

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
**Senate Committee on University Priorities**  
**Memorandum**

**TO:** Senate

**FROM:** John Waterhouse  
Chair, SCUP  
Vice President, Academic

**RE:** Latin American Studies Program  
External Review

**DATE:** October 9, 2003

---

The Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) has reviewed the External Review Report on the Latin American Studies Program together with the response from the Program, the Department and comments from the Dean of Arts.

**Motion:**

That Senate concurs with the recommendations from the Senate Committee on University Priorities concerning advice to the Latin American Studies Program on priority items resulting from the external review as outlined in S.03-103

The report of the External Review Committee for the Latin American Studies (LAS) Program was submitted on March 18, 2003 following the review site visit February 19 - 20, 2003. The response of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology was received on May 2, 2003 followed by the response of the Program on May 22, 2003 (which was written on April 30<sup>th</sup>) and finally, that of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts on June 4, 2003.

It is evident that past events have had a considerable impact upon the Latin American Studies Program and its current placement and interactions within the university community. In light of the many concerns raised during the external review process, SCUP spent a considerable amount of time and effort in reviewing the external review documentation as well as:

- A proposed Action Plan from the Dean of Arts which outlined new resources to assist the LAS Program;
- Enrollment statistics;
- The LAS Self-Study Report prepared for the External Review;
- Comments provided by N. Angerilli, Director, SFU International;
- Comments provided by M. Kenny, Acting Chair of Soc/Anthro at that time;
- Comments provided by J. Brohman, Director of the LAS Program;
- Field Schools Proposal in Latin America from M. Escudero.

SCUP met on two occasions with the LAS Program Director and the Acting Chair of the Department as well as on one occasion with the new Chair of the Department to discuss and explore their concerns.

After careful consideration of the resources and opportunities that could be made available to the LAS Program, SCUP determined that the Program should continue to operate. However, as a condition of this decision, the LAS Program will be required to report annually in the Fall to SCUP relating its progress on implementing the recommendations of the External Review. SCUP may, at its discretion, require these reports for at least three years (2004, 2005, 2006) and may choose to either extend the length or frequency of the reports if circumstances warrant it. The reports to SCUP, in addition to reporting on the activities of the Program should provide particular focus on the following areas:

- Student Demand
- Administration and Championship of the Program
- Acquisition and Allocation of Resources
- Research and Scholarship of the LAS Faculty

With the decision to continue with the Program, SCUP urges the Dean, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and the LAS Program to revisit the existing Memorandum of Agreement between the LAS Program and the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and to focus on the following issues:

- Program management and support structure, i.e. Program Director, Program Steering Committee, Faculty complement etc.;
- Development of a timeline, goals and vision for the revitalization and further development of the Program;
- Identification of the necessary human (faculty and staff), fiscal and physical resources needed to provide ongoing support for the revitalization and further development of the Program;
- Program profile within and external to the University.

Once the Memorandum of Agreement has been revised, the following recommended areas of focus for the Program should be pursued:

#### Internationalization

The Program is advised to explore with SFU International, opportunities to work with and capitalize on the University's internationalization initiative.

#### Undergraduate Program

SCUP recommends that the structure and design of the undergraduate curriculum be reviewed with particular attention being paid to:

- Creating a program with a logical and well-conceived set of courses that enable students to progress methodically in their studies;
- Increasing the range and consistency of the undergraduate offerings;
- Reducing the reliance on sessional instructors;
- Crosslisting courses with other disciplines;
- Monitoring LAS student FTE's to gain an understanding of what courses they register in;

- Enable students to undertake courses at other universities via a letter of permission.

### Graduate Program

SCUP recommends that LAS explore opportunities for graduate students to take courses through the Western Deans' Accord and identify sources for increased graduate funding.

### External Initiatives

In order to improve its external profile and to cultivate useful collaborations and partnerships for LAS, the Program is advised to continue its relationship with the UBC LAS program and to consider offering more community related events.

encl.

c: J. Brohman, Director, LAS  
J. Pulkingham, Chair, Dept. of Sociology & Anthropology  
J. Pierce, Dean of Arts



**EXTERNAL REVIEWER'S REPORT**  
**(Of the Latin American Studies Programme)**

**to the Office of the Associate Vice-President Academic,**

**Simon Fraser University**

John M. Kirk,  
Professor of Latin American Studies,  
Dalhousie University

**Background**

This report is based upon written material received from both the office of the Director of Academic Planning and the Latin American Studies (LAS) programme; a site visit I made to Simon Fraser University in February; and email exchanges with some of the faculty who were away from the University while I was there, and with colleagues in LAS at UBC. I visited the university on February 19 and 20, 2003. In the morning of February 19, together with the reviewers of the Sociology and Anthropology programme, I met with Dr. Bill Krane, Associate VP (Academic), Ms. Laurie Summers, Director of Academic Planning, Dr. Jonathan Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr. Bruce Clayman, VP (Research), and Dr. John Pierce, Dean, Faculty of Arts. Over the afternoon, and most of the next day, I met with individual support staff, administrators and academics, as well as a delegation of students majoring in LAS, a grad student representative, and three librarians. The final afternoon revolved around meetings with the LAS Steering Committee (faculty and students), and with Drs. Krane and Pierce, and Ms. Summers.

The visit was extremely well organized, and I would like to thank in particular Laurie Summers for making the arrangements and ensuring that everything went smoothly. I would also like to acknowledge the cooperation of everyone who took the time to meet with me. It was a pleasure to spend two days back at Simon Fraser—where I began my teaching career as a lecturer in LAS in 1976-77.

**Historical Overview**

The LAS programme at Simon Fraser reached its peak about 25 years ago. At that time it was the first (and for many years, only) such programme in the country. Later York imitated the idea of an interdisciplinary LAS programme, and have now cornered the market (There are some

35 Latin Americanists teaching in it). The introduction of the graduate programme in LAS in 1991 (again, the first in Canada) was a logical step, and solidified the programme's offerings. (I was one of the reviewers of the graduate programme at that time, and was pleased to support its introduction). In a recent email from Bill French, coordinator of LAS at UBC, he referred to this long history: "It is a little difficult to hold up UBC as an example of SFU as they had a thriving LAS programme long before we did and are, rightly, proud of that".

Then came the turbulent 1990s, replete with personality clashes, legal threats, widespread infighting, contentiousness, and plummeting enrolment. It was a disaster in many ways, and resulted in the programme becoming totally dysfunctional. Attempts to merge it with the Spanish Division (a logical decision anywhere other than at SFU) failed, and in 1996 LAS was placed in another academic home—the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies—where it stayed until 1998, when it relocated to its current home, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology (S/A). Along the way (in 1996) it was stripped of its LAS major, and a moratorium to the M.A. programme was imposed—a correct decision, given the lack of harmony and growing tensions at that time.

The questions raised by this sad process are quite simple: how fares the LAS programme now?; and, what should be done about both the MA and undergraduate programmes?; should one stay with the current course, or move on to something new?; and if so, what course should be pursued?

### **General Comments on the Undergraduate and Graduate Programmes**

The LAS programme still retains vestiges of its formerly stellar reputation (I personally have encouraged two of my former students at Dalhousie to complete this M.A. programme. Both were very satisfied by it, and one is just finishing his PhD in LAS at York). There is an extremely hard-working, dedicated set of professors involved in teaching LAS courses at SFU, and in general they also manage to maintain solid research records. Given the strains involved in running the two programmes, maintaining a solid working relationship in their own "home" department, and keeping up their own research, they have done a first-rate job. They deserve to be commended for their dedication to LAS.

