered, including higher minimum GPAs.

B. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME:

Planning and Management:

The preamble to eight recommendations under section B is somewhat baffling to the School in that there is a clear set of practices to guide the scheduling of courses and that rotation of courses in our view, is irrefutably "fair and equitable"; perhaps the Reviewers had something specific in mind in terms of "fair and equitable," but we are not sure what this might be.

B.1. A statistical projection of how the entry of the new majors in the first year will impact enrollments and demand in the upper level courses in the 2nd and 3rd years. This would help the School predict which courses will be in demand and thus better plan the cycle of courses and faculty resources over a longer period of time.

Which courses are in demand (and therefore need to be in continual rotation) is not at all a mystery. High demand courses are offered at least twice per year. We are not clear on how to do a "statistical projection" of where 1st year students might go in their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years; and of course, students have considerable choice at the 200- 300- and 400-levels in Communication. And as noted, the School's highest enrollment and most frequent rotation courses are well known and factor into the School's course planning. It should be emphasized that the School is committed to smaller classes whenever possible; however, the achievement of such classes is entirely dependent on increased faculty resources.

B.2. As part of this statistical projection of estimating how many courses and sections must be offered in a typical year, the School should consider standardizing the sizes of classes in each year. For example a typical lecture class may have the following enrollments: year one- two hundred; year two- one hundred; year three- fifty; year four- twenty-five. The steady reduction of class size after the first year might address the student's concerns about the lack of differentiation between courses in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years. These numbers would need to be adjusted for laboratory classes.

We are not sure why class sizes should be standardized, but we note that individual course enrollments are rather consistent over many years. The differentiation between courses is a good suggestion to be addressed by Curriculum Coordination Group meetings twice a year.

B.3. Course offerings must continue to factor in future retirements, sabbaticals, research leaves and course remissions. It may be advisable to ensure that at least two regular faculty members are trained (and willing) to teach each of the core courses. It also may be more advantageous to create 'limited term appointment' positions rather than sessional positions if a replacement is needed for one particular area for a sustained period of time. This would give the School an added full-time person who could contribute to all aspects of the programme. It would also reduce the ratio of sessional appointments to full-time academic staff.

We have successfully searched for a limited term appointment, as per the recommendation.

B.4. Faculty should be consulted about the courses they would like to teach and on what days they are available. However, it may be prudent to schedule to courses on particular days at a specific time each year first, then to find the faculty to teach on these days. The present system seems to be guided by faculty availability on particular days.

Every faculty member submits a 3-year teaching plan (updated each year). The consultation process includes negotiation over School scheduling needs and the schedules of individual faculty members—we find that this system works quite well under current resource constraints.

B.5. To gauge where faculty teaching interests lie, to pinpoint where the gaps in teaching and research exist, and to plan for the near future, the School may conduct a simple survey of both graduate and undergraduate courses. Questions may include what faculty can teach because they have experience or expertise; what they want to teach; and what new courses they want to add to the curriculum.

We already survey faculty in terms of teaching interests and plans.

B.6. A meeting of the Director, Assistant Director and the Undergraduate Coordinator to create a preliminary schedule of the yearly slate of courses and their times is recommended. As the undergraduate and graduate programmes are linked through the tutorial system, the Graduate Programme Director may also participate. The undergraduate schedule should minimize conflicts with the graduate courses.

The Reviewers are conflating course scheduling with course planning. If the Reviewers mean that the Director, Associate Director, Undergraduate Chair and Graduate Chair convene to plan the frequency and rotation of courses according to current and projected enrollment demands, we support this recommendation. Together with the Administrative Assistant who coordinates scheduling, course planning can proceed as per the recommendation.

B.7. At the present time, some faculty use the point system for course remissions while others do not feel entitled to do so. The Director must implement this system more effectively. Junior faculty, in particular, must take advantage of the 'points' they are accumulating.

The system of points is fully implemented. Perhaps the Reviewers are recommending more detailed communications to junior faculty with regard to the system of points, and the Director has already implemented a schedule of meetings with junior faculty.

B.8. Although we did not have the opportunity to look at specific course outlines, the complaints about repetition in the curriculum indicates that some evaluation of the course outlines for cognate courses may be needed.

The School supports this recommendation, and while a procedure to evaluate outlines for cognate courses has been implemented already (the Curriculum Coordination Group), the Director will direct all faculty in each program area to meet separately to review outlines as well.

C. TUTORIALS

C.1. The School of Communications should continue to administer the distribution of tutorials.

The School is one of the University's strongest advocates for the tutorial system, and will continue to develop and innovate pedagogical approaches and practices on the model of the tutorial system.

C.2. The Director of the School, in conjunction with the Graduate Programme Director, must ensure that graduate students teach no more than twelve hours per week. Graduate students must not perceive this regulation as a flexible policy guideline.

The School adheres strictly to the TSSU collective agreement (which specifies base units determined by enrollments, not hours). The School ensures that all TAs log hours and report any overtime for compensation.

C.3. The wishes of undergraduates for more varied tutorials, particularly tutorials which stress an application of the concepts covered in the lectures and readings, should be communicated to the course instructor and the tutorial leaders. More effective and stimulating analytic exercises, appropriate to communications students, could be developed and suggestions distributed to tutorial leaders.

The School is committed to pedagogical innovation in its tutorials. This recommendation appears to be based on some anecdotal evidence that contradicts the data; that is, the evaluations of undergraduate tutorials in the School are overwhelmingly positive.

C.4. More scholarship money should be made available to graduate students through the Faculty of Applied Science and the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

The School agrees completely with this recommendation

D. LABORATORIES

The laboratory resources are a vital component of our teaching and research initiatives. To implement the recommendations put forward by the Report and to maintain labs that are comparable with other schools within the Faculty of Applied Science, the School requires substantial funding support. The three forms of resources that are identified as essential to the maintenance and renewal of the labs, include: (1) renewal funding to update labs as part of the School's move and redesign; (2) recurring funding to maintain labs based on yearly depreciation values; and (3) additional permanent support staff.

D.1. We propose that a clearer distinction be made between research labs that exist in conjunction with short-term research projects and labs that have a pedagogical purpose that serves the undergraduate curriculum.

We know of no ambiguity between labs for short-term research projects and labs that are used to serve ongoing undergraduate curriculum needs. We are not sure what the Reviewers are referring to here; however, the School's Lab Instructor will investigate any problem to see if we might better understand this recommendation.

D.2. If the FAS would like the School to be noted for its mix of theoretical and applied research, then a more effective means to fund the labs that serve a pedagogical purpose must be found so that they are not updated only when and if individual professors successfully acquire research funds.

The School certainly supports this recommendation for FAS support.

D.3. Another internal technology assessment may be necessary to examine and devise a restructuring plan for the current pedagogical labs. This assessment should include a more detailed analysis of the courses that have laboratory needs; how many students use them; how students get access to these courses; and which professors have access to these labs. A policy for purchasing equipment to upgrade them can then be considered.

This entire recommendation is being implemented in the context of the move of the School from RCB Hall to the SSB.

D.4. Restructuring may involve some of the labs being amalgamated so that equipment can be shared across courses. It may be preferable to have fewer multifunctional teaching labs that have better equipment and up-to-date software than a number of small labs with poor equipment and old software. Again, this restructuring would need to be tied to an assessment of the scheduling of undergraduate laboratory courses.

As above, this entire recommendation is being implemented in the context of the move of the School from RCB Hall to the SSB.

D.5. If the laboratories become more integrated into the overall curriculum and budget of the School, then a production committee to agree on common equipment investments and curriculum recommendations on a yearly and on-going basis may be needed.

As above, this entire recommendation is being implemented in the context of the move of the School from RCB Hall to the SSB.

D.6. Consultation with the researchers at SIAT to discuss how to develop labs and joint curriculum or research projects should be undertaken.

As the Reviewers were informed, and as well noted in the Self-Study Document, there have been ongoing consultations with SIAT with regard to the development of joint curriculum and research projects. It was emphasized to the Reviewers that full implementation of joint projects must wait until the major faculty hiring process of SIAT has been completed.

E. THE GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Graduate Courses and Completion Times:

E.1. The scheduling of graduate courses should not be secondary to the scheduling of tutorials; some coordination of these schedules must take place, as previously recommended. If too much of the regular course time in a week is taken up during the daytime, then the School should consider scheduling its graduate courses at night.

While the School endeavours to coordinate graduate courses with undergraduate tutorial schedules, a more rigorous system of coordination can be developed. The Administrative Assistant is currently working on such a system and will propose revisions before the beginning of the Fall 2005 semester.

E.2. As noted with the undergraduate courses scheduling, the teaching of graduate courses, particularly core courses, should be regularly rotated amongst the faculty members. At present, the availability of graduate courses appears to depend on the preferences and availability of a handful of faculty. To repeat an earlier suggestion, a survey of faculty teaching interests may help to identify courses that could be shared.

As evidenced by data on graduate teaching, the rotation of courses among faculty is healthy and most effective. Indeed, within constraints imposed by study leaves, undergraduate enrollment pressures, the specialized nature of one of the research courses, and an attempt to reduce the commitments of young faculty in their first two years (to allow them to concentrate on their research) we have still managed to involve 16 different faculty members in graduate teaching over the review period.

E.3. Three potential solutions exist to the demand for more courses. First, the School can bring in more graduate students every year to increase the demand for courses. Given the large numbers of students who apply to the School, and the numbers of graduate students needed for tutorials, the School could consider expanding its yearly quota. Further study and discussion would be needed, for this might entail a change in policy regarding the funding of graduate students for their degrees. Second, the School can increase the number of courses required for the MA or PhD degree. This would mean a reversal of the previous revision to the graduate programme. Third, the School could eliminate the courses that have low enrollments or can only be taught by one professor.

The Graduate Studies Committee is currently reviewing current course offerings, and developing recommendations for new courses to address demand. The School recognizes the need for new

courses and notes that its ability to introduce such courses depends on increased resources (specifically, new faculty lines).

E.4. If the School decides to create additional courses for the Masters or Doctoral students, then these additions should be such that more than one faculty member is qualified and willing to teach them. A colloquium-type course may be one other way to meet the demand for more courses, for it could be taught by a variety of faculty on a rotating basis. Two types of colloquium come to mind: one that assists in professional development of graduate students; another that acts as a forum for the first incarnation of the design of individual thesis or projects.

The School accepts the suggestion of new courses having more than one faculty member able to teach such courses. With respect to the reviewer's comments about a colloquium course, it is important to note that the School has had such courses in the past but in response to graduate input, the colloquium course was discontinued. In our experience, student demand for these types of courses appears to be cyclical, but the Graduate Studies Committee will consider the reinstatement of the colloquium.

E.5. Making different requirements between MA and PhD students clear within the courses may help to further reduce the times to completion for Masters students. Reducing the workload in the courses for all students may hasten the completion of their course work more quickly and thus reduce completion times.

This recommendation arises from the Reviewers' concerns about the "lack of differentiation" between doctoral and MA courses, and a suggestion that some MA students are concerned that "they have to perform at the same level as Doctoral students in classes." Our response to this is to note that for more than 20 years, our program has had MA and Ph.D. students in the same classes. Throughout this time, and in two previous external reviews, this issue has not been raised as a "problem." On the contrary, our students have had no difficulty perceiving the differentiation referred to, and MA students have told us more often than not that they greatly enjoy the fact that they take classes with doctoral students.

E.6. The Graduate Committee should examine the length of graduate theses, particularly MA theses, to determine if they are over the required lengths of eighty to one-hundred pages inclusive of bibliographies and appendices, as advised in the calendar. This may make the task of supervision and the writing of the thesis less daunting and lead to better completion times.

The School rejects this recommendation. MA students who read the thesis guidelines should know the differences between MA theses and PhD dissertations. It is true that some MA students exceed the guidelines in length and depth. We certainly do not encourage this, but students are also not penalized for exceeding expectations. As evidenced by data on completion times and theses lengths, there is an increased rate of MA completion.

E.7. A better distribution of supervision may assist in the completion of dissertations.

Evidence shows a wide distribution of supervision among faculty—at the moment there are 14 different faculty members who are supervising two or more graduate students.

E.8. If the Graduate Diploma is dormant, then it should be excised from the calendar.

The Reviewers are confused on this point. It appears they are referring to the post-baccalaureate diploma. This diploma is detailed in the undergraduate section of the Calendar and currently has 30 students enrolled.

Graduate Admissions Recommendations:

1. *The number and quality of students applying to SFU Communications, the need for more undergraduate tutorials, the desire of faculty to teach and supervise, and the demand by students to have more courses may warrant increasing the yearly quota of incoming students beyond the current threshold.*

The Graduate Studies Committee feels that it would be imprudent to increase graduate admissions without resource adjustments to accommodate such increases. The School has considerable trepidation about expanding "our yearly quota" of graduate students without an in-depth review of the issue.

2. *Admissions should continue to take into account the fit of the applicant with the general programme, the ability of supervisors to guide a student in a particular area of expertise, and the current number of students being supervised by a faculty member. However, there should be a more flexible negotiation of the numbers of students a faculty member is allowed to take on, particularly as first round choices are sometimes lost.*

Not a recommendation; GAR.2. simply affirms a continuation of current School practice.

3. *A waiting list policy should be developed and implemented. This may also mean a delay in refusal letters to prospective students.*

A wait-list policy and practice has been effective and ongoing for the entire review period, and in fact, for the past 20 years. We are not sure why the Reviewers are under the impression that there is no wait-list policy.

4. *The graduate programme should reconsider the assignment of one or two back-up committee members at the time of admissions. We suggest that this be the case for both MA and PhD admissions. This is not to suggest that the programme take in students who could only work with one person; one assumes that the students admitted fit with the overall profile of the graduate programme.*

The Graduate Studies Committee in fact does consider "back up" committee members at the time of admission for M.A. students.

5. *Faculty who have adequate research funds to attract students to the programme in the first year and who have demonstrated their ability to bring students to completion within a reasonable length of time should not have restrictions placed on the number of students they take in as interim supervisors, particularly if their overall numbers of students are in line with the supervisory loads of other faculty members.*

The School emphasizes that its current system of admissions is fair, equitable, and rigorously systematic. If a particular faculty member meets all criteria set out in the recommendation, then the Graduate Studies Committee could decide to increase the number of students to that faculty member (if, as the Reviewers note, "the overall number of students are in line with the supervisory loads of other faculty members").

6. *Membership to the Graduate Admissions Committee could be determined by election, not appointment.*

It is often quite difficult simply to get faculty to agree to sit on the Graduate Committee because of the sheer volume of the work involved. We also have a long tradition of at least 3 student representatives on committees and these students have done extraordinary service to the School in this process. The School will certainly consider the merits of an election process.

F. GOVERNANCE

[Note: this section is properly designated as "F" within the body of the Report, but erroneously designated by the Reviewers as "G" in the Appendix of the Report]

Overview:

It is encouraging that faculty members want to be involved in the intellectual life and administration of the School. The demands are positive signs indicating:

- 1. a decentralized, democratic approach to administration is viable;*
- 2. a more consistent rotation of administrative responsibilities is possible;*
- 3. more public colloquia and events to bring faculty and students together are desired.*

We recommend that all three strategies be undertaken to strengthen the School as a unit.

The School of Communication developed a governance document in 1992 to establish a set of policies and procedures for the operations and administration of the School. At present, the governance document is under review, updating, and revision by the School's Governance Document Review Committee.

1. a decentralized, democratic approach to administration is viable;

The School is committed to an open and accountable system of governance, and will implement an annual meeting of the Committee-of-the-Whole around operations and policies to further enhance participation.

2. a more consistent rotation of administrative responsibilities is possible;

The School notes that the success of a system of rotation is dependent on an adequate (and available) faculty complement.

3. more public colloquia and events to bring faculty and students together are desired.

An excellent recommendation—the School has been discussing strategies for more public colloquia, and a number of faculty members have already started to plan a number of lecture series.

Junior Faculty Recommendations:

1. Junior untenured faculty should not be given be given this level of administrative responsibility. They should be working on their research and teaching dossiers for this is what will bring them tenure.

Service also is a factor in achieving tenure, but the point is well taken. Junior faculty should carry some administrative responsibilities, but not onerous administrative tasks.

2. Junior faculty need to be given the guidelines governing tenure immediately so that they can make wise career decisions. If a Director is too busy to advise junior faculty on these important issues then another senior administrator should be appointed to do this.

The Director has started a series of meetings with junior faculty to discuss career progress strategies.

The School and "The Faculty of Applied Studies" [sic] Recommendations:

1. The best solution to this lack of fit with the FAS is to give the School the faculty, staff and technological resources that they need to keep growing as a strong unit in the FAS.

The School agrees that increased resources and the move will help the School and FAS to develop collaborative areas of teaching and research.

2. *One other potential that lies untapped is to instigate contact between the School of Communication and SIAT. This needs to be done by creating links between researchers in both programmes and not just administrative liaisons.*

The use of the term "untapped" is unfortunate and erroneous. As explained to the Reviewers, and as noted in the Self-Study Document, links between Communication and SIAT are well under way.

III. APPENDIX

The School expresses some disappointment with the Report on a number of issues, including: the surprising number of factual errors, both small and substantial, throughout the Report, and particularly in the section dedicated to the Graduate Program; the tendency of the Reviewers to focus on operational minutia and micro-level issues throughout the Report; the use of limited anecdotal evidence to draw recommendations; the unprecedented number of recommendations—42 to be precise—many of which are concerned with small-scale operational details of the School.

A. GENERAL CORRECTIONS

p. 2, par. 2 "The undergraduate and masters degree in publishing remains unique within Canada and a distinctive component of the School."

While the Publishing program is certainly unique in Canada, the masters degree (M.Pub.) is not a component of the School—it is situated in the Faculty of Arts. Further, the School has been supportive of the efforts of Dr. Rowly Lorimer, Director of the Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing to bring together the undergraduate publishing courses with the M.Pub. program in the Faculty of Arts.

The School is dismayed that of all of its current distinctive components—research and programmatic components arising from the two CRCs, new innovative research and teaching labs and facilities, high profile international initiatives, and others—the Reviewers point to a graduate program that isn't even in the School, and an undergraduate group of courses that are rather peripheral to the School's research and teaching foci.

p.3, par. 3 "Enrollments and demand outpace the School's ability to deliver its programmes effectively as classrooms and laboratories, particularly undergraduate courses held on the Burnaby campus, are filled to capacity and beyond."

In fact, the School has been delivering some of the most effective programs in the university (as evidenced by teaching evaluations and awards, a record of consistent and excellent programs). No courses are filled "beyond capacity". Clearly the School is taxed to the extreme, and in need of a considerable increase in resources.

p. 4, par. 5 "The demand for more course instructors, often at the last minute, has resulted in graduate students teaching courses before they are admitted to candidacy."

The circumstance of "last minute" Sessional Instructor appointments is extremely infrequent, and occurs under extraordinary situations (as in December 2004 when a Sessional Instructor suddenly passed away). As Administrative Assistant Lucie Menkveld has noted, the characterization of last minute demand as "often" is not accurate, and unfortunately misrepresents the actual situation.

Indeed, there have been incidents of graduate students teaching courses before they are admitted to candidacy; to be precise, since 2000, there have been 6 cases in which doctoral candidates were assigned Sessional Instructorships before the completion of comprehensives. Of these six, three students were allowed to teach to prepare the "Teaching Dossier" option for one of the comprehensive exams (an option that was eliminated in 2003). The other cases were indeed responses to extraordinary enrollment demands.

p. 5, par. 2 "The shortage of tutorial instructors means that some graduate students have been working more than the twelve hours-per-week maximum; graduate students do not always log these extra hours because they want to be seen as team players."

The School not only encourages, but insists that TAs log hours, and report any extra hours at the end of semester. They are then compensated by the School according to the Collective Agreement, and TSSU rates. This is the standard, the practice, and the imperative. The School does not understand the basis for this claim.

p. 5, par. 2 "Furthermore, we were told that some graduate students were carrying several tutorial sections at a time, which is difficult for students to refuse because they need the money"

We are unable to understand the problem here—of course students carry several tutorial sections at one time. 3 tutorials (4 Base Units), 4 tutorials (5 Base Units), or (very rarely) 5 tutorials (6 Base Units)—these tutorials are in the same course.

p. 5, par. 6 "Large classes with more tutorials impact those, such as junior faculty, whose undergraduate teaching tends to be clustered into lower level courses."

This statement is misleading. As the evidence clearly shows, junior faculty members teach an equal portion of lower and upper level courses.

p. 5, par. 7 "Last minute changes in scheduling, a consequence of unfettered enrollments, results in a number of administrative problems."

We take particular issue with this claim. As can be documented, last minute changes in scheduling are extremely rare, and occur only in a situation of extraordinary circumstances. Most recently, the sudden death of a Sessional Instructor caused a last minute change, and the schedule for a faculty member's hip replacement operation caused another change. Last minute changes are infrequent, as noted, and have nothing to do with "unfettered enrollments".

p. 5, par. 7 "Undergraduate majors reported difficulty securing first access to the courses that they want and need and they have no clear sense of which courses will be made available in any given year."

In fact, students know two semesters ahead which courses will be offered. We acknowledge recent problems however, and these are entirely issues with the introduction of *Peoplesoft*.

p. 8, par. 1 "Within the present system junior faculty seem to be carrying the bulk of undergraduate teaching at the lower levels that have the highest enrollments."

A basic review of undergraduate teaching assignments demonstrates the inaccuracy of this statement.

**B. RESPONSE TO THE EXTERNAL REVIEW SECTION
ON THE GRADUATE PROGRAM**

We are pleased to see that the Reviewers acknowledge the quality of the Graduate Program in the School of Communication. There are also some useful recommendations about course scheduling and course planning that the School's graduate committee receives gratefully. However, we believe that the Report dramatically underplays the strengths of the program in favour of a superficial commentary that makes numerous factual errors. The Reviewers' analysis appears to rely more on anecdotal "evidence" derived from one or two faculty members than from a systematic review of faculty opinion or from a careful assessment of quantitative data.

On the question of the program's past success and quality, the Report notes early on that a "goodly" number of the School's Ph.D. students have full time positions in communications departments nationally and internationally. The data attached to the Self-Study Document allow a more precise assessment. Nearly 80% of all of the School's doctoral graduates have gone on to successful careers in university teaching, not just in communications but in several disciplines. More notably, many of the dissertations written in the school in the review period have been published—some such as James Compton's book, *The Integrated News Spectacle*, and Timothy Gibson's book, *Securing the Spectacular City*, are being hailed by reviewers as major contributions to the field. An earlier generation of students, such as Yuezhi Zhao and Nick Witheford, wrote dissertations in the School that reviewers around the world have characterized as landmarks. Without undertaking a systematic survey, we can easily think of more than ten Ph.D students in the past fifteen years who published their dissertations, several to great acclaim.

The reputation of the graduate program for quality is the factor that drives our consistently high rate of applications. The Reviewers note on page 12 that the quality of students "who choose SFU is obviously good." We think the quality is consistently extraordinary. This not only shows in the scholarly successes of our graduates especially at the doctoral level, it also shows in the current successes of our students in national grants competitions. For example, this past year four of our doctoral students won SSHRC doctoral fellowships, and two of our MA students won SSHRC MA awards. The extraordinary record of scholarly achievement of our MA and PhD graduates demonstrates that the School has been "getting it right" in the graduate program for a long time. The Reviewers recognize this later on page 12 by referring, in passing, to graduates who have won SSHRC scholarships and who have gone on to "illustrious careers." But we feel that the Report fails to adequately balance an assessment of the program's apparent shortcomings with a discussion of the program's successes.

We present here a more focussed critique of some of the factual errors and questionable interpretations outlined in the Report.

p. 12, par. 2 The Reviewers note that "a graduate diploma is mentioned in the course calendar" and that the program seems inactive and received no mention in the calendar." A closer reading of the calendar reveals that this "diploma" is not a graduate degree at all. The Reviewers are referring here to the schools under-graduate post-baccalaureate diploma

p. 13, par. 2 The Reviewers assert that "there seems to be a practice of letting students out of some of the required courses, such as methods, and substituting these course with directed studies." To the extent that it occurs, this "practice" mostly arises in situations where students who may have attended SFU for an MA and are later admitted to the doctoral program. These students have already taken the required methods course. So, rather than have students redo the same course, we allow students to substitute an approved methods course from another department for their doctoral method requirement, or we allow a student and faculty member to engage in directed studies to tailor-make a methods

course relevant for their area of study. Sometimes students who are admitted to the MA program have also taken one of the School's methods courses as a special student, prior to admission. In extraordinary circumstances we will also allow a student with an extensive methodological background from another institution to claim a "methods equivalent" exemption based on prior training.

p. 13, par. 4 The Reviewers make the point that "one discerns a lack of rotation of courses amongst the faculty in the past 5 years, especially in 802, 805, 845, and 849." The data on graduate course instruction contradicts this assertion. Since 1998 the school has offered 13 different courses in rotation, in addition to reading courses and directed studies courses. *These 13 courses have been taught by a total of 16 different faculty members.* Considering that some of our current faculty complement are fairly new, this does not suggest a situation where faculty have not had opportunities in the past to teach graduate courses. Of the courses noted by the Reviewers, one is a specialized course in quantitative methods taught by an instructor who has specialist expertise in this area. It is not at all unusual to find such courses taught over several years by a single instructor.

p. 14, par. 1 The Reviewers claim that "one or two faculty are supervising the bulk of Ph.Ds. While more faculty are involved in MA supervision, the recent data indicates that there is also some concentration amongst a few faculty in this programme. This uneven distribution has created some resentment within the faculty." We are unable to speak about "resentments" except to say that we know of only a single faculty member who has expressed any concerns in this area to the Graduate Committee. Again, the data on faculty supervision contradicts this claim. At this moment there are 10 different faculty "officially" supervising doctoral students and another 6 (different) faculty who are currently acting as interim advisers to doctoral students. In other words, approximately 75% of our active full-time faculty are currently involved in doctoral supervision. Of the 10 "officially registered" supervisors noted above, 8 are supervising 2 PhDs or more, and of these 8 supervisors, 3 are supervising more than 3 doctoral students. These 3 faculty members are currently supervising half of the students who have "officially" declared supervisors, but this figure does not include interim advisers many of whom are supervising students who have simply not yet done the "official" paperwork to declare their committee. In any case, the data paint a very different picture from the reviewer's assertions that "one or two faculty are supervising the bulk of PhDs." At the MA level, more than 13 faculty are involved in supervising on "officially declared" committees, and 4 other faculty are acting as interim advisers. Six faculty are supervising 2 or more MA students. *When we add up the total supervisory loads (MA and PhD) of all faculty members, the data show 14 different faculty members who are "officially" supervising 2 or more graduate students.*

p. 16, par. 4 The Graduate Studies Committee takes great exception to the reviewers' comments that "we were told that this lack of a clear waiting list and the need for more than one faculty to be assigned to each incoming student has led to unhealthy insider trading and bargaining for students at the time of admission." We find this claim to be both inaccurate and unfair to all the faculty and student committee members who have spent hundreds of hours in graduate admissions over the years. Evidence with regard to interim advisers assigned to incoming students since 2000 shows clearly and irrefutably the very wide range of interim supervisors associated with our "first offer" graduate students. It also shows the waitlist in each year. The School has a very systematic process in place for determining admissions. It is hard to imagine that it could be more fair.

p. 17 The School's admissions policy is very rigorous and every effort is made to insure a reasonably equitable distribution of interim advisers to incoming students, assuming students in various research areas have similarly strong academic files. *The Graduate committee wants to insure that students admitted to the school have support from enough faculty to insure their ability to complete their programs if their relationship with their interim advisers does not work out.* At the MA level, especially, we take the position that students are being admitted to the program as a whole, not entering a specialized program linked to the research of individual faculty. We canvas faculty interest

in various files as a rough indicator of our ability to support the student's interests. At the MA level we acknowledge that students often change their areas of interest. That is why GPAs, letters of reference, and writing samples have always been the major criteria in MA admissions. The problem is that the process is so competitive that if a student with a strong file is endorsed strongly by, say, 6 different faculty members, we are more likely to give that student priority over another comparable candidate who is strongly endorsed by a single faculty member. At the doctoral level we allow for greater specialization. *Still, the committee believes it has a responsibility to admit students who will clearly be able to build a functioning supervisory committee.* If a student's area of specialization is so narrow that he or she cannot find more than a single faculty to support it, we believe the student's interests are best pursued elsewhere. In the admissions process the committee tries to balance the opportunities made available by large grants held by individual faculty with the imperative that the graduate program not become a recruiting tool for individual faculty research projects.

External Assessors' Report
School of Communication
Simon Fraser University

Submitted to: Dr. Bill Krane, Associate Vice-President, Academic
Submitted by: The External Review Committee
Dr. Kimberly Sawchuk (Chair)
Dr. David Mitchell
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April 6, 2005.

CONTENTS:

- A. SUMMARY, p. 2
- B. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME, p. 7
- C. TUTORIALS, p. 9
- D. LABORATORIES, p. 10
- E. THE GRADUATE PROGRAMME, p. 11
- F. GOVERNANCE, p. 17
- G. CONCLUSIONS, p. 19
- APPENDIX- recommendations, p. 21

A. SUMMARY

Strengths

The School of Communication is a vibrant academic unit within the Faculty of Applied Science (FAS) that is contributing an enormous amount to the Faculty in grants, student enrollments, and intellectual prestige. The stated mandate of the School is to combine pedagogical and academic excellence with a commitment to social change. In these respects, the unit is very successful. The School is producing the next generation of scholars and practitioners within three strategic areas that it has identified as central to this mandate: society and technology, policy and political economy, and media and cultural studies.

When queried about the quality of teaching, students at all levels had high praise for their course instructors. For three consecutive years three different faculty members –Truax, Howard and Laba– have won University-wide teaching awards. Although we were not privy to teaching evaluations, it is evident that the students who graduate from the School's programmes excel. The administrators of the co-operative education programme underscored that the School's undergraduate majors perform well-above average in their placements. The undergraduate and masters degree in publishing remains unique within Canada and is a distinctive component of the School. A goodly number of graduates produced by the Doctoral programme have full-time positions in communications departments nationally and internationally. (appendix 6) Since the last appraisal the School has successfully reduced the number of years that it takes both Masters and Doctoral students to complete their degrees: the average masters student completes in six semesters; the average Doctoral student in 13.75. There has been an explosion of graduations during this time, particularly at the Masters level: six Masters and five Doctoral degrees were awarded in 1998; in 2004 the School graduated twelve Masters and six PhD students.

Nationally and internationally the research produced by the faculty in the School is on par with the very best in the field of communications. The grants being generated within the School are significant when measured against other programmes in the humanities and the social sciences. (appendix 10) Even within the Faculty of Applied Sciences, a Faculty that receives large grants because its departments apply for NSERC funding, the standing

of the School is excellent. As the submitted *curriculum vitae* indicate, many of the researchers in the School have international reputations, significant publications in the field, and are doing innovative research on pressing local issues within a global context. The School has secured prestigious Tier One and Tier Two Canada Research Chairs in two areas of strategic importance: the first in science and technology studies (Feenberg) and a second in global communications with an expertise in political economy (Zhao). The combined strengths of these two areas further distinguish the School from other programmes in the country. Recent hirings in the area of media and cultural studies have brought in a new cohort of junior faculty whose energies are revitalizing the School. They are busy hosting guest speakers, seeking research grants, establishing their publication records, teaching large undergraduate classes, and taking on administrative responsibilities that in some cases benefit more senior scholars.

The School is extremely successful in four other respects. The support staff, quite simply, are outstanding; their commitment and work was praised by faculty and students alike. The co-op programme is well-run, exceedingly popular with students and employers, gives students a taste of how their degrees might have practical applicability, and is a place of significant alumni activity that the School may want to examine and emulate. The library has added new resources and managed to keep pace with developing areas in media and communication studies. Finally, the potential links with the new programme located in Surrey, the School for Interactive Arts and Technology or SIAT, is worth further exploration. The School of Communications and SIAT have complementary intellectual expertise and emphases that may mutually benefit faculty and students doing applied media or new media research— if the current faculty are encouraged to become involved in intellectual exchanges and in the on-going negotiations that are now taking place at an administrative level.

Weaknesses

As mentioned in the self-appraisal document, new problems have been generated by the School's success. Enrollments and demand outpace the School's ability to deliver its programmes effectively as classrooms and laboratories, particularly undergraduate courses held on the Burnaby campus, are filled to capacity and beyond. The undergraduate courses offered by the School are very popular with the School's own majors and with students in other programmes. The number of students enlisted as majors in the school is growing even with the increase in the grade point average necessary for admissions enrollments. At the time of the last review in 1998, the School had 803 undergraduate students and 617 majors. It now has 1081 undergraduate students and 792 majors. (appendix 3 and p. 9 *Self-Appraisal Study*, herein referred to as *SAS*) Although there has been an increase in enrollments and class sizes, the "turn-away rate" for courses offered by the School remains one of the highest in the University. (p. 97, *SAS*)

These statistics are telling. On the one hand, when one looks at enrollments in the FAS it is clear that the School boosts the enrollment numbers for the Faculty. On the other hand, compared to other units in FAS one sees that the School services too many students with too few staff and full-time faculty. The Full Time Enrollment/Academic Staff ratio is 42.54 for Communications; 21.79 for FAS. (p. 18, *SAS*) Furthermore the ratio between

support staff and academic staff is *lower* than any other unit in FAS. The ratio for the School of Communications is .21; the average for the FAS is .43. (p. 18, SAS) If one compares the School to other social sciences and the humanities at Simon Fraser, the School's numbers are still well above average. Economics, for example, had a head count of 3,496 students in the spring of 2005, while the School of Communications had a total head count of 3,313 students in this same period. (supplementary document provided by support staff) Yet Economics boasts thirty-one faculty and eight staff in comparison to twenty-three Full-time faculty and five staff members for the School of Communications. The situation is, in actuality, worse than these FTE/AS numbers indicate. The School's palpable success in attaining grants means that this talented group of researchers can buy themselves out of teaching; full-time faculty may not have full-time teaching loads. Furthermore, two of the positions considered 'full-time' in the above statistics are held by Canada Research Chairs, positions that are designated as research positions and have minimal teaching obligations.

To meet the extraordinary demand for courses by its majors and by other undergraduates, the School has adopted two basic solutions. Some new sections of courses have been added that are filled by sessional instructors: a total of forty sessional contracts were awarded 2004. (p. 20, SAS) In most instances, the size of the courses was increased and sections of tutorials added: the increase in the tutorial budget at the time of the last external review in 1998 was \$215,000; in 2004/05 the budget was \$392,708, which the school acknowledges reflects the substantial increases in enrollments. At first glance these solutions appear viable. The addition of sessional appointments gives experience and employment to graduate students and to recent graduates. The addition of tutorials provides guaranteed employment for graduate students with less responsibility than a sessional appointment. It is an important component of the School's recruitment strategy. The data, the documents and three days of interviewing faculty, staff and students reveals the side-effects of this burgeoning student population combined with a low faculty and staff complement.

The situation has produced a cascade of consequences that impacts students, faculty and staff and threatens to undermine the School's ability to effectively deliver its programmes.

-The demand for more course instructors, often at the last minute, has resulted in graduate students teaching courses before they are admitted to candidacy. This contravenes the School's policy that restricts (and protects) graduate students from sessional teaching before their thesis proposals are completed. (appendix 1) In at least one instance a required undergraduate course, Research Methods, was awarded to a Masters student. These are not desirable precedents.

-The ratio of sessional appointments to full-time faculty is not a viable solution as sessional appointments are not required to participate fully in the academic and administrative life of the School. As mentioned, this situation is exacerbated by the School's success in securing major research grants.

-The addition of tutorials demands more graduate students to run them; yet there has not been a significant enough increase in the numbers of students admitted to the graduate programmes in the past few years to cover the increase in this demand for undergraduate tutorial leaders. (appendix 4) There appears to be a shortage of graduate tutorial leaders for undergraduate courses.

-The shortage of tutorial instructors means that some graduate students have been working more than the twelve hours-per-week maximum; graduate students do not always log these extra hours because they want to be seen as team players. Furthermore, we were told that some graduate students were carrying several tutorial sections at a time, which is difficult for students to refuse because they need the money. If indeed this is happening, then this violates Graduate School policy, Union regulations and the best interests of the Graduate programme and the students.

- Graduate students, who provide the tutorials, spoke of having to drop their graduate courses in the event of scheduling conflicts with their assigned tutorials.

-This situation has pedagogical consequences for undergraduate students. Can graduate students be effective tutorial leaders in these circumstances? In interviews, undergraduates lauded the lectures in their courses but they were critical of their tutorial experience. The formulaic recipe for most tutorials is that two or three students present a summary of the weekly readings. Little time is left for discussion or for intellectually stimulating applications of the concepts covered in the course and the readings.

-Some of the high enrollment undergraduate courses, laboratory courses, and required graduate seminar class sizes are growing beyond what the physical resources (classroom space and equipment) can handle, although once again we have had to rely on testimonials from students as the statistics that we were given average-out the class sizes. (p. 9, appendix 3) Applied courses, in demand because they offer a unique pedagogical experience by providing access to equipment for creative analytic productions, are under even more pressure.

-Large classes with more tutorials impact those, such as junior faculty, whose undergraduate teaching tends to be clustered into lower level courses. When courses have high enrollments the faculty who lecture in them must manage more tutorial leaders. In addition, junior faculty are not being encouraged to take advantage of the system of rewards for service on graduate committees by the administration. It is presented to them as an option. As they are untenured they are less likely to take advantage of this system.

-Last minute changes in scheduling, a consequence of unfettered enrollments, results in a number of administrative problems. The staff shoulders the burden of scheduling courses and managing the rotation of courses and professors. Undergraduate majors reported difficulty securing first access to the courses that they want and need and they have no clear sense of which courses will be made available in any given year. Graduate students back out of their courses at the last minute when there are scheduling conflicts with the volatile undergraduate schedule. There have been added difficulties with scheduling and

registration because of the new on-line registration system, *peoplesoft*, but this may be a temporary situation.

-The entire staff are handling more student requests, complaints, applications, dossiers and equipment breakdowns because of the sheer increase in the numbers of users. These pressures have lowered staff morale, happening as they are in the context of a freeze on staff wages imposed by the provincial government. Staff have been subjected to a worsening of their conditions of work without any corresponding financial remuneration. In fact, increases in the cost of living mean that they are actually working for less money than five years ago. While they understand that this is a provincial matter they are frustrated, with reason, by the University's lack of attention to their plight and failure to advocate on their behalf.

-These are not optimal conditions for the construction of an "environment conducive to the attainments of the objectives of the Department," to quote from the terms of reference forwarded to the External Review Committee. Many faculty and students want more collective intellectual activities to bring members of the Department together; many faculty expressed their willingness to participate in the running of the School. Given this scenario it is clear why there is little spare time to participate in the occasional collective event or for faculty to contribute to the administrative running of the programme. Building a common agenda *and* a healthy respect for intellectual differences is an on-going and necessary challenge for a School with this level of organizational complexity. It is even more difficult to achieve under these conditions.

In summary, the imbalance in the FTE/AS and the Support Staff/AS ratio reverberates throughout the School and needs immediate attention. The current imbalance hinders the quality of the undergraduate and graduate programme, which the tutorial system inexorably links. It has an impact on regular full-time faculty, sessionals, administrative staff and students. Rectifying this imbalance is the cornerstone to the future success of the School.

Primary Recommendations:

To avert irreparable damage to the School and more importantly to maximize the School's full potential the External Review Committee recommends:

1. The present ratio of Full-Time Equivalent students (FTE) to Academic Staff (AS) should be commensurate with the other units in FAS, and with other comparable social science and humanities programmes in the University. The School now services 42.54 students for every academic staff member while other units in the Faculty service 21.79 students for every academic staff member. Two new faculty lines are likely necessary to bring the School in line with the rest of the Faculty of Applied Science.
2. The Support Staff/Academic Staff ratio must be commensurate with the other units in FAS. The School of Communications only has .21 Support Staff members for every Academic Staff member while the average in the FAS is .43.

3. A more drastic enrollment management strategy than suggested in the *Self-Appraisal Study* is needed to limit undergraduate enrollments to a number that the School can handle. (p. 44, SAS) This could be attained by putting a simple cap on enrollments or by raising the undergraduate GPA. Although the GPA requirement was increased from 2.25 to 2.50 for undergraduate majors (effective fall 2004), this appears to have had minimal impact on the current numbers of students being serviced.

Without an increase in human resources the School will not be able to meet its objective of 'renewal' or the objectives outlined by the document provided by the FAS. Adding new faculty and staff will not be enough. Without more effective enrollment management the demand for courses will continually outpace the School's human, physical and technological resources.

The remainder of this document will return, in detail, to aspects of the above analysis and make further recommendations to address the remainder of the terms of reference.

B. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME

Planning and Management

Since the last appraisal the School has streamlined the focus of its undergraduate course offerings into three key areas that reflect the research of the Faculty and give the School an intellectual focus. These three areas are: society and technology; policy and political economy; and media and cultural studies. As the self-appraisal document notes, the School has added twelve new courses in a seven-year period and deleted eight others. (pp.44, 49 SAS) The honours programme has been significantly revised; the cooperative education programme expanded. While the teaching in these courses appears to be excellent and the streamlining of the programme into three clusters has provided coherence to the undergraduate curriculum, challenges remain.

First, the students interviewed spoke of a lack of predictability in the scheduling of the yearly course offerings. They would like the School to ensure that the courses that they need to graduate are available on a regular rotating cycle. Second, they signaled a lack of differentiation between first, second and third year courses. There was expressed as a complaint of too much repetition in the conceptual content of some of their courses without a more profound development of the concepts (semiotics was cited over and over as an area of investigation that they are continually introduced to, but only in a rudimentary fashion). Third, they recounted difficulties in obtaining first access to the courses that they need to graduate or want to take. The courses that are too full may have tutorials or sessions added at the last minute. In this case, staff are faced with the challenge of slotting in courses and professors.

Faculty also want the yearly assignment of courses to be better managed. Individual faculty members mentioned the need for a regular and equitable rotation of undergraduate courses. Some courses appear to be under the purview of individual faculty members. Others discussed the lack of faculty depth in particular areas, such as political economy and society and technology. Faculty are reported to be given considerable leeway in

choosing the time and the day when they will teach. Within the present system junior faculty seem to be carrying the bulk of undergraduate teaching at the lower levels that have the highest enrollments. This prevents them from teaching and developing upper level undergraduate courses or graduate courses in their research specialties.

Debating these concerns is integral to curriculum building in the context of programme planning. Do individual professors own courses because they initially develop them? How does one achieve a healthy balance between individual research interests and broader curricular goals? Finally, how are undergraduate courses scheduled, rotated and assigned?

Recommendations:

The scheduling of courses on particular days should not be left to the staff. A clear policy and set of practices to guide the scheduling of courses and their fair and equitable rotation of undergraduate courses and faculty members is needed. This may include:

1. A statistical projection of how the entry of the new majors in the first year will impact enrollments and demand in the upper level courses in the second and third years. This would help the School predict which courses will be in demand and thus better plan the cycle of courses and faculty resources over a longer period of time.
2. As part of this statistical projection of estimating how many courses and sections must be offered in a typical year, the School should consider standardizing the sizes of classes in each year. For example a typical lecture class may have the following enrollments: year one— two hundred; year two— one hundred; year three— fifty; year four— twenty-five. The steady reduction of class size after the first year might address the student's concerns about the lack of differentiation between courses in the second, third and fourth years. These numbers would need to be adjusted for laboratory classes.
3. Course offerings must continue to factor in future retirements, sabbaticals, research leaves and course remissions. It may be advisable to ensure that at least two regular faculty members are trained (and willing) to teach each of the core courses. It also may be more advantageous to create 'limited term appointment' positions rather than sessional positions if a replacement is needed in one particular area for a sustained period of time. This would give the School an added full-time person who could contribute to all aspects of the programme. It would also reduce the ratio of sessional appointments to full-time academic staff.
4. Faculty should be consulted about the courses they would like to teach and on what days they are available. However, it may be prudent to schedule to courses on particular days at a specific time each year first, then to find the faculty to teach on these days. The present system seems to be guided by faculty availability on particular days.
5. To gauge where faculty teaching interests lie, to pinpoint where the gaps in teaching and research exist, and to plan for the near future, the School may conduct a simple survey of both graduate and undergraduate courses. Questions may include what faculty

can teach because they have experience or expertise; what they *want* to teach; and what new courses they want to add to the curriculum.

6. A meeting of the Director, Assistant Director and the Undergraduate Coordinator to create a preliminary schedule of the yearly slate of courses and their times is recommended. As the undergraduate and graduate programmes are linked through the tutorial system, the Graduate Programme Director may also participate. The undergraduate schedule should minimize conflicts with the graduate courses.

7. At the present time, some faculty use the point system for course remissions while others do not feel entitled to do so. The Director must implement this system more effectively. Junior faculty, in particular, must take advantage of the 'points' they are accumulating.

8. Although we did not have the opportunity to look at specific course outlines, the complaints about repetition in the curriculum indicates that some evaluation of the course outlines for cognate courses may be needed.

C. TUTORIALS

The ERC agrees that the School should control the assignment of tutorials as it is an important source of income for graduate students and a means for the School to attract prospective students. (p. 22, SAS) However, the current situation is untenable. As mentioned earlier, the undergraduate students who attended our meetings reported their dissatisfaction with their tutorials. The graduate students who give these tutorials are under pressure to spend more time with the undergraduates than their contracts stipulate. It is reported that some have taken on more tutorials than the University's policy, the School's policy and Union regulations allow.

Recommendations

1. The School of Communications should continue to administer the distribution of tutorials.
2. The Director of the School, in conjunction with the Graduate Programme Director, must ensure that graduate students teach no more than twelve hours-per-week. Graduate students must not perceive this regulation as a flexible policy guideline.
3. The wishes of undergraduates for more varied tutorials, particularly tutorials which stress an application of the concepts covered in the lectures and readings, should be communicated to the course instructor and the tutorial leaders. More effective and stimulating analytic exercises, appropriate to communications students, could be developed and suggestions distributed to tutorial leaders.
4. More scholarship money should be made available to graduate students through the Faculty of Applied Science and the Faculty of Graduate Studies. If the tutorial limitations are honoured, graduate students may find themselves impoverished, given the cost of living in Vancouver.

D. LABORATORIES

Currently, the School runs a number of research laboratories including: the Media Analysis Lab (Kline); the Telematics Research Lab (Anderson); the ATIC-DL and Action for Health Lab (Balka). The operation of these laboratories is detailed in pages 28-39 of the *Self-Appraisal Study*. A whole range of other computing services and laboratories exist such as: The Sonic Studio and Classroom (Truax); the Interactive Media Lab; the Media Analysis Lab: Research Methodology and Design; the Applied Media Analysis Lab; the Media Monitoring Lab; the Media Editing Lab; the Advanced Media Analysis Lab; the Project Room; and the Graduate Faculty Lab. These laboratories are detailed on pages 100- 107 of the *Self-Appraisal Study*. All of the existing laboratories are examined, in some depth, in the "Internal Technology Report" (appendix 11).

As mentioned in the *Self-Appraisal Study*, classroom work in the School of Communication is increasingly laboratory-based in two key areas: information and communication technology and media analysis and design. A cluster of undergraduate courses defines these two areas. The assessment in the "Internal Technology Report" indicates that at least six of these labs require a serious upgrading of equipment or software if they are to continue.

The ERC met with a group of professors and technicians responsible for many of these labs. All emphasized that the hands-on experience acquired by undergraduate students was an important component of the School. The labs give students a chance to learn by doing and they fulfill the mandate of "applied study" fitting with the philosophy of the FAS. Interviews with undergraduates indicated that there is a demand to have access to production type courses. Echoing the assessment in the "Internal Technology Report" those present at the meeting underscored: that the continuation of the labs are contingent upon faculty renewal; that adequate space be maintained for labs in the current move; that there is a need for more stable funding of the labs and an end to the uncertainty of project-by-project funding through individual research grants.

The ERC have examined some of the lab-based research projects being done by students, which are available on-line, and we concur that the hands-on production and analyses are impressive. The results are even more impressive after a tour of several of these laboratories to survey the space and the equipment. This visit made visible the problems highlighted in the "Internal Technology Report" and by this constituency. We found the equipment in many of the small labs to be outdated in the current technological climate.

We also noted that what is classified as a 'laboratory' in the documents and in discussions varies and that this variation has an impact on the future development and administration of the laboratories. In some instances, a lab is comprised of state-of-the-art equipment tied to a scientific research agenda that has significant external funding, such as Anderson's Telematics Lab. In other instances, the laboratory had minimal equipment needs and some external research funding (Feenberg). In these instances the need for

money to sustain the labs seemed less pressing. These labs are driven by the research project and while they are sometimes used for teaching this is not their primary function.

In many other instances a lab has a primary pedagogical function as a production space for student research projects, although an individual professor may also utilize it for their research. Many of these labs seem to have grown out of an initial input of research funds. They acquired a more permanent status as undergraduate courses developed from the research of individual professors. The professors who control these labs continue to run them with whatever funding they can cobble together. Many of these labs are comprised of office space replete with computers, monitors, a scanner and other multimedia equipment, such as digital cameras. These labs were the ones that most frequently had outdated equipment needing an injection of capital.

Recommendations

1. We propose that a clearer distinction be made between research labs that exist in conjunction with short-term research projects and labs that have a pedagogical purpose that serves the undergraduate curriculum.
2. If the FAS would like the School to be noted for its mix of theoretical and applied research, then a more effective means to fund the labs that serve a pedagogical purpose must be found so that they are not updated only when and if individual professors successfully acquire research funds.
3. Another internal technology assessment may be necessary to examine and devise a restructuring plan for the current pedagogical labs. This assessment should include a more detailed analysis of the courses that have laboratory needs; how many students use them; how students get access to these courses; and which professors have access to these labs. A policy for purchasing equipment to upgrade them can then be considered.
4. Restructuring may involve some of the labs being amalgamated so that equipment can be shared across courses. It may be preferable to have fewer multifunctional teaching labs that have better equipment and up-to-date software than a number of small labs with poor equipment and old software. Again, this restructuring would need to be tied to an assessment of the scheduling of undergraduate laboratory courses.
5. If the laboratories become more integrated into the overall curriculum and budget of the School, then a production committee to agree on common equipment investments and curriculum recommendations on a yearly and on-going basis may be needed.
6. Consultation with the researchers at SIAT to discuss how to develop labs and joint curriculum or research projects should be undertaken.

E. THE GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

In the terms of reference we were asked to pay attention to the graduate programme with regard to the number and diversity of course offerings, rates of completion and times to completion.

Simon Fraser University's School of Communication regularly attracts one hundred to two hundred applications each year and accepts anywhere from twelve to approximately twenty new students per year. This number of applicants is impressive, and the quality of the students who choose SFU is obviously good. The current total of students is forty-eight MA students and thirty-seven PhD students. While a graduate diploma is mentioned in the course calendar, it seems inactive and received no attention in the *Self-Appraisal Study*.

The MA students and PhD students enrolled in the School's graduate programme take the same slate of courses. These courses are clustered into six areas. MA students must take a total of four courses to complete their degree. Two courses are required, one from History and Theory and another from Design and Methods. MAs have the option of writing a thesis, two extended essays or completing a project. In the past six years 90% of students chose the thesis option. The Doctoral programme requires students to take five courses. Three are required: two from the first cluster and one from the second. Six to eight courses are offered per year.

Since the last report the School has succeeded in reducing the rate of completion. Six students have quit the Masters programme in the last five years. Eight students have left the Doctoral programme in this same period. The MA withdrawal rate seems normal. The withdrawal from the Doctoral programme seems a bit high, but there seems to be a sound explanation of why the rate appears to be less than optimal: two students had to leave for personal reasons and are poised to re-enter (p. 60, SAS). As noted previously, students in the programme do very well. Many receive SSHRC scholarships and many have illustrious careers. (p. 59, SAS)

Despite these undeniable successes, two general areas were brought to our attention: the first pertains to the courses; the second to admissions procedures.

Graduate Courses and Completion Times

Like their undergraduate counterparts, graduate students reported that they are satisfied with the instruction that they receive in their seminars from individual professors. They also report satisfaction with their supervisors. Three sub-issues were brought to our attention: the scheduling of courses; the variety of courses on offer and the size of their classes.

Graduate students find it difficult to plan their course schedules because they don't know when the tutorials that they will be assigned will be offered. If graduate courses conflict with undergraduate tutorials, then they find themselves in the situation of making a difficult decision of dropping one or the other. From a graduate student perspective, their course schedule is driven by the School's practice of servicing the undergraduate programme at the expense of the graduate programme. If a graduate student drops an

optional course, then this course may be cancelled at the last minute and substituted instead with a directed study. This situation then creates a problem for the full-time faculty who teach these graduate courses.

Graduate students also find that the School does not offer a variety of courses year after year. They want *more* courses that correspond to their research interests to be offered on a yearly basis. They do not want to substitute classes with directed studies courses. They want to spend more time in the classroom as a cohort because this gives them a sense of intellectual community. Furthermore, they are not happy with the reduction of courses required for their respective MA or PhD degrees. Some saw this merely as an administrative strategy to push them through faster. They stated that course work helps their thesis work and that the opportunity to take more courses (from a wider sample of professors) might actually help them focus on their thesis topics more quickly. As a corollary, they want these courses to be offered on a regular rotating basis. Again, these issues were echoed in discussion with faculty who would like to offer more graduate courses in their areas of expertise.

In examining the data provided, one sees that the distribution of bodies in the graduate classes is astoundingly uneven. Some, such as 800, are bigger than a seminar should be (twenty in 2004 and supposedly higher this year); others barely make the minimum enrollment count of five students- these are the courses most likely to face a last minute cancellation. Neither size provides an optimum seminar environment, which the students crave. There also seems to be a practice of letting students out of some of the required courses, such as methods, and substituting these courses with directed studies. Except for one required methods courses (805), which has consistently low enrollments, the optional courses are often on the verge of dipping below the five student minimum requirement.

Appendix 9 confirms some of these problems: 800, 801, 802, 84, and 805, courses in the cluster of required theory and methods courses, are offered every year. Except for 805, which has consistently low enrollments, the enrollments in these courses are adequate to high. In the case of 800, they are exceptionally high (twenty in 2004) Five regularly scheduled optional courses exist: 815 (technologies), 830 (pop culture and media theory), 840 (political economy), 845 (knowledge systems and development), 859 (acoustic communication) These have regular course titles and almost all been offered every year for the past five years. Except for 845, which has had very small enrollments the past two times, and 859, which seems to be struggling as of late, all meet the minimum five student enrollment criteria.

If one looks at who has taught these courses for the past five years, one discerns a lack of rotation amongst the faculty, particularly in 802, 805, 845, and 859. The small number of graduate courses means that many of the faculty have little chance of engaging in graduate-level teaching in their areas of specialization. Course numbers exist for special topics classes, (855 and 857; 858) but these course numbers haven't been used in the past few years. Instead, the gap in specialized courses is filled by directed study courses, internships or fieldwork tailored to individual students (850; 851; 856; 880; 881). These

seem to be used with some frequency, perhaps to compensate for the lack of variety in the regular course offerings.

We were told that the decision to curtail the course requirements was made to reduce the amount of time that it takes students to complete the degree. The numbers indicate that this appears to be the case. However, we also were told that the creation of more supervision guidelines and a more stringent application of these guidelines was the primary reason for the reduction in completion times. In any event, the end result is that these measures have limited the number of courses available to faculty to teach and for students to take. As a result graduate students have less exposure to a range of faculty. This may have the unintended consequence of producing the uneven dispersal of supervisors, despite admissions policies that try to balance the distribution of students. The numbers that we were given upon request, which unfortunately are not included in the *Self-Appraisal Study*, indicates that one or two faculty are supervising the bulk of PhDs. While more faculty are involved in MA supervision, the recent data indicates that there is also some concentration amongst a few faculty in this programme. This uneven distribution has created some resentment within the faculty.

Subsequent discussions with the graduate students revealed that the time to completion may also be affected by the lack of differentiation between the Masters students and Doctoral students in courses. The programmes and courses are identical, except that the number of courses required for the MA is smaller and the thesis is shorter in length. MA students are concerned that they must perform at the same level as Doctoral students in their courses. They are unclear about the length of the thesis and the differences between an MA and Doctoral thesis. They anecdotally reported that many seemed to be longer than the hundred page maximum length.

While the reduction in completion times is much improved, a further reduction may be necessitated if the Dean of Graduate Studies ties fellowships to completion rates. The External Review Committee does not agree with this proposed change in Graduate Studies policy.

Graduate courses and completion times

Recommendations:

1. The scheduling of graduate courses should not be secondary to the scheduling of tutorials; some coordination of these schedules must take place, as previously recommended. If too much of the regular course time in a week is taken up during the daytime, then the School should consider scheduling its graduate courses at night.
2. As noted with the undergraduate courses scheduling, the teaching of graduate courses, particularly core courses, should be regularly rotated amongst the faculty members. At present, the availability of graduate courses appears to depend on the preferences and availability of a handful of faculty. To repeat an earlier suggestion, a survey of faculty teaching interests may help to identify courses that could be shared.

3. Three potential solutions exist to the demand for more courses. First, the School can bring in more graduate students every year to increase the demand for courses. Given the large numbers of students who apply to the School, and the numbers of graduate students needed for tutorials, the School could consider expanding its yearly quota. Further study and discussion would be needed, for this might entail a change in policy regarding the funding of graduate students for their degrees. Second, the School can increase the number of courses required for the MA or PhD degree. This would mean a reversal of the previous revision to the graduate programme. Third, the School could eliminate the courses that have low enrollments or can only be taught by one professor.

4. If the School decides to create additional courses for the Masters or Doctoral students, then these additions should be such that more than one faculty member is qualified and willing to teach them. A colloquium-type course may be one other way to meet the demand for more courses, for it could be taught by a variety of faculty on a rotating basis. Two types of colloquium come to mind: one that assists in professional development of graduate students; another that acts as a forum for the first incarnation of the design of individual thesis or projects.

5. Making different requirements between MA and PhD students clear within the courses may help to further reduce the times to completion for Masters students. Reducing the workload in the courses for all students may hasten the completion of their course work more quickly and thus reduce completion times.

6. The Graduate Committee should examine the length of graduate theses, particularly MA theses, to determine if they are over the required lengths of eighty to one-hundred pages inclusive of bibliographies and appendices, as advised in the calendar. This may make the task of supervision and the writing of the thesis less daunting and lead to better completion times.

7. A better distribution of supervision may assist in the completion of dissertations.

8. If the Graduate Diploma is dormant, then it should be excised from the calendar.

Graduate Admissions

Consultation with individual faculty, a look at the data on the distribution of supervisory loads and completion times, and an examination of the policy and practice indicates some systemic problems with admissions procedures in the graduate programme.

The admissions procedures are set out in the governance document, which stipulates the constitution of a committee comprised of the Graduate Programme Director, one faculty member and two students. All files are read to determine whether students are admissible. Individual dossiers are flagged by the committee and faculty are asked whether they will act as interim supervisors. The number of students assigned is based on the overall number of students the graduate programme can afford to admit in a given year, the capacity of faculty to supervise the student's research, and the availability of faculty as

supervisors. Faculty are then asked to find one other potential supervisor as back-up (for MAs) and two others (for PhDs).

In addition to making sure that students who enter the programme meet the criteria and have adequate funding to complete their degrees, the present policy and procedures seem to be governed by a principle of fostering an equitable distribution of supervisors across the existing full-time faculty. It tries to ensure that the cohort does not become skewed towards areas where individual faculty members have significant research money. We have also been told that policy is contingent upon the number of students a supervisor currently has and their rates of completion. However, given the uneven supervisory loads, this seems to be a less important criterion for supervision at the time of admission.

The following were identified as problems with the present admissions procedures. First, the present system restricts a potential supervisor with research grant money from using this money to recruit students to the fullest extent. Money, which should stay in the School, has been used to recruit and support students in other departments and Faculties, like Arts and Sciences.

Second, the procedure also stipulates that a given faculty member must find at least one other back up person for an MA student at the time of admissions and two others for the Doctoral student and many faculty find this onerous. The astute comment was made that incoming Masters students, fresh out of a Bachelors programme, may not even know what their research interests are, or that they might change as a result of the education they receive in the School. Another comment was that guaranteeing this number of interested faculty, particularly in the case of MA students who often change their projects, was a premature request.

Third, faculty are only allowed to pick a single MA and a single PhD student in the current procedures. If these students choose another institution, the faculty member is not easily able to find a substitute because there doesn't seem to be a waiting list. Letters refusing students have been sent out before the first choice candidates have accepted. If this is the case, qualified candidates may be lost. We were told that this lack of a clear waiting list and the need for more than one faculty to be assigned for each incoming student has led to unhealthy insider trading and bargaining for students amongst faculty at the time of admission.

Finally, the faculty who are assigned to the graduate committee are appointed by the Director, although the student members are elected by their constituency. Given the power of the graduate committee in determining the assignment of courses and admissions, some full-time faculty want the constitution of the graduate committee to be more democratically assigned, more frequently rotated amongst the faculty and the rules and procedures be more transparent and decisions made by the committee to be accountable to all.

In summary, the current procedures for assigning supervisors appears to be causing the programme to lose qualified students and is creating unnecessary tensions within the School.

Graduate admissions

Recommendations:

1. The number and quality of students applying to SFU Communications, the need for more undergraduate tutorials, the desire of faculty to teach and supervise, and the demand by students to have more courses may warrant increasing the yearly quota of incoming students beyond the current threshold.
2. Admissions should continue to take into account the fit of the applicant with the general programme, the ability of supervisors to guide a student in a particular area of expertise, and the current number of students being supervised by a faculty member. However, there should be a more flexible negotiation of the numbers of students a faculty member is allowed to take on, particularly as first round choices are sometimes lost.
3. A waiting list policy should be developed and implemented. This may also mean a delay in refusal letters to prospective students.
4. The graduate programme should reconsider the assignment of one or two back-up committee members at the time of admissions. We suggest that this be the case for both MA and PhD admissions. This is not to suggest that the programme take in students who could only work with one person; one assumes that the students admitted fit with the overall profile of the graduate programme.
5. Faculty who have adequate research funds to attract students to the programme in the first year and who have demonstrated their ability to bring students to completion within a reasonable length of time should not have restrictions placed on the number of students they take in as interim supervisors, particularly if their overall numbers of students are in line with the supervisory loads of other faculty members.
6. Membership to the Graduate *Admissions* Committee could be determined by election, not appointment.

F. GOVERNANCE

The procedures for appointment to the School's committees are outlined in detail in the School's governance document. The present Director is attempting to implement these procedures within difficult circumstances – the School is a large and complex unit dispersed across campuses, and it is severely understaffed. Within this set of conditions, the Director is doing very well.

We did hear demands for more transparency, consistency, clarifications of the procedures covered in the document, and more accountability for decisions made. We agree that these are important administrative principles that must be put into practice. Some of the complaints we heard with respect to governance, such as a lack of follow-up (by sub-

committees and to suggestions made at faculty retreats), need attention. However, this lack of follow-up to suggestions may be the temporary result of the pressures created by the School's inadequate full-time faculty and staff complement. Other key areas where administrative improvements could be made have been discussed in earlier sections of this document.

We also heard calls for the creation of an intellectual community in the School to alleviate the feeling of isolation amongst the entire constituency, but most notably amongst graduate students and faculty members. This perception of isolation is augmented, no doubt, by: the remote physical location of the School in Burnaby; the presence of two campuses and now a third at Surrey; the existence of multiple labs that faculty administer; and the range of programmes and research centres affiliated with the School, including C-prost and M.Pub.

Recommendations:

It is encouraging that faculty members want to be involved in the intellectual life and administration of the School. The demands are positive signs indicating:

1. a decentralized, democratic approach to administration is viable;
2. a more consistent rotation of administrative responsibilities is possible;
3. more public colloquia and events to bring faculty and students together are desired.

We recommend that all three strategies be undertaken to strengthen the School as a unit.

Two further governance issues were brought to our attention: first, the positioning of junior faculty within the School; second, the position of the School within the Faculty of Applied Science.

Junior faculty are bringing fresh energy and new research interests to the School. They need to be retained by ensuring that their teaching, as recommended earlier, is not clustered into those courses with the highest enrollments. The senior administration must ensure that they take advantage of the current system of course remissions for the contributions that they make to supervision and administration, as mentioned previously. Furthermore, junior untenured faculty can and must be given administrative responsibilities to create continuity within the School. However, it is worrying that an untenured faculty member has been appointed Undergraduate Chair. Professor McCarron is doing an excellent job in this position, but this is not a good precedent.

Recommendations:

1. Junior untenured faculty should not be given inappropriate levels of administrative responsibility. They should be working on their research and teaching dossiers for this is what will bring them tenure.

2. Junior faculty need to be given the guidelines governing tenure immediately so that they can make wise career decisions. If a Director is too busy to advise junior faculty on these important issues then another senior administrator could be appointed to do this.

The School and The Faculty of Applied Studies

Though they have been members for twenty years, there is still considerable ambivalence about the School's placement in the Faculty of Applied Science. Almost everyone interviewed mentioned a lack of intellectual fit in the FAS. While they agree with the adjective 'applied,' the teachers and researchers in this unit are conducting applied *social sciences* and *humanities* research. They respect their colleagues in the Faculty, but they are not natural scientists. For all, save one or two members, there is less intellectual kinship with the Faculty than with other units, and individual faculty members are building strong connections outside the programme. Stronger links with other programmes is not a problem if affinity is maintained to the School. This is not always the case.

The appraisers heard two rationales for the placement of the School in the FAS from senior administration. The first is a pragmatic rationale that claims the School is better off materially and economically than it would be elsewhere. The second rationale is intellectual. This unit, it is stated, brings to the FAS a critical social science perspective on science and technology. On the first, we have no hypothesis. However, it is clear that the Faculty benefits from his arrangement because of the FTEs in the School. The second reason given seems to be a *post facto* rationale offered by senior administration. If so, we see little evidence of actual collaborations. Faculty testimony indicates that the other units in FAS are not interested in the critical view offered by the School's rendering of the word 'applied' with respect to technology.

Recommendations:

1. The best solution to this lack of fit with the FAS is to give the School the faculty, staff and technological resources that they need to keep growing as a strong unit in the FAS.
2. One other potential that lies untapped is to instigate contact between the School of Communication and SIAT. This needs to be done by creating links between *researchers* in both programmes and not just administrative liaisons.

G. CONCLUSIONS

The External Review Committee would like to reiterate that: the quality of the unit's teaching programme is high and that the School is taking measures to ensure its evaluation and revision; the quality of faculty research is high and there are signs of faculty collaboration and interaction, although they are hampered by the pressures to do more than is humanly possible because they are servicing more undergraduate students than the present faculty/staff complement can handle; some of the School's members do participate in the administration of the unit but again this could be improved; the School takes an active role in the dissemination of knowledge in the academic world as well as in other industries; the environment is not as conducive to meeting the objectives of the

School because of the strains produced by the imbalanced ratio between full-time faculty/staff and the number of students being serviced.

The School must work towards better management of its undergraduate curriculum, as mentioned; rectify the problems in the tutorial system; and revise aspects of its graduate course offerings and admissions procedures. Once these key areas are taken care of the School will be in a position to develop linkages with the Office of University Advancement to raise funds for special initiatives, projects, facilities and for graduate support. These links may be one way to address the need for an injection of capital into the teaching laboratories, which are worth maintaining. The three-year plan set out by the School will be attainable if they are given adequate faculty and staff resources to implement it.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Primary Recommendations:

To avert irreparable damage to the School and more importantly to maximize the School's full potential the External Review committee recommends:

1. The present ratio of Full-Time Equivalent students (FTE) to Academic Staff (AS) should be commensurate with the other units in FAS, and with other comparable social science and humanities programmes in the University. The School now services 42.54 students for every academic staff member while other units in the Faculty service 21.79 students for every academic staff member. Two new faculty lines are likely necessary to bring the School in line with the rest of the Faculty of Applied Science.
2. The Support Staff/Academic Staff ratio must be commensurate with the other units in FAS. The School of Communications only has .21 Support Staff members for every Academic Staff member while the average in the FAS is .43.
3. A more drastic enrollment management strategy than suggested in the *Self-Appraisal Study* is needed to limit undergraduate enrollments to a number that the School can handle. (p. 44, *SAS*) This could be attained by putting a simple cap on enrollments or by raising the undergraduate GPA. Although the GPA requirement was increased from 2.25 to 2.50 for undergraduate majors (effective fall 2004), this appears to have had minimal impact on the current numbers of students being serviced.

B. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME

Recommendations:

The scheduling of courses on particular days should not be left to the staff. A clear policy and set of practices to guide the scheduling of courses and their fair and equitable rotation of undergraduate courses and faculty members is needed. This may include:

1. A statistical projection of how the entry of the new majors in the first year will impact enrollments and demand in the upper level courses in the 2nd and 3rd years. This would help the School predict which courses will be in demand and thus better plan the cycle of courses and faculty resources over a longer period of time.
2. As part of this statistical projection of estimating how many courses and sections must be offered in a typical year, the School should consider standardizing the sizes of classes in each year. For example a typical lecture class may have the following enrollments: year one– two hundred; year two– one hundred; year three– fifty; year four– twenty-five. The steady reduction of class size after the first year might address the student's concerns about the lack of differentiation between courses in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th years. These numbers would need to be adjusted for laboratory classes.
3. Course offerings must continue to factor in future retirements, sabbaticals, research leaves and course remissions. It may be advisable to ensure that at least two regular faculty members are trained (and willing) to teach each of the core courses. It also may be more advantageous to create 'limited term appointment' positions rather than sessional

positions if a replacement is needed for one particular area for a sustained period of time. This would give the School an added full-time person who could contribute to all aspects of the programme. It would also reduce the ratio of sessional appointments to full-time academic staff.

4. Faculty should be consulted about the courses they would like to teach and on what days they are available. However, it may be prudent to schedule to courses on particular days at a specific time each year first, then to find the faculty to teach on these days. The present system seems to be guided by faculty availability on particular days.

5. To gauge where faculty teaching interests lie, to pinpoint where the gaps in teaching and research exist, and to plan for the near future, the School may conduct a simple survey of both graduate and undergraduate courses. Questions may include what faculty *can* teach because they have experience or expertise; what they *want* to teach; and what new courses they want to add to the curriculum.

6. A meeting of the Director, Assistant Director and the Undergraduate Coordinator to create a preliminary schedule of the yearly slate of courses and their times is recommended. As the undergraduate and graduate programmes are linked through the tutorial system, the Graduate Programme Director may also participate. The undergraduate schedule should minimize conflicts with the graduate courses.

7. At the present time, some faculty use the point system for course remissions while others do not feel entitled to do so. The Director must implement this system more effectively. Junior faculty, in particular, must take advantage of the 'points' they are accumulating.

8. Although we did not have the opportunity to look at specific course outlines, the complaints about repetition in the curriculum indicates that some evaluation of the course outlines for cognate courses may be needed.

C. TUTORIALS

Recommendations:

1. The School of Communications should continue to administer the distribution of tutorials.

2. The Director of the School, in conjunction with the Graduate Programme Director, must ensure that graduate students teach no more than twelve hours per week. Graduate students must not perceive this regulation as a flexible policy guideline.

3. The wishes of undergraduates for more varied tutorials, particularly tutorials which stress an application of the concepts covered in the lectures and readings, should be communicated to the course instructor and the tutorial leaders. More effective and stimulating analytic exercises, appropriate to communications students, could be developed and suggestions distributed to tutorial leaders.

4. More scholarship money should be made available to graduate students through the Faculty of Applied Science and the Faculty of Graduate Studies. If the tutorial limitations are honoured, graduate students may find themselves impoverished, given the cost of living in Vancouver.

D. LABORATORIES

Recommendations:

1. We propose that a clearer distinction be made between research labs that exist in conjunction with short-term research projects and labs that have a pedagogical purpose that serves the undergraduate curriculum.
2. If the FAS would like the School to be noted for its mix of theoretical and applied research, then a more effective means to fund the labs that serve a pedagogical purpose must be found so that they are not updated only when and if individual professors successfully acquire research funds.
3. Another internal technology assessment may be necessary to examine and devise a restructuring plan for the current pedagogical labs. This assessment should include a more detailed analysis of the courses that have laboratory needs; how many students use them; how students get access to these courses; and which professors have access to these labs. A policy for purchasing equipment to upgrade them can then be considered.
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5. If the laboratories become more integrated into the overall curriculum and budget of the School, then a production committee to agree on common equipment investments and curriculum recommendations on a yearly and on-going basis may be needed.
6. Consultation with the researchers at SIAT to discuss how to develop labs and joint curriculum or research projects should be undertaken.

E. THE GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

Graduate Courses and Completion Times

Recommendations:

1. The scheduling of graduate courses should not be secondary to the scheduling of tutorials; some coordination of these schedules must take place, as previously recommended. If too much of the regular course time in a week is taken up during the daytime, then the School should consider scheduling its graduate courses at night.
2. As noted with the undergraduate courses scheduling, the teaching of graduate courses, particularly core courses, should be regularly rotated amongst the faculty members. At present, the availability of graduate courses appears to depend on the preferences and

availability of a handful of faculty. To repeat an earlier suggestion, a survey of faculty teaching interests may help to identify courses that could be shared.

3. Three potential solutions exist to the demand for more courses. First, the School can bring in more graduate students every year to increase the demand for courses. Given the large numbers of students who apply to the School, and the numbers of graduate students needed for tutorials, the School could consider expanding its yearly quota. Further study and discussion would be needed, for this might entail a change in policy regarding the funding of graduate students for their degrees. Second, the School can increase the number of courses required for the MA or PhD degree. This would mean a reversal of the previous revision to the graduate programme. Third, the School could eliminate the courses that have low enrollments or can only be taught by one professor.

4. If the School decides to create additional courses for the Masters or Doctoral students, then these additions should be such that more than one faculty member is qualified and willing to teach them. A colloquium-type course may be one other way to meet the demand for more courses, for it could be taught by a variety of faculty on a rotating basis. Two types of colloquium come to mind: one that assists in professional development of graduate students; another that acts as a forum for the first incarnation of the design of individual thesis or projects.

5. Making different requirements between MA and PhD students clear within the courses may help to further reduce the times to completion for Masters students. Reducing the workload in the courses for all students may hasten the completion of their course work more quickly and thus reduce completion times.

6. The Graduate Committee should examine the length of graduate theses, particularly MA theses, to determine if they are over the required lengths of eighty to one-hundred pages inclusive of bibliographies and appendices, as advised in the calendar. This may make the task of supervision and the writing of the thesis less daunting and lead to better completion times.

7. A better distribution of supervision may assist in the completion of dissertations.

8. If the Graduate Diploma is dormant, then it should be excised from the calendar.

Graduate Admissions

Recommendations:

1. The number and quality of students applying to SFU Communications, the need for more undergraduate tutorials, the desire of faculty to teach and supervise, and the demand by students to have more courses may warrant increasing the yearly quota of incoming students beyond the current threshold.

2. Admissions should continue to take into account the fit of the applicant with the general programme, the ability of supervisors to guide a student in a particular area of expertise, and the current number of students being supervised by a faculty member.

However, there should be a more flexible negotiation of the numbers of students a faculty member is allowed to take on, particularly as first round choices are sometimes lost.

3. A waiting list policy should be developed and implemented. This may also mean a delay in refusal letters to prospective students.
4. The graduate programme should reconsider the assignment of one or two back-up committee members at the time of admissions. We suggest that this be the case for both MA and PhD admissions. This is not to suggest that the programme take in students who could only work with one person; one assumes that the students admitted fit with the overall profile of the graduate programme.
5. Faculty who have adequate research funds to attract students to the programme in the first year and who have demonstrated their ability to bring students to completion within a reasonable length of time should not have restrictions placed on the number of students they take in as interim supervisors, particularly if their overall numbers of students are in line with the supervisory loads of other faculty members.
6. Membership to the Graduate *Admissions* Committee could be determined by election, not appointment.

G. GOVERNANCE

Recommendations:

It is encouraging that faculty members want to be involved in the intellectual life and administration of the School. The demands are positive signs indicating:

1. a decentralized, democratic approach to administration is viable;
2. a more consistent rotation of administrative responsibilities is possible;
3. more public colloquia and events to bring faculty and students together are desired.

We recommend that all three strategies be undertaken to strengthen the School as a unit.

Junior Faculty

Recommendations:

1. Junior untenured faculty should not be given this level of administrative responsibility. They should be working on their research and teaching dossiers for this is what will bring them tenure.
2. Junior faculty need to be given the guidelines governing tenure immediately so that they can make wise career decisions. If a Director is too busy to advise junior faculty on these important issues then another senior administrator should be appointed to do this.

The School and The Faculty of Applied Studies

Recommendations:

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1. The best solution to this lack of fit with the FAS is to give the School the faculty, staff and technological resources that they need to keep growing as a strong unit in the FAS.

2. One other potential that lies untapped is to instigate contact between the School of Communication and SIAT. This needs to be done by creating links between *researchers* in both programmes and not just administrative liaisons.