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**MEMORANDUM**

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**ATTENTION** Senate  
**FROM** Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic and  
Provost, and Chair, SCUP  
**RE:** Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology: External Review of the School of  
Communication (SCUP 12-31)

**DATE** September 12, 2012

**PAGES** 1/1

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At its September 5, 2012 meeting SCUP reviewed and approved the Action Plan for the School for the Communication that resulted from its External Review.

**Motion:**

That Senate approve the Action Plan for the School for the Communication that resulted from its External Review.

encl.

c: A. Beale  
C. Geisler



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**MEMORANDUM**

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**ATTENTION** Jon Driver, Chair, SCUP **DATE** August 23, 2012  
**FROM** Bill Krane, Associate Vice-President,  
Academic and Associate Provost **PAGES** 1/1  
**RE:** External Review of the School of Communication

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Attached are the External Review Report on the School of Communication and the Action Plan endorsed by the School and the Dean.

**Motion:**

**That SCUP approve and recommend to Senate the Action Plan for the School of Communication that resulted from its External Review.**

Following the site visit, the Report of the External Review Team\* for the School of Communication was submitted in April 2012.

After the Report was received, a meeting was held with the Dean, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology, the Director of the School of Communication, and the Director of Academic Planning and Budgeting (VPA) to consider the recommendations. The School then prepared an Action Plan based on the Report and these discussions. The Action plan was then submitted to the Dean who endorsed it.

The Reviewers commented that "The School of Communication at Simon Fraser University is a well-established, intellectually innovative center for communication research and teaching. The School boasts internationally renowned scholars in the areas of political economy/policy and in technology and society".

The Reviewers made a number of recommendations covering the agreed Terms of Reference.

SCUP recommends to Senate that the School of Communication be advised to pursue the Action Plan.

**Attachments:**

1. External Review Report – April 2012
2. School of Communication - Action Plan

**\* External Review Team:**

Dr. Vincent Mosco (Chair), Queen's University  
Dr. Lisa Henderson, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
Dr. Leah Lievrouw, University of California, Los Angeles  
Dr. Marjorie Cohen (Internal), Simon Fraser University

CC Cheryl Geisler, Dean, Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology  
Alison Beale, Director, School of Communication

## **Report of the External Review Committee for the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University**

Submitted to:

Dr. Glynn Nicholls, Director, Academic Planning & Budgeting, Simon Fraser University

Submitted by:

Dr. Vincent Mosco (Chair), Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Queen's University  
Dr. Lisa Henderson, Professor of Communication, University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
Dr. Leah Lievrouw, Professor of Information Studies, UCLA

April 12, 2012

### **Executive Summary**

The School of Communication at Simon Fraser University is a well-established, intellectually innovative center for communication research and teaching. The School has internationally recognized strengths in the areas of political economy/policy and in technology and society, as well as burgeoning recognition in cultural studies and particularly in feminist scholarship. In addition to a number of renowned scholars, the School has a committed group of junior faculty, including new hires, and an equally dedicated staff of administrators, advisers, and technicians for its academic and co-op programs. The appointment of a new Director, along with the organizational move into a new Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology and the physical relocation into much-improved facilities have brought a renewed sense of optimism. In addition, the School can be proud of its community engagement in Vancouver and across the province, as well as a strong commitment to international research and teaching, most recently in Asia. Alongside its large undergraduate and co-op program, the School includes a substantial graduate program with a strong cohort of doctoral students.

These strengths provide the School with a good foundation to take up a number of difficult challenges. Foremost among these is the need to address unsustainable enrolment growth and, relatedly, to make a number of curriculum reforms. Enrolment expansion at all levels, but especially at the undergraduate level, threatens to undermine the quality of all of the School's programs. We recommend an immediate commitment to add two full-time positions to the faculty complement. Even with this, much more needs to be done to address enrolment and curriculum issues. We recommend curriculum revisions that would better balance the academic and the professional dimensions of communication. In addition, the School needs to create measures that track qualitative as well as quantitative performance and better measure long-term program performance. Moreover, the School needs to strengthen the undergraduate Honours program, establish a higher GPA "gate" for admission to the major, and implement enrolment targets at both

the undergraduate and graduate levels commensurate with the School's commitment to educational excellence. The School also requires a better balance between research and teaching. Like research, teaching needs to be recognized as the responsibility of all faculty at all levels of the program. Furthermore, the School needs to improve its use of technology throughout the program, including how it manages the program and presents itself to students and to its wider community. The School would also benefit by addressing problems in its climate or culture. These include malaise among senior faculty, the perception of gender exclusion, and fears about the ability to sustain the School's recent progress. Finally, the School needs to do a better job of planning for the future.