It is also, however, a programme living largely on its past—and is badly in need of fresh blood. (During the past decade eight of its permanent faculty have retired, or have left: Jorge Nef and Alberto Ciria in Political Science, Richard Boyer and Ronald Newton in History, Jorge García in Linguistics, Rita de Grandis in Spanish, Geoffrey Spurling in History, and Patricia Landolt in Sociology/Anthropology. One additional faculty--Andy Hira in Political Science--has been hired to teach LAS courses, and two other faculty with Latin American interests have been hired in other disciplines (Alex Clapp, Geography, and Ross Jamieson, Archaeology—neither of whom, however, teaches LAS courses. Both clearly have heavy responsibilities in their "home" Departments, and little time available for LAS. They are thus academics with an interest in Latin America, but in the current framework at SFU not active members of the LAS programme). I

heard rumours when I was at SFU that a Latin Americanist historian was soon to be hired—a position that is badly needed in order to replace the two historians who have retired in recent years, and to meet the great demand. In fact it is shocking that a university of the stature of SFU does not have a historian specializing in Latin America.

Clearly this massive reduction of staff, and the decision not to replace them, has had a major impact upon LAS. In effect it was put into academic receivership in the mid-1990s, and at most other universities would have (sadly) died a natural death. Yet despite this extraordinary pressure, LAS has survived, and in fact has posted a notable growth of students (from 136 students in 1999 to 283 in 2002; moreover the number of joint majors and minors has also increased to its highest point since the discontinuation of LAS/Spanish majors). Given the growth of LAS courses in other universities, as well as the burgeoning interest in Latin America (through business ties—and NAFTA in particular—tourism, and immigration), the demand is clearly there throughout Canada and the United States. In a cosmopolitan city the size of Vancouver, with large numbers of latino immigrants, and extensive business interests in Latin America, the potential for successful LAS programmes is extraordinary.

Unfortunately the insecurity surrounding the programme apparently on all sides at SFU has been very severe, with rumours persisting for several years that LAS was about to be folded. Certainly its moving around in search of an academic base, and the non-replacement of retiring faculty, could scarcely have been confidence-inspiring. For the administration at SFU the antics of the LAS faculty at the time must have been frustrating in the extreme. For the students it was simply confusing and frustrating. Why should students register in LAS courses when it had such problems? What was the point of starting LAS courses, only to see the programme closed down? Several students mentioned to me such concerns, which are completely understandable. It is also clear that the Registrar's Office and other support staff have actually warned students not to take LAS courses, because of the danger that the programme could collapse. (Given that uncertainty—and the anomalous situation in which students can do an M.A. in LAS but not a Major—it is in fact surprising to see the increase in student numbers. Undoubtedly these figures would increase far more if there were a degree of stability and appropriate funding for LAS).

Consistently the question of the turbulent past was raised in interviews at SFU, and clearly it is a millstone around the collective necks of faculty (and students) in LAS. Furthermore some members of the senior administration are still marked by the troubled history; and evidence was provided that some Departments at SFU actually try to stress their distance from LAS, rather than their ability to collaborate with it. Moreover incoming faculty with an interest in LAS have been recommended to downplay that interest, and to have little to do with "those troublemakers" (as one person put it). While this might make political sense in the short term, it is an attitude that badly needs to be revised. LAS has rehabilitated itself, offers a solid (albeit limited) series of course offerings, and deserves respect. The new millennium is not the same as the early 1990s, and collectively this has to be recognized.

The funding question in particular needs addressing. At the time, the move to S/A made

perfect sense. The rationalization of support staff, the sharing of resources, and the opportunity to develop a solid base for academic regrouping, was extremely important. But three years later, with increasing undergraduate enrolment and a new cohort of graduate students about to start, it is time to revisit both the structure of this arrangement (see recommendations below), and the budget itself. While the operating budget almost doubled from 2001 to 2002, its new annual total of \$5,000—with just \$300 designated for honoraria—is rather sad. Moreover the 2003 budget temporary instructional budget (\$18,345 for three sessionals, with \$10,560 for TAships) is also rather miserable. This is unacceptable for any programme—even if there are cost-sharing arrangements with a larger Department.

Two positive areas need to be emphasized. One bright note is the relationship between LAS faculty and the Library staff. I met with three subject specialists and raised the question of library resources with students and faculty alike—and was pleased to see both a highly professional staff working on LAS material and a reasonable budget for the programme.

Moreover, there is an extremely bright, energetic group of undergraduate students in LAS, with a clear set of well-formulated opinions. Their written report to me was extremely well-documented and argued, and their website is first-rate (Maybe they could be hired by LAS to revamp the official website, which badly needs to be amended?). Their Latin American Studies Student Union is impressive indeed, and they have been involved in a number of conferences, film series, community events, and speaking tours to local high schools. Clearly they have been inspired by a genuine “feel” for Latin America, an exceptional development which speaks to their respect for the LAS programme, and the ability of LAS faculty to communicate effectively with them. Yet, while they feel a debt of loyalty to LAS, they also have valid concerns, which I have tried to address in this report.

One final matter of concern in this general section needs to be addressed. In the initial meeting with Bill Krane, we were asked to consider whether there was a stimulating environment in the university, and whether there was the potential for wider collaboration at the university. A quick answer to the first part of the question is that the environment has been somewhat stifled, in part because of the “black legend” of LAS, and all its accompanying baggage of 5-10 years ago. As noted earlier, some LAS faculty members have in fact been warned by their “home” Departments to steer clear from the “contentious” LAS programme. This is a sad reflection on academic openness, or the lack thereof—and badly needs to be addressed.

There is great potential for wider collaboration (see recommendations at end)—but first there has to be a university-wide acceptance of LAS. This can only happen if the senior administration recognize that the earlier troubles are a thing of the past, and in turn pass the world down the line to Chairs that this is so. There is great room for fence-mending, and it has to start with the senior administration.

## The Graduate Programme

The graduate programme—which was alone in its class two decades ago—is in a sorry state, and therefore deserves a separate set of comments. Despite claims to the contrary from some faculty members, and despite a solid record in the past of grad students obtaining excellent employment, it is obvious that it is now in trouble. (The quality of graduate students in this programme, it should be pointed out, is extremely high. The programme does indeed attract “truly interdisciplinary students with a strong fieldwork orientation,” as Marilyn Gates pointed out to me in email from Mexico). Significantly almost all are not graduates of SFU. This speaks to the traditional nation-wide and indeed international respect for the programme.

The idea to limit intake of grad students (currently there are 6 in the programme, with 11 applications for the next intake, of whom 5 will be accepted) to a biennial rate is a good idea. However it is important to recognize that even with this rationalization there are problems. Some faculty members are supervising more than their fair share of grad students (Marilyn Gates is supervising three, and John Brohman and Mónica Escudero two apiece), while others are remaining cloistered in their home departments—with little incentive to encourage them to leave and participate more actively in LAS. (In particular Marilyn Gates should be singled out for supervisory support “above and beyond the call of duty,” since in addition to her LAS supervision she is supervising three graduate students in SA, and is on thesis committees of ten other graduate students).

The “Graduate Programme Guide” distributed to incoming graduate students, is badly in need of revision. The “Biographical Profiles” section consists of two complete pages of “Professors Emeriti” who have virtually no contact with LAS. It is somewhat unrepresentative to have them included, and also misleading. The Guide should also be more explicit on the remarkably limited funding available to graduate students, and should warn them more clearly and concretely about the limited availability of graduate-level courses.

The course offerings for grad students are at a skeletal level, and offer an extremely limited variety of courses. Two of the four courses are compulsory, but are apparently of inconsistent quality. One (the research methods course) is unpopular, since it has a solidly Sociology and Anthropology focus; financial support for graduate students is poor; and the core course for all grad students is clearly a patchwork of offerings. (It is supposed to be of an interdisciplinary nature, but in fact depends more on the disciplinary preference of the person who happens to be teaching it). The other two courses are extremely vague and ad hoc solutions seem to be the order of the day. Finally it is clear that “piggy-backing” of grad and upper undergraduate level courses, while perhaps necessary in light of limited faculty to teach, is not satisfactory: it might provide courses for students, but the two constituencies are extremely different, and deserve to be treated separately, and ultimately with more respect.

It is clear that—yet again—a core number of the LAS faculty go “above and beyond the call of duty” in supporting grad students. The latter largely graduate on time, have solid supervision

(albeit from a tiny nucleus of faculty), and obtain a well-rounded understanding of Latin America. But they should get far more—and would indeed if there were a sufficiently large core of specialists. (The fact that Senior Lecturer Mónica Escudero is supervising two grad students speaks volumes of just how short-staffed LAS is. It also speaks to the dedication to the programme of the stalwarts in it).

Once again the central issue is a lack of resources. To have just five overworked faculty available to supervise is just not good enough for any quality graduate programme, since it shortchanges the students. There is clearly not enough variety of supervisory staff. (One graduate student informed me that he had come to SFU with the intention of doing his Master's thesis on Latin American history. Since there is nobody teaching that area, however, he switched to political science. This should not happen). The inevitable result of this structure is that faculty associated with LAS will gradually withdraw from the programme in order to concentrate on their (already heavy) responsibilities in their home department. Several colleagues interviewed echoed this fact: such responsibilities (accompanied by a lack of incentives to reach out and support LAS) left them little time or energy for LAS programme-building. This badly needs to be addressed by the senior administrators at SFU.

Insufficient funding for grad students is a particularly severe problem. This is accentuated by the fact that LAS grad students need to undertake extensive field work in their target country, clearly resulting in extra expenses. These are not met by the university, as the president has recognized: "SFU must be able to offer student financial assistance which is as good or better than other Canadian universities ... Simon Fraser currently devotes less resources to student services than other leading Canadian universities" ("The President's Agenda: SFU at 40").

In sum, the graduate programme in LAS is in critical shape, and is largely being kept alive by the efforts of 2-3 people. This is unsustainable. In its present format I cannot recommend retaining it, since it is simply too weak. Mention was made earlier that I have sent two of my best students to undertake the M.A. programme in LAS here. In all conscience I can no longer do that. It is time for SFU administrators to decide whether it wants to fund it appropriately (with faculty, support staff, and an appropriate budget), or close it down.

### **Challenges over the Next Decade**

This is apparently the first LAS review—perhaps not surprising given the traumatic roller coaster ride on which protagonists have been involved in recent years. It will prove a useful benchmark on which to reflect in the future, since in many ways it is a baseline report. In essence it is a series of observations on an extremely limited number of faculty members who are clearly stretched to the limit. Indeed it is amazing that they are still functioning, given the various academic pulls on their time and health.

One of the areas which is particularly noticeable is the pressure on research activities which LAS faculty are currently facing. The core faculty are extremely involved in research ventures—John Brohman, Gerardo Otero and Andy Hira are particularly active, and Mónica Escudero is involved with a large Mexico-US Borderland research project. At the same time Profs. Hira and Escudero have a large teaching load (and indeed Escudero, a Senior Lecturer, is also supervising two M.A. theses), while Marilyn Gates is also heavily involved with her own research and thesis supervision (as well as her regular work in S/A). In addition there is the omnipresent challenge (which should not be underrated) of proving—to students, senior administrators, and colleagues alike—that they do indeed have a serious academic programme, and deserve to be treated with respect. Given these multifaceted challenges, I was surprised by the high level of research still being done by the LAS faculty, and their ongoing commitment to their research projects.

The LAS programme is at a critical stage. It might be tempting for senior administration to consider closing it down and “doing away” with a programme that caused much grief for several years in the past. This would be a major mistake, given academic trends, and the progress made by the LAS faculty in the past 4-5 years. It might also be tempting to attempt to maintain the status quo, hoping that the current faculty can continue to withstand the growing demands for LAS. The mantra of “doing more with less” is a tempting panacea—but it is unrealistic in this circumstance. The attempt to “muddle through” would be a mistake, since the faculty are stretched extremely thin at present. (This is particularly the case for the graduate programme, which is badly in need of an infusion of extra support—moral, financial, and faculty).

The final scenario—to support growth in LAS—is the one that has already been recognized across Canada and the United States (A problem, in fact, is that there are insufficient candidates for the positions opening up). I see from Michael Stevenson’s report, “The President’s Agenda: SFU at 40,” that some 40% of current faculty and staff will retire within the next decade. Rather than merely replace faculty on a one-for-one basis, it obviously makes sense to strategize around those programmes that offer the most potential for growth in the next 10-20 years. LAS is one of those areas.

Much has to be done, however, in order to implement such a strategy. The most obvious challenge is staffing. LAS has a remarkably limited list of offerings, and insufficient courses are cross-listed. Some simple steps could be taken quickly and easily, as noted below—crosslisting courses in various SFU departments (and the administration badly needs to encourage Departments where there are faculty teaching courses with Latin American content to promote such crosslisted courses); similarly, the administration needs to lobby those Departments so that faculty involved in crosslisted courses are supported more actively and are in fact encouraged to work with LAS; in addition LAS should be encouraged to work more closely with UBC; they should be given the funding to hire some of the talented sessionals who have worked at SFU in the past (while at the same time ensuring that core courses are taught by regular faculty); and finally, to continue to seek innovative ways of making joint appointments—as in the case of Andy Hira, a most successful hiring. (The possibilities of a new International Studies programme

would be a useful avenue for hiring a Latin Americanist, perhaps specializing in “broad-brush” areas such as security issues, development issues, environmental concerns, or globalization).

One fundamental suggestion needs to be emphasized, however. If this programme is to be retained, SFU needs to be proactive within LAS per se, and in particular needs to hire at least 2-3, and preferably 4 more professors to teach core LAS courses. In its present format, LAS—and in particular the graduate programme—cannot be sustained.

At the initial meeting with senior administrators where the parameters for our report were discussed, we were informed that this review was not intended as a “resource reallocation exercise”. While sensitive to the needs of beleaguered vice-presidents and deans (faced with clearly insufficient funding from the provincial government, and the need to make the famous “hard decisions”), I think that this is precisely what has to happen in this programme. It is an area of tremendous growth potential—and this simply has to be recognized. That in turn means a combination of imaginative financing and appointments. But, if it is to be saved, I repeat, LAS desperately needs an infusion of new human capital, in the shape of at least 2-3 new full-time faculty.

I was very impressed by the president’s references to the internationalization of the campus—a process that is taking place around the country. Specifically SFU is clearly committed to such a process:

“The universality of knowledge in the information age, the competitive nature of world trade and the increasing rate of cultural exchange dictate that the international dimension of higher education must keep pace with changes occurring globally. Internationalization is therefore essential for the University to fulfill its mandate to create and share knowledge, and to provide a learning environment that prepares students, faculty and staff to function effectively in an increasingly integrated, global environment”

“Internationalization of the University should enrich the educational and professional experience of students, faculty, and staff, by introducing them to the languages, cultures, and intellectual traditions of other nations”

(“Internationalization for the New Millennium”)

A key strategy in realizing this goal is to “promote curricula that are international in nature, and that provide a global and comparative perspective, which are appropriate to particular courses and programs”. Faculties are also to be encouraged “to internationalize courses and programs”. These are laudable goals. Given the trends of recent Canadian trade patterns, this translates into two major geographical areas—China and Latin America, a fact pointed out by the president: “Likewise, our location on the Pacific Rim gives us a unique opportunity for international partnerships and regional focus, especially in Asia and the American hemisphere”.

Complementary points were made in the "Three-Year Plan of the Vice-President, Academic, 2001-2004: Flexibility and Responsiveness". In Goal 4 of the document, it was noted how more than two-thirds of SFU graduates "indicated that it was somewhat or very important in their current employment for them to be knowledgeable about the traditions of other countries and cultures" (74%). Since the Canadian economy will be increasingly interconnected with Latin America (witness the doubling of bilateral trade with Mexico within 5 years of NAFTA being passed), it makes eminent sense to develop LAS. Moreover, given one of the goals of the Three-Year Plan of the Faculty of Arts and the thrust of internationalization in other SFU documents cited, it is now worth implementing the recommendation that "Students will be encouraged to build international experiences into their studies through the increasing use of exchange agreements". One of the logical places for this to occur—for the reasons stated above—is Latin America. To a certain extent it is already being done. A more concerted effort badly needs to be undertaken—and probably can only start once LAS is actively promoted and supported by the senior administration, and once the SFU community again believes in the LAS programme.

Given the tradition of LAS at SFU before the infighting of a decade ago, there is an enormous basis of "brand name" recognition that could easily be built upon. In particular the "Field Schools" at SFU are known throughout the country in LAS circles, and some creative financing (and hard work tracking down the appropriate funding) could prove enormously helpful in promoting this agenda of internalizing the campus. In addition, an international coop programme, with a support staff member actively seeking coop placements for LAS students, would be a most helpful innovation. The president is right to talk about the need for internationalization—and this is one area where tremendous gains could be made at a relatively low cost. It is time, though, to put into practice his thought-provoking ideas on this process.

Finally, there is a major psychological hurdle that needs to be taken collectively—and this is perhaps the most important hurdle for the collective SFU community to overcome. The LAS programme has survived a most difficult test of fire. It has rebounded, and posted modest growth. Its core of committed faculty have gone above and beyond the call of duty, and have been cautiously supported by the SFU administration. Now it is time to recognize that survival and growth, to agree to support (morally and financially) what should be a growth area in the Faculty of Arts—and to move on. Making the LAS programme into an independent Department, with its own support staff and budget (the annual \$5,000 it currently receives under the S/A umbrella is vastly insufficient), would be a good first step.

The LAS programme is at a crossroads. The simplest solution is to do nothing—a process that would not be helpful for anybody. That leaves two possibilities—winding down and reducing the offerings, or promoting and strengthening them. I believe strongly that the latter path should be followed, and that this would prove a useful and profitable long-term investment in human capital at SFU. Both the undergraduate and graduate programmes are in desperate need of resources—and offer the potential to develop unique course offerings, providing that the funding to hire more faculty can be provided. The Department has come a long way since the bloodletting of the early and mid-1990s, and in recent years has made significant progress in

attracting student growth—despite adverse circumstances. Given North American-wide trends, it makes sense for this path to be taken, and a long-term plan drawn up.

### **Conclusion**

The LAS Programme at SFU has been through a difficult maturation process. It has come through this process well, and has exorcised the devils of the troubled past. It is now time for the senior administration to do the same—recognizing that significant changes have taken place, and that LAS offers excellent growth potential. There are major shortcomings in the undergraduate and graduate programmes (particularly the latter)—and these need to be addressed with increased financial and moral support.

## Recommendations

- The University authorities need to understand that, everywhere else in Canada, LAS is a rapidly growing area of studies. Even at SFU, where the staff were demoralized by horrible internal bickering, there has been noteworthy growth. This phenomenon of widespread interest in things Latin American can be seen throughout Canada and the United States, and one only needs to examine figures at UBC, U. of Calgary, or many other locations (My own year-long courses on Cuba and Mexico/Central America regularly have 150 students. At UBC there are consistently 50 students in all upper level courses). It is now time for the Administration to realize this academic fact of life.  
It is also important to recognize that SFU has been the national trailbreaker in this regard. Despite its current threadbare offerings, it is still highly regarded because of that tradition—and it would be easy to build upon this foundation.
- SFU, if it accepts the nationwide trends for enrolment in LAS, should strengthen the existing LAS program. Several strategies could be followed. The most obvious is to hire at least 2-3 tenure-track Latin Americanists, with joint appointments. (Several people suggested the great need to replace Prof. Landolt as soon as possible—but again with somebody who was primarily a Latin Americanist). Specialists are needed in fast-growing areas such as popular culture, immigration, indigenous issues, and resource and environmental management. In addition, hiring more sessional lecturers would help to offer a badly-needed greater variety of courses. More human resources are badly needed, working within a re-energized LAS Department.
- A related point... The undergraduate students talked about a lack of consistency in their LAS courses, since only two regular faculty members had taught courses at the undergraduate level, with the bulk of courses being taught by sessionals. There are also very few LAS courses being taught, and a broader selection of offerings is badly needed. Since undergraduate students are the backbone of the programme, they have to receive a better, more consistent treatment. In addition, it was widely felt that lower level courses often overlapped, since the mixture of professors and sessionals had to continually re-introduce fundamentals of Latin America. The lack of uniformity among faculty and sessionals needs to be addressed, so that a well-conceived set of offerings can be given. (While it is important to have sessionals teaching in the programme, it is necessary to have the bulk of the courses taught by full-time faculty).
- Senior Administrators need to encourage all faculty members with expertise in Latin American Studies to cooperate more closely, and to be proactive in listing courses with Latin American content. In particular administrators need to convince Chairs that interdisciplinarity is innovative, and desirable; and that crosslisting courses with LAS can be beneficial, and should be encouraged. (It will also save money). Finally, incentives should be provided to Chairs so that students who register for such courses can be counted in both the “home” department and LAS. On a related note—Chairs should look

favourably upon their faculty members who teach in LAS, and take this into account when making decisions on tenure and promotion.

- It is time for the LAS programme to be recognized for its remarkable turn-around. This is not the same departmental dynamic of 10 or even 5 years ago. A vote of confidence should be given by the Administration to the LAS faculty in their reconstruction of what was an embittered and moribund programme. If the Major in LAS deserved to be closed down then, it has shown that it now deserves to be re-opened.
- There is clearly room for further cooperation with the LAS programme at UBC. The recent graduate students conference, featuring presentations from students at both universities, shows what can be done. The UBC coordinator is keen to work with his SFU counterpart in making this an annual event, and this example of institutional cooperation should be supported by the senior administration at both universities. Among several initiatives that should be considered: crosslisting courses at both institutions; rationalizing offerings; perhaps a joint (or at least a complementary) M.A. at both universities could be investigated; a joint speakers' series; and alternating—at the downtown campus—courses (For example UBC could offer a core course one year downtown, and SFU another course the following year, also at its downtown location). It is important to overcome strains of tribalism in this relationship—since both groups of very talented academics have so much to offer the students of the other institution.
- Several students (and one professor) indicated that the Western Deans' Accord, allowing students to take courses at other universities, is cumbersome and far more complicated than it needs to be. A simple letter of permission, readily available and well promoted, should be all that is required. Again, this has to be well publicized, and explained to students at both SFU and UBC.
- Faculty in the LAS programme need to meet as a group with senior administrators in order to outline their goals and vision for future growth. This external review could serve as an initial document for discussion purposes. The administration needs to convince itself that the turn-around in LAS is consistent, and lasting. (They also need to convince Chairs of departments where there are LAS faculty teaching that their contribution to LAS should be encouraged and supported, and not—as sometimes appears to be the case—hindered and criticized). Moreover individual faculty need to make a firm commitment to the programme, and to share equitably the workload.
- Some criticism was heard of the administrative duties being undertaken by the staff of Sociology and Anthropology. In particular several people (including students) referred to the lack of understanding in the advising process, or indeed support for LAS students in that process. LAS needs its own support staff, and its own adviser. In addition the website is badly in need of revising and upgrading—since at present it seems like an adjunct, or even an extension of S/A.

- In addition a student guide should be provided to all LAS students outlining programme requirements for joint degrees in all programmes. Students complained (correctly) that putting the name of former professors in the guide is not helpful, and their names should be removed. These two latter points can be resolved easily—but only if LAS support staff concentrating solely on LAS matters can function in their own programme.
- The “marriage of convenience” resulting from LAS being located in Sociology and Anthropology has worked relatively well (although several people referred it to a marriage “without passion”). S/A are to be commended for their collective support and collegiality, and indeed both sides deserve congratulations for the political will in making it work. But now it is time to move on—and for a new Department of Latin American Studies to open. In other words, to go “forward to the past”—and the concept of some quarter of a century ago.
- It would be worth exploring the possibility of funding for grad students with a brief trip to Ottawa, to investigate possibilities with IDRC, CIDA, and the Embassy of Mexico. The grad students in the programme desperately need an increase in their financial support package from the university. It would be worthwhile to send a 2-person delegation to Ottawa for 3-4 days to beat the bushes and see what funding could be available.
- The LAS faculty need to develop a united front around a leader who will provide them with a commitment to the programme, set out clearly a future direction for the programme, and provide solid leadership. A full-time, committed leader is needed. The rest of the faculty with LAS interests have to renew their commitment to the programme, especially those from other Departments which to date have shown lukewarm support for their relationship with LAS. LAS has developed well while in survival mode. It has now reached a plateau, and needs to refocus, gird its loins and, with good, dynamic leadership, start to move on.
- LAS needs to expand its constituency basis. Just as the SFU administration needs to recognize that the programme has changed dramatically, and is in need of far greater support, so too LAS needs to take greater initiatives. A Latin American cinema festival, conference on Latin America with appeal (e.g. Is NAFTA Working?, Canada-Mexico Relations?, Cuba after Fidel Castro, etc.), the development of connections with the Latin American constituency, work with local companies that have investments in Latin America, are all possibilities. A certificate programme in LAS, taught at the downtown campus, should also be explored—and could be given as an Adult Education/ community programme. N.B. Because these initiatives are laborious, energy-sapping ventures (and because LAS faculty are already badly-over-committed), this should happen after the administration has revealed a greater commitment to LAS. At the same time, such initiatives badly need to take place

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE CHAIR  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
AND ANTHROPOLOGY  
<http://www.sfu.ca/sociology>



8888 UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6  
Telephone: (604) 291-4297  
Fax: (604) 291- 5799  
Email: [kenny@sfu.ca](mailto:kenny@sfu.ca)

## MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. John Waterhouse, Vice-President, Academic  
Dr. William R. Krane, Associate Vice-President Academic  
Dr. John T. Pierce, Dean of Arts  
Dr. John Brohman, Director, Latin American Studies Program

From: Michael Kenny, Acting Chair, *J. Pearson for Michael Kenny*  
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

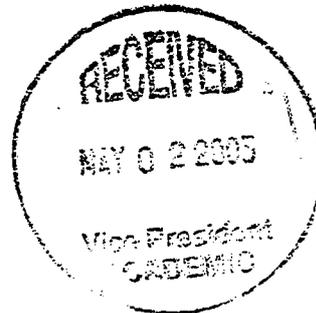
Re: Latin American Studies Program External Review

Date: May 1, 2003

---

Enclosed you will find a response of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology to the External Reviewer's Report on the Latin American Studies Program, along with a copy of the Memorandum of Agreement between S&A and LAS.

c: Laurie Summers, Director, Academic Planning  
Karen Payne, Departmental Assistant, S&A & LAS



**RESPONSE  
of the  
DEPARTMENT of SOCIOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY  
to the  
EXTERNAL REVIEWER'S REPORT  
on the  
LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM**

Michael G. Kenny  
Acting Chair, Sociology & Anthropology  
(May 1, 2003)

**General**

In our view, Dr. Kirk's evaluation of the LAS Program is on the whole very well founded. It forthrightly identifies problems and prospects in plain sight to anyone directly acquainted with the issues involved.

When the affiliation of LAS with Sociology/Anthropology was first proposed by the Dean of Arts, it was our hope as a Department that LAS would thrive and, in time, that a useful mutual relationship would develop, building on the already existing Latin Americanist expertise within our own Department. Dr. Kirk now points out the impossibility of LAS doing so without further infusion of resources in the form of new faculty to help make up for the losses it has suffered over the years.

We have nothing further to add on that score. However, there are several points that should be made concerning Dr. Kirk's comments on the relationship between LAS and Sociology/Anthropology. I first provide a little essential background.

**Background**

Sociology & Anthropology became involved with LAS when Dean Pierce concluded that the various units associated with the catch-all Division of Interdisciplinary Studies should be found suitable departmental homes. S&A was a logical place for the Latin American Studies Program because of the presence of Marilyn Gates and Gerardo Otero. The former -- an anthropologist -- has had a long involvement with LAS, regularly undertakes research in Mexico and, as Dr. Kirk points out, has done 'more than her fair share' of supervision of LAS graduate students; Dr. Otero -- a sociologist -- came half-time into S&A during the troubles in the old SLAS Department, and now splits his teaching between the two programs. He is also heavily involved in research in Latin America, particularly Mexico.

I was Acting Chair of S&A when the Dean proposed this affiliation -- which was conceived of in terms of the potential for intellectual and programmatic 'synergy' -- and negotiated for the Department on how to bring this off to mutual advantage.

I therefore had discussions with a number of those involved in the Program, particularly Drs. Brohman and Escudero. It became apparent that there was a great deal of ambivalence

concerning this move on the part of those with longest and closest involvement in LAS. The desire was for things to continue on very much as before - administratively housed in S&A but basically the same program with the same support staff. Sociology/Anthropology agreed with the proposition that the LAS Steering Committee should control the basic direction of the programme, structure, courses to be taught, etc., and that S&A would be closely involved only when policy issues of mutual concern arose. This arrangement was formalized in a Memorandum of Understanding laying all this out [see addendum].

The only immediate result for S&A in practical terms was the acquisition of a new staff position. Formerly the role of Graduate Secretary and Chair's Secretary had been combined; in light of the greater workload that an affiliation with LAS would entail, this position was split into two. On the other hand, our Departmental Assistant now *also* assumed the responsibility for advising LAS students, as well as administering grant funds, and other administrative matters.

At the time the LAS affiliation was first mooted, S&A was about to lose a sociologist (Hari Sharma) to retirement. In light of the affiliation with LAS, it was decided to define the proposed replacement for Dr. Sharma's in terms of Latin American expertise. The goal was to enhance the Department's own strength in this area, while also enhancing the supervisory capacity of the LAS graduate program. However, we emphasize that this position was **never** conceived as anything but a Sociology position fully attached to S&A; the teaching of dedicated LAS courses was not an option (we are short of faculty as it is). But unfortunately the successful candidate for this position (Dr. Patricia Landholt) soon pushed on to other pastures back east and the job is currently vacant, with no replacement search as yet authorized. This was the state of things at the time of Dr. Kirk's visit. With the above background in mind, I now address several points in the "Recommendations" section of Dr. Kirk's report:

#### Response to specific recommendations of the LAS External Review

**A. [re point two on p. 11]:** *"SFU, if it accepts the nationwide trends for enrolment in LAS, should strengthen the existing LAS program [The most obvious strategy] is to hire at least 2-3 tenure-track Latin Americanists, with joint appointments. (Several people suggested the great need to replace Prof. Landholt as soon as possible - but again with somebody who was primarily a Latin Americanist.)"*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These points are reinforced by Dr. John Brohman's response (Apr. 30) to the Kirk report, in which he says: "to replace the many vital faculty the Program has lost over the past decade, three tenure-track Latin Americanists need to be hired... These new faculty might have several home departments in related disciplines, *but it is essential that they be available to teach LAS courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels....*" (my emphasis).

We find this phrase difficult to interpret. Is Dr. Kirk under the impression that the Sharma/Landholt position was a "joint" appointment with LAS? As explained above, it was not, and S&A would be very antipathetic to any notion that this should have dedicated LAS teaching responsibilities (graduate supervision is another matter, since this was envisioned as a possible responsibility in the first place). The Sociology side of the S&A Department is currently down two and one-half positions from three years ago. On the Sociology side, 1/3 of our faculty complement (3 of 9) are in cross-appointed positions. The actual resources available for undergraduate teaching, graduate supervision, and committee work are correspondingly limited. S&A cannot afford having resources siphoned off to an autonomous program by way of another joint appointment. I reiterate that Sociology/Anthropology would not be sympathetic to any arrangement that involved a transfer of its own teaching resources to LAS. New joint appointments are one thing, but the fate of the Sharma/Landholt replacement is quite another. **However, our thinking about this position is contingent on what the Administration decides to do about the LAS Program.**

**B. [re last point on p. 12]:** *"Some criticism was heard of the administrative duties being undertaken by the staff of Sociology and Anthropology. In particular several people (including students) referred to the lack of understanding in the advising process, or indeed support for LAS students in that process. LAS needs its own support staff, and its own advisor."*

This comment is not very helpful, and amounts to innuendo. We would ask, what "lack of understanding"; what "lack of support"? As for LAS having its own support staff and own advisor, that would certainly be advisable and necessary if LAS were to grow beyond its present scope and/or become an entirely separate unit again.

**C. [re second point on p. 13]:** *"The "marriage of convenience" resulting from the LAS affiliation with Sociology and Anthropology has worked relatively well (although several people referred to it as a marriage "without passion")."*

It would be more accurate to characterize what happened as a shotgun marriage, at least from the point of view of LAS, which was given little choice in the matter. As mentioned above, the hoped-for arrangement was phrased in terms of an evolving synergy; S&A did its part, and then some, through what proved to be the disappointing and currently vacant Landholt appointment. The so-called 'marriage of convenience' got off to a somewhat rocky start, but is now functionally stable.

— o —

Dr. Kirk has given everyone much to think about -- and especially his fundamental point that LAS should either be given suitable resources or closed down. It should also be noted that the original Memorandum of Understanding between S&A and LAS stipulated that the relationship should be evaluated after a 3-year trial period. This has now passed, and the time is now ripe for everyone to seriously re-examine the issue in the light of Dr. Kirk's report.

**NB: The S&A/LAS affiliation will be revisited in the response to our own External Review Report.**

**Memorandum of Agreement between the Latin American Studies Program and the  
Department of Sociology/Anthropology  
20 May 1999**

**Preamble:**

This agreement concerns the housing of the Latin American Studies Program, currently an independent unit within IDS in the Faculty of Arts, and the Department of Sociology/Anthropology. The Faculty of Arts Three Year Plan (2. C iii.1) recommends that "three-way negotiations between program steering committees, prospective home departments, and the Dean's office should be concluded as soon as possible to determine where the Canadian Studies, Latin American Studies, and Family Studies Certificate programs should be transferred, effective no later than September 1, 1998." It also states that "active discussion on the transfer and reorganization of Latin American Studies may see the program become part of the Sociology and Anthropology Department." Discussions between the two units regarding the feasibility of this recommendation were carried through the Spring and Summer Semesters of 1998 and resulted in a tentative agreement document consisting of eleven (11) points which was forwarded to the Dean of Arts Office in late August 1998. Since then the Department of Sociology/Anthropology and the Latin American Studies Program have been working toward a definition of the nature of the relationship between the two units, and on the details for the implementation of this new administrative arrangement. One key issue has been the need of LAS to maintain its autonomy within the Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology, seen as essential for LAS to realize its full potential, which will clearly benefit the Department as a whole. A second issue is that, as a result of this arrangement, neither the LAS Program nor the Department of Sociology/Anthropology will lose resources, especially with regard to graduate student support. What follows is a summary of the points of implementation agreed upon by both units.

**Program Management:**

- The Latin American Studies Program will continue to be run by its own Steering Committee.
- The Director of the Latin American Studies Program will be a member of the LAS Steering Committee, will be elected by the members of the LAS Steering Committee, and will be recommended for appointment to the Dean of Arts. The Director may or may not be a member of the Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology.
- The Director of the LAS Program will have the right to attend Sociology/Anthropology departmental meetings when issues related to LAS are on the agenda.
- The Chair of Sociology/Anthropology will be invited to participate as non-voting member in the LAS Program Steering Committee.
- The Chair of Sociology/Anthropology will communicate proceedings of the Dean's Advisory Committee meetings when issues relevant to LAS arise.

---

\* This agreement is modelled on the Memorandum of Agreement between the Asia-Canada Program and the Department of Humanities, signed on August 30th, 1998.

## Undergraduate Program

- The LAS undergraduate curriculum will be separate from the Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology undergraduate curriculum.
- The LAS guide for undergraduate studies will be separate from the S/A undergraduate program guide.
- The Director of the LAS Program will be responsible for all matters related to the LAS Undergraduate Program.\*\*
- The Director of the LAS Program will have signature authority for all matters related to the LAS Undergraduate Program.
- The Chair of the Sociology/Anthropology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee will represent LAS at FACC.
- The Chair of the Sociology/Anthropology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee will be invited to participate as a non-voting member in the LAS Undergraduate Committee meetings when issues related to S/A are on the agenda.
- The Director of the LAS Program will be invited to participate as a non-voting member in the Sociology/Anthropology Undergraduate Curriculum Committee meetings when issues related to LAS are on the agenda.

## Graduate Program

- The LAS Graduate Program is an independent, interdisciplinary program developed by the former Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies. As such it is unrelated to the S/A graduate program except for the sharing of administrative resources.
- The LAS graduate curriculum will be separate from the Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology graduate curriculum.
- The LAS guide for graduate studies will be separate from the S/A graduate program guide.
- The Chair of the Sociology/Anthropology Graduate Studies Committee will represent LAS at FAGSC.
- The Director of the LAS Program will participate as a non-voting member at FAGSC meetings when issues related to the LAS graduate program are on the agenda.
- The Chair of the Sociology/Anthropology Graduate Studies Committee will be invited to participate as a non-voting member in LAS Graduate Committee meetings.
- The Director of the LAS Program will be invited to participate as a non-voting member in the Sociology/Anthropology graduate Curriculum Committee meetings when issues related to LAS are on the agenda.
- The Director of the LAS Program will be responsible for all matters related to the LAS graduate program.
- The Chair of the LAS Graduate Studies program will have signature authority for all matters related to the LAS graduate program.
- The LAS Steering Committee will be responsible for the admission of LAS MA students.

---

\*\* At present the Director of the Latin American Studies Program performs the duties of both Undergraduate and Graduate Program Chairs. This may change in the future, in which case the responsibilities related to the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs will be assumed by the LAS Steering Committee members designated to those tasks.

- The LAS Graduate Program will be allocated three (3) Graduate Fellowships per year for the next three years starting April 30th, 1999.
- The LAS Steering Committee will be responsible for the allocation of Graduate Fellowships amongst its LAS graduate students.
- Teaching Assistantships and other sources of financial support for students will be allocated and managed under separate budgets.
- Qualified LAS graduate students will have priority for Teaching Assistantships available through the Spanish language program.

### **LAS Resources**

- The LAS Program Steering Committee currently consists of seven members (five tenured Faculty, one Senior Lecturer and one Lab Instructor) belonging to different Departments within the Faculty of Arts. As of May 99, three (Mónica Escudero, Marilyn Gates and Gerardo Otero) are members of the Sociology/Anthropology Department.
- Space will be allocated to house LAS resources (TV, VCR, videos, etc.).
- LAS resources (TV, VCR, videos, etc.) will continue to be the property of LAS, to be shared with S/A as needed.
- Space will be made available for the LAS Steering Committee to hold its meetings.
- The space allocation for LAS graduate students and faculty will continue as at present.

### **Future LAS appointments**

- The LAS Steering Committee will be responsible for, and have autonomous jurisdiction in, matters pertaining to teaching personnel and secondment.
- Request for Faculty appointments will be made by the Director of the Latin American Studies Program directly to the Dean, with the support of the Chair of the Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology. Request for faculty appointments will not be linked with negotiations for appointments/replacements undertaken by the Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology (or other affiliated units) unless such linkage is seen as desirable by the units concerned.

### **Administrative Personnel**

- The Sociology/Anthropology Graduate Secretary will serve both the Sociology/Anthropology and the LAS graduate programs.
- The Sociology/Anthropology Chair's Secretary will also serve LAS in an equitably distributed manner. This person will also serve as secretary to the LAS Director, and assist in undergraduate and graduate student advising in LAS when necessary. Fluency in Spanish will be an asset for this position. (LAS related duties are estimated to be between 12 and 15 hours per week).
- The Sociology/Anthropology general office secretary position continues as in the past.
- The Sociology/Anthropology Departmental Assistant becomes DA and undergraduate advisor for both units.

### **Budget**

- Library, capital and operating budgets will remain autonomous. LAS program budgetary matters may be discussed directly with the Dean's office.

**Note.** Unforeseen future situations/conflicts not covered by this agreement will be the subject of negotiations between Sociology/Anthropology and the LAS Steering Committee.

The agreement reached between LAS and Sociology/Anthropology will be reviewed by each of the parties at the end of three years of implementation of this agreement (ie April 2002) to determine whether the arrangement is still viable and desirable for each. If at that time, a majority of the members of either LAS or Sociology/Anthropology indicate dissatisfaction with the arrangement, this will be conveyed to the Dean of Arts. If a majority of either LAS or Sociology/Anthropology desire it, an alternative structure to house LAS in the Faculty of Arts will be found.



---

Ellen Gee  
Chair  
Dept. of Sociology/Anthropology



---

Mónica Escudero  
Director  
Latin American Studies Program

---

John Pierce  
Dean  
Faculty of Arts

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES  
PROGRAM



8888 UNIVERSITY DRIVE  
BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6  
Telephone: (604) 291-3146  
Fax: (604) 291-5799

16 May 2003

Dr. William R. Krane  
Associate Vice-President, Academic  
Simon Fraser University  
Burnaby, BC

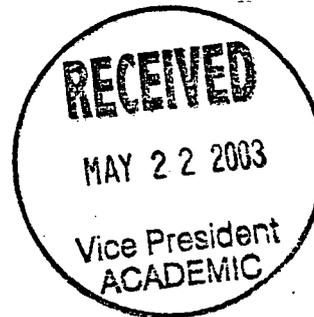
Dear Bill,

Accompanying this note is the formal Response from the Latin American Studies Program to the External Review Report authored by Dr. John Kirk. As Director, I wrote the Response of the LAS Program, which was discussed and approved by the Program's Steering Committee at a meeting on May 2, 2003.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Brohman'.

Dr. John Brohman  
Program Director



**Response by the Latin American Studies Program  
To the External Review Report of the LAS Program  
by Professor John Kirk  
April 30, 2003**

Background

The members of the LAS Program are very appreciative of the time and effort that was invested in the External Review by all involved, and especially by the External Reviewer, Professor John Kirk. Dr. Kirk came into the review process extremely well informed about the background of the Program, and its major issues, problems, and challenges. While at Simon Fraser, Dr. Kirk was also very conscientious in meeting, both individually and collectively, with faculty, staff, students, and others involved in all facets of the workings of the Program. The members of the LAS Steering Committee believe Dr. Kirk's Report is an accurate reflection of the current situation of the Program, and they hope that concrete steps will soon be taken to meet the major concerns of the Report, especially in the badly needed areas of augmenting faculty and other resources. We agree with Dr. Kirk's major recommendation that, given the progress that the Program has shown in recent years, and the considerable potential of LAS programs in Canada presently in general, it is time to put the unpleasant events of the 1990s behind us and move vigorously into a new, more promising era.

Recommendations

Our response to the External Review Report of Dr. Kirk focuses on its many insightful and useful recommendations:

Despite the troubles of the 1990s and the considerable ensuing contraction of LAS at SFU, we are pleased to hear that our Program is still highly regarded nationally, due especially to the longstanding tradition of Latin American Studies at our university. We agree that, if badly needed resources were devoted to the Program, it would be relatively easy to build upon this foundation, and all of our members would be ready and able to pitch into this task ahead. Especially given the rapid growth of other LAS programs across Canada in recent years, we agree that it would be a shame if SFU were not to take advantage of this opportunity.

We also agree with Dr. Kirk that additional faculty are absolutely essential to the continued rebuilding of our Program, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. To replace the many vital faculty the Program has lost over the past decade, three tenure-track Latin Americanists need to be hired in areas such as Dr. Kirk has identified where there is a heavy student demand. These new faculty might have several home departments in related disciplines, but it is essential that they be available to teach LAS courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, if we are to offer an appropriate mixture of regularly-taught courses to our students. The geographic areas of greatest need for these faculty are Brazil, the Caribbean and Central America, and the Andean

region. The substantive areas of greatest need are popular culture, indigenous studies, environmental issues, urban studies, communications, and business.

One of the chief complaints of our undergraduate and graduate students, which was noted by Dr. Kirk, is the insufficient course offerings of the Program. This is a problem which cannot be corrected without hiring additional faculty whose course loads include LAS offerings, many of which might be taught via cross-listing arrangements with other departments. In addition to the tenure-track appointments noted above, the hiring of a LAS Lecturer, at least as a ½ position, might help to alleviate some of the strain the Program is currently under to offer an appropriate array of undergraduate courses. However, as Dr. Kirk suggests, new faculty hiring for LAS probably ought to begin with a replacement position for Patricia Landolt, whose departure was a real blow to the Program, to its graduate offerings and supervision, and to its nascent relationship with Sociology/Anthropology.

As Dr. Kirk also notes, in addition to new faculty, the Program needs to find ways, in concert with other departments and the administration, to open up avenues for its current faculty, who are based in other 'home' departments, to contribute to the workings of the Program on a more consistent basis. Many of these faculty perceive that their home departments discourage such involvement. Such faculty are understandably reticent to become more fully involved in the day-to-day workings of the LAS Program—meaning that the bulk of tasks and activities are left to a very small group, a situation which is not sustainable. Therefore, the members of the LAS Program propose consultation with the Faculty of Arts and the Chairs of relevant departments to search for ways to provide incentives for more consistent faculty involvement in the Program, as well as removing any disincentives that are perceived to hinder such participation.

One such meeting should quickly take place, for example, with the History Department, which recently hired a Latin Americanist. This hiring took place without any consultation with the members of the LAS Program, who were not even made aware that candidates were holding seminars and giving interviews. While we recognize that this appointment is to a full-time History position, we expect that the person hired will play an important role in the workings of the LAS Program, especially via graduate supervision, as did several Historians in the past whom have recently retired. Nevertheless, we cannot help but feel the disregard of the LAS Program during the hiring process of a Latin Americanist does not bode well for our future relations, and tends to underscore the points made above by Dr. Kirk about unnecessarily poor relations between LAS and the 'home' departments of Latin Americanists at SFU.

It is also evident that, given the relatively small size of LAS, it makes good sense to increase cooperation with LAS at UBC, which also has a fairly small program. In fact, several meetings have recently been held between LAS faculty at the two universities in which all agreed that it would be mutually beneficial to increase joint events and other activities between the campuses. A very successful recent conference organized by LAS graduate students from both campuses demonstrated the potential that such cooperation could offer. We believe that an appropriate first step to increase cooperation would be

the organization of a joint LAS speakers' series, with seminars to be alternated between the downtown campuses of the two universities. This might also be an excellent way to increase the visibility of LAS among the general public, especially the Latin American population, in the Lower Mainland. A seminar organized by SFU's LAS Program last September was held before an overflow crowd in one of the Harbour Centre's largest theatres, demonstrating the potential for such events. We agree with Dr. Kirk that there are probably several methods which might be explored to increase cooperation between the LAS programs at SFU and UBC, but that an appropriate first step would be for the universities to jointly sponsor a speakers' series, which could increase interaction among faculty and students at the two campuses, and could serve to build rapport and confidence in the mutual benefits of such a relationship. Toward this end, a work-study position should be made available to a LAS student so that s/he could devote some time to helping faculty organize a SFU-UBC speakers' series and other cooperative inter-campus events.

However, in order to hold such activities, which are essential to enliven the Program and create synergies with UBC, it is also necessary to increase the LAS budget. Dr. Kirk commented that the current annual budget of LAS of \$5000 is "vastly insufficient," and does not allow for mounting the types of activities expected of a vibrant program. Accompanying the steep reduction in LAS faculty at SFU in recent years has been an equally drastic reduction in budget. Indeed, the LAS Field School in the 1990s used to receive a stipend from the university which was four times the current annual budget of the entire program! While we do not seek to return to this type of field-school funding, this comparison underscores the extreme financial strain the Program has been put under in recent years.

In the end, we agree with Dr. Kirk that there are several initiatives that the LAS Program can and should undertake in the coming years in order to better serve its undergraduate and graduate students, to enhance its cooperation with UBC and other LAS programs in the Lower Mainland, and to increase its visibility and meaningfulness to the local Latino-Canadian population and others with an interest in Latin American affairs. However, in order to do this we must clearly put our troubled past behind us, something in which we must have the full cooperation of the administration and other interested parties at SFU. We would be glad to participate in discussions and meetings toward this end, and we pledge to cooperate with the administration so that it may have confidence once again that LAS is a worthy cause in which to invest scarce resources. We have worked very hard over the past several years to 'turn a new page' on LAS at SFU—to resurrect the Program 'from the ashes.' Against considerable odds, we have shown some modest success, which we think should be rewarded by a 'vote of confidence' from the administration that it is willing to support the rebirth of a nationally-recognized LAS Program at SFU.

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**  
Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts  
**MEMORANDUM**



**To:** John Waterhouse  
VP Academic

**From:** John T. Pierce  
Dean of Arts

**Subject:** External Review: LAS  
Dean's Response

**Date:** June 3, 2003

---

**External Review, LAS, Dean's Response**

John Kirk has provided a very expansive and hard hitting report which, in a nutshell, argues that the "LAS program is at a critical stage"; and that to be successful it must receive moral as well as additional financial support. Clearly there are significant opportunities for the growth and further development of LAS as there are significant challenges for both LAS and the Faculty to achieve these goals. Although there are a large number of recommendations, I would like to address five key areas of concern to help clarify options and to refocus the discussion.

**Resources**

Significant attention is paid to the issue of the inadequacy of resources for faculty, staff, operating, field schools and basic course offerings at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. After the demise of the Department of Spanish and LAS, the program was moved to Sociology and Anthropology and a conscious and deliberate decision was made to limit its size and scale. Important and unanswered questions existed regarding its future shape and status that could not be addressed without the advantage of the passage of time and the addition of experience.

The report makes it clear that there is significant demand for LAS courses across Canada and that we should be prepared to redress our imbalances. I am prepared to re-examine the need for additional resources. This will have to be done within the context of the Faculty's strategic planning and the availability of resources. Allocating two to four new faculty positions as recommended plus additional operating base funding would require either a significant amount of new money entering the Faculty or the redeployment of existing monies. The participation and support of cognate disciplines will be critical in this regard. And even if there is significant growth potential we must determine whether we as a Faculty wish to pursue this direction as opposed to some other.

### **Internationalization**

The report draws some of its inspiration from the University's "Internationalization" initiative and the proposed International Studies program. There may indeed be important synergies and complementarities which we must explore. In the case of an International Studies major a legitimate question is which area specialties will be drawn into the program. Latin America may be one of them.

### **Growth Potential and Structure of the Program**

As previously stated much is made of the high growth potential for LAS. While there have been some promising increases in student enrollments recently, it is unclear what that potential is for SFU. Both John Kirk and John Brohman make the point that the uncertainties surrounding the program and inadequate resources for faculty and course delivery are at the heart of the problem. It may very well be a supply based problem which our office is prepared to examine in the overall context of strategic planning.

In terms of the structure of the program, the report strongly endorses the need for both an undergraduate and graduate program. The graduate program, it is argued, is in a "sorry state" and "is not sustainable". I was surprised that the report avoids the issue of the need to specialize in either undergraduate or graduate programming. When LAS was being re-organized, this office suggested that it would make more sense to concentrate resources on the graduate program but this was interpreted as yet another strategy to downsize and diminish the program. I think it is time again to think about this option but from a more positive perspective.

### **Relations with S & A**

It was never our intention to make this a "marriage of convenience" nor is it fair to categorize the arrangement as a "shotgun wedding". Michael Kenny in his response assesses both the rationale for the association and its success to date. S & A saw this, to quote Michael, as "a logical place for the Latin American Studies Program".

I believe that S & A has worked hard to make this a viable proposition. I believed in 1997/98, as I do now, that there remain important synergies and potential for creative collaboration. I will be meeting with Michael and the new Chair, Jane Pulkingham, to discuss the model and what can be done to improve it.

### **Departmental Status**

It is recommended that LAS be returned to Departmental status. I would argue that this would be premature at this time. There is considerable work to be done politically and strategically before LAS could be considered for this status again.

### **Conclusion**

John Kirk urges the senior administration to provide adequate funding or to close the program down. Given the recommendation for departmental status I am not sure what adequate means. It would appear that there is considerable space between these two poles. I will be meeting with the LAS Steering Committee, the Chair of S & A and our own Strategic Planning group to determine the alternatives and choices and their associated costs/benefits.



JTP/rt

Cc: J. Brohman, Director, Latin American Studies  
M. Kenny, Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology  
T. Perry, Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts  
L. Summers, Director, Academic Planning