These are substantial challenges but we are confident that the School has the ability to address them with intelligence and creativity.

## **Introduction**

This is the report of the External Review Committee for the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. The Committee was comprised of Dr. Vincent Mosco, Chair, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, Queen's University; Dr. Lisa Henderson, Professor of Communication, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; and Dr. Leah Lievrouw, Professor of Information Studies, UCLA. Dr. Marjorie Cohen, Professor of Political Science at SFU served as an internal member of the Committee for the duration of its site visit and the Committee is very grateful for her generous assistance throughout the process.

The Committee was constituted in the fall 2011 and was provided with documents to review about the School of Communication, the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology, and Simon Fraser University about one month before members visited the University. The site visit took place from February 21-25, 2012. The Committee met for the first time on the evening of February 21 to get acquainted and discuss its itinerary and terms of reference. From February 22-24 it met with faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, and administrators in the School and in various administrative units at SFU. The Committee provided preliminary impressions from the site visit to the Director of the School and then to a group of senior administrators on February 24. On February 25 the Committee met to discuss its findings and plan this written report.

## **Strengths**

The School of Communication at Simon Fraser University is a well-established, intellectually innovative center for communication research and teaching. The School boasts internationally renowned scholars in the areas of political economy/policy and in technology and society. The former include particular expertise in the study of media corporations, government policy-making (including cultural policy formation), media and social movements, media democracy, and international communication. Moreover, the School has considerable strength in both the conceptual understanding of the relationship between technology and society and in the empirical study of technology, especially in the areas of health and science. The School has burgeoning strengths in cultural studies and particularly in feminist scholarship. The combination of seasoned scholars and new hires has the potential to turn this area into a field of international recognition.

One of the particularly positive signs for the School has been the ability to make a number of important and successful hires at the junior level. It is clear that it has not had the resources to hire sufficiently to replenish its complement, particularly in light of the significant growth in undergraduate enrolment. However, new and more seasoned junior faculty have been a source of considerable strength and continuity in each of the School's primary areas of specialization. The School also appears to have a strong tutorial system that brings together teaching assistants and undergraduates.

The School has a tradition of research relationships beyond Canada, particularly with scholars and policy makers in the United States. It has recently established a strong base

of international commitments, notably in Asia. Foremost among them is the establishment of a joint graduate program with the Communication University of China (CUC) in Beijing. More than an exchange of graduate students, the program will enable participants to pursue a rigorous joint degree that is sure to enrich SFU's already strong MA in Communication Studies. The CUC is one of the foremost communication studies programs in China and sufficient preparation is underway to build on the joint teaching program with research collaborations. Since the program has only just been approved, it is important to closely monitor its development. In addition to this program, the School has taken advantage of another faculty appointment to expand its research profile into Korea, a major centre for communication research in Asia.

From our observations, the School has a dedicated staff of administrators, advisers, and technicians for its academic and co-op programs. Considering the sheer number of undergraduate majors (roughly 1300) co-op participants (about 350) and graduate students (over 80), it is remarkable that the program manages with its limited number of staff. It is evidence of everyone's hard work and commitment but one wonders for how long the staff can manage without additional personnel.

Although precise data are not available, interviews and knowledge of university programs in Canada provide evidence that PhD program graduates find positions in distinguished academic programs and in academic leadership roles across Canada.

We observed a strong *esprit de corps* among junior and recently-tenured faculty who have taken on the challenge of leading key committees, initiating reforms in the School's decision-making processes, and managing undergraduate courses whose enrolments have increased substantially in recent years. This is especially the case among core undergraduate courses, but it can be observed throughout the curriculum. It is particularly positive to note the commitment of junior and recently tenured faculty to the responsibilities of collaborative governance. This is especially evident in the undergraduate program committee but can also be observed in the graduate program committee.

The appointment of a new Director has introduced a climate of possibility in the School. Specifically, although concerns remain about the process of succession, there is a general feeling in the School, especially among newly appointed and recently tenured faculty, that there is a renewed and much-needed commitment to transparent processes, collegial governance, and gender equity.

Although the Committee did not have opportunities to talk to many undergraduates, interviews with undergraduate leaders, faculty, and staff associated with the program suggest that undergraduates have a solid affinity with one another and with the program. While they would like to see a more applied communication focus in the undergraduate curriculum, there is an appreciation of the quality of teaching, particularly in the areas of program concentration: media culture, technology and society, and political economy/policy.

A key reason cited for general undergraduate satisfaction is a well-managed co-op program. With participation from about thirty percent of majors, the co-op program places students in paid positions in jobs that are generally related to the field of communication. Although systematic data on career outcomes is not available (see recommendations), anecdotal evidence leads to the conclusion that the program has helped graduates find employment after completing the degree.

Faculty and students in the School are engaged in a wide range of community outreach activities including, but certainly not limited to, leading the annual Media Democracy Day event, contributing to community knowledge production, and participating in the wider community's effort to expand communication and better manage environmental risk and disaster. The School's involvement in a variety of British Columbia communities is certainly noteworthy for the depth and breadth of its reach. However, information about community engagement is rarely communicated to the university's various constituencies.

Over the years, the School has built an impressive set of archives. These include the papers of Dallas Smythe, a central figure in the development of communication studies, particularly the political economy approach to the media. Smythe was a vital force in the early development of the School of Communication. In addition, under the direction of Professor Barry Truax, the School holds the Soundscape collection, which is a type of electroacoustic music characterized by the presence of recognizable environmental sounds and contexts whose purpose it is to invoke the listener's imagination and recollections associated with the soundscape. There is also a notable archive on alternative media, particularly on media developed in British Columbia. Much more could be done to preserve and make readily accessible these rich resources. The library liaison for the School of Communication, whose interview impressed our committee, is keen to work on this important task.

Two relatively recent relocations, one physical and one organizational, are also sources of renewed strength for the School. First, the relocation of the School to the Shrum Science Centre is a major improvement in the size and quality of the office space and available facilities. With this location and the Harbour Center campus, where 40% of courses are now taught, the School is well situated to carry out its teaching and research. Nevertheless, given the size of the graduate cohort and anticipated expansion, attention needs to be paid to office space for doctoral students. Second, organizational restructuring has placed the School in a new Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology (FCAT). The reorganization provides a considerably more appropriate location for the School than its previous position within a Faculty of Applied Sciences. Although it is too soon to determine whether genuine collaborations will emerge between units in the faculty, there is considerable potential for these to develop.

## **Challenges and Opportunities**

### **Enrolment and Curriculum**

The Committee's view – consistently reinforced by faculty, students, and administrators as well as by the recommendations from the previous review – is that the single most serious challenge facing the School of Communication is the size of its academic programs relative to available resources. Recent enrolment growth, especially at the undergraduate and Ph.D. levels, has generated a web of significant, interrelated, and negative consequences for virtually every aspect of the School's operations. The situation is frankly unsustainable.

*Background and scope.* Exact figures for enrolment trends were a bit difficult to determine, given data comparability issues in the materials provided by the University and the School (e.g., some reports employed annualized student FTE in their analyses, some used registered students, some total headcounts, etc.). However, a rough estimate provided by faculty during our visit is that there is currently a total of about 1300 registered undergraduate FTEs in Communication, up from 1200 reported by the University in Spring 2010 (roughly an 8% increase in less than two years). According to the School's Self-Study, the number of undergraduate majors increased by approximately 30% during the period of the present review (AY 2004-05 through 2010-11), including a particularly steep rise of more than 36% in the six years from Spring 2005 to Spring 2011. After the last external review, the minimum GPA for admission to the major was raised from 2.25 to 2.50, but this seems to have done little to stem the steadily rising tide of enrolments.

The proportion of undergraduate Honours majors is surprisingly low; in 2010, just 9 of 1128 majors (.0079%) were Honours students. Despite the undergraduate program's focus on theory and research, faculty report that only about 2-3% of Communication B.A.s continue to graduate academic study or professional programs. Some claimed that this rate reflects the School's vision that students should be prepared to "navigate citizenship in a media-dense, global, multicultural world" (as quoted in the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee Report from 2010). One interviewee put it more bluntly: "we teach for citizenship, not graduate school." There were some anecdotal reports of problems with academic integrity (plagiarism) arising from degree completion and employment pressures. According to data included in the Self-Study Report, persistent demand for courses among both majors and non-majors has led to a shortage of seats in required courses; as of 2010 undergraduate time to degree was nearly five years.

An increase in the number of registered undergraduates with international visas appears to be an important factor contributing to enrolment growth. According to University figures, international students accounted for about 10% of communication undergraduates between 2004 and 2009, but then rose sharply to 13% in Spring 2010 and nearly 17% in Spring 2011. According to the Self-Report, that figure is now about 22%, and has already raised significant issues for instruction and advising, including language, culture, and student life issues.

In addition to the undergraduate population, the School enrolls over 80 graduate students at all stages of progress, with a fairly high ratio of Ph.D. students to M.A. students (54 of 83.5, or over two-thirds, in University figures from 2010). To some extent the large

population of doctoral students may be the product of increasing time to degree rates, which, according to the Self-Study Report, averaged nearly 18 “active” (registered) semesters, or six years, during the present review period, a figure which does not include terms when students are on leave or working independently. In interviews, doctoral students attributed time to degree problems to their large teaching loads; most financial support for doctoral students takes the form of temporary employment as teaching assistants, sessional or limited-term instructors, who staff the School’s own undergraduate courses.

Currently the School has a faculty complement of 24.5 FTE, up from 21.5 in 2010. In 2009-10, the faculty-student ratio in the School was 1:48.2, among the highest in the University, compared to an average of 1:29.8 for SFU as a whole and 1:36.1 for FCAT. Figures from the School’s Self-Study indicate that the ratio improved modestly, to 1:43.8 in 2010-11 (about a 10% decrease), which may be attributable in part to two new tenure-track faculty hires. It remains the highest in FCAT. Moreover, the decline was still less than a University-wide drop of nearly 15%, to 1:26, during the same period.

In an attempt to address the growing enrolment problems, the School established a new Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) during the current review period. It was charged with finding ways to rethink and restructure the curriculum to bring it into line with the School’s resources. In June 2010 the UCC conducted a faculty curriculum retreat and issued a report with preliminary recommendations for taking constructive steps toward goals identified in the retreat. These included the streamlining and re-focusing of the number and content of courses; reducing enrolments by raising standards for admission to the major; and updating course information online to make it conform to actual syllabi and course content.

During our visit, this report was consistently hailed as a turning point by faculty, staff and graduate students. Unfortunately, however, more recent progress reports from the UCC and our conversations during the visit indicate that action on the 2010 recommendations has been slow in coming. As of January 2012, titles and/or descriptions of 13 courses (out of a total catalog of roughly 75 undergraduate-numbered courses, not including special topics courses) have been revised and posted on the university Calendar. Proposed changes to 14 other courses have either been rejected outright or returned to faculty subcommittees for further discussion. Meanwhile, as noted in Appendix B of the UCC report, the School offers more courses than any of its comparison programs in North America, and maintains a larger catalog of courses than its rivals. (Even the School’s Self-Study Report describes the undergraduate curriculum as “expansive.”)

One existing course (CMNS 200) – which, perhaps ironically, was among the most popular with students because of its focus on effective communication skills -- has been eliminated on the grounds that faculty are unavailable to teach it. A proposal for an FCAT-wide introductory course on new media, informally dubbed “Tech One,” which would have integrated theory, design, and digital media competencies, was rejected by Communication faculty because of its focus on technology rather than on social science research. In December 2011 faculty participating in the three major areas of the

undergraduate curriculum (political economy and policy, media and culture, and technology and society) met to discuss curriculum content and structure for each area; one group (technology and society) drafted a new area description. As noted above, undergraduate enrolment has continued to increase since the report was issued.

In sum, despite the sense of urgency about ballooning undergraduate enrolment expressed by virtually everyone during our visit, there seems to have been little substantial progress since the last review to put measures in place that might begin to remedy the situation. Instead, faculty and staff seem to be nearly overwhelmed just dealing with the demands of the existing program. The complexities of setting the course schedule and faculty teaching assignments have been largely delegated to administrative staff, who understandably tend to replicate the established schedule year after year, or as one member put it, “pretty much hit the repeat button.” A relatively large proportion of all CMNS courses (one interviewee estimated 25%) are cross-listed between the undergraduate and graduate programs, so that they do “double duty” with scarce resources. But cross-listing has also led to a lack of a dedicated core curriculum for the Ph.D. and an unfortunate situation for graduate students who sit in the same classrooms with undergraduates who are their pupils in other courses.

Faculty, staff and students offered various anecdotal explanations for this seemingly intractable situation. Some cited large and unreasonable enrolment expectations from university administrators, who are thought to see the undergraduate Communication program as a source of revenue generation. (In fact, administrators confirmed that the School’s budget is “revenue-driven,” with student fees a key component.) As one faculty member put it, “The University thinks of us as a ‘bums-in-seats’ program.” Another said that the administration would often “open the floodgates,” creating last-minute sections for popular courses and unanticipated staffing shortages, while prohibiting the School from setting its own enrolment levels. A few cited increasing pressures from the University to enrol a greater proportion of international students, who are more likely than domestic students to meet the School’s admission requirements, pay considerably more than the rate of domestic undergraduate tuition, but also require more remedial instruction and advising support. Some graduate students attributed the slow pace of change to resistant faculty, saying that there was “little traction” among faculty on the undergraduate proposals after the 2010 retreat.

In our own exploration of the issue, we found what appear to be common attitudes within the School toward different modes of knowledge creation and learning which may also act as barriers to change. Although “hands-on” courses and production are described on the School’s website as major features of study at SFU, a number of faculty tended to cast research/scholarship and creative work/practice (e.g., media production, digital technology design and use, community engagement and activism) as opposing or even antithetical pursuits. The first was intellectually valorized and privileged, while the second was often dismissed as secondary or even anti-intellectual. Several faculty specifically excluded any suggestion that the program should increase its focus on “media practice” in the core curriculum, contending that such courses dilute the School’s primary

focus on theory and research, and that skills courses are better handled by local colleges or postgraduate certificate programs.

A second, and related, attitude among many of those we spoke with is that research and teaching are competing activities in a zero-sum relationship: effort directed toward teaching is seen as taking time and effort away from more prestigious and rewarding research activities, and vice-versa. This view has had a clear influence on the curriculum. Many senior faculty with active research projects or administrative responsibilities receive substantial, and perennial, teaching releases. Some are either unwilling or unprepared to teach introductory undergraduate classes and instead concentrate their teaching efforts on small, specialized upper-division courses and graduate seminars. Although the UCC Report notes that the School “can offer students exposure to the work of advanced researchers and leading experts in many areas of Communication Studies,” it also concedes that with full time (tenure-stream) faculty teaching just 16% of the School’s courses in 2009, “Students have limited contact with full time faculty, especially at the lower levels.”

Responsibility for the largest introductory and required courses has largely been shifted to junior and recently tenured faculty, especially to sessional and limited-term instructors drawn from the ranks of the School’s own doctoral graduates and graduate students. Statistics compiled for the 2010 UCC report<sup>1</sup> bear this out. They suggest that between 2004-05 and 2009-10 the number of lower-level undergraduate courses taught by sessionals roughly doubled, while the number taught by full-time faculty fell, with the steepest change occurring after 2007. Although the differences were not as pronounced for upper-division courses, the trend was broadly similar; by 2009-10 (the most recent data available), sessional instructors were teaching substantially more undergraduate courses overall than full-time faculty. This redistribution trend seems to be strongly supported by the tenure-stream faculty: the UCC Report even floated a suggestion that the School consider creating a new, teaching-only tier of full-time faculty lecturers so that senior researchers might continue to be sheltered from extensive undergraduate teaching responsibilities. Indeed, one interviewee thought it unlikely that senior faculty who are already unwilling to teach lower division courses could be “rehabilitated,” i.e., persuaded to teach such courses in the future.

We offer the following recommendations to address enrolment and curriculum issues.

**1) Increase the number of full-time faculty in the School of Communication.**

We recognize the attraction and energy of a Communication program and the reputation that Communication has in sustaining student interest. It is widely understood as a cutting-edge field, a liberal arts alternative, and a flexible major for students whose interests are in formation and whose ambitions lead them to currently popular professions

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<sup>1</sup> Three graphs using the same titles and data labels appear in both Appendices B and D of the 2010 UCC report (*200-level Course Teaching Distribution*, *Lower-level Course Teaching Distribution*, and *Upper-level Course Teaching Distribution*). Although they show the same basic trends, there is some inconsistency in the data between the versions presented in each Appendix. Therefore only the trends are discussed here.

and pursuits. It is one of the few disciplines in the liberal arts and social sciences experiencing growth in relevant academic and non-academic fields. One can easily understand the demand for undergraduate and graduate programs in the field. However, if the administration of the university chooses to continue to permit this growth then it must increase the faculty complement in the School or suffer the erosion of program quality at all levels. At the very least, it needs to add two new full-time positions to the School with this net increase to the faculty complement in place by the start of the 2015 academic year. The failure to provide sufficient faculty will continue to exacerbate a series of problems. Undergraduate over-enrolment relative to faculty resources inflates class size; dramatically reduces faculty/student contact; limits essential, labor-intensive forms of instruction and evaluation that faculty, students, and University leaders value; and entrenches a work environment of overextension and precarity for students, faculty, staff, and advisors. Recognizing the pressures on the University from reduced provincial and institutional budgets, we do not make this recommendation lightly. The School faces a clear threat to its well-earned reputation brought about by enrolments spiraling out of control. We also recognize that several steps in addition to enhanced resources must be taken to address the curriculum and enrolment challenges it faces.

## **2) Prepare students for life after SFU, whether professional or academic.**

Understandably, anxious students facing an uncertain postgraduate job market tend to demand instruction that centers on simple skills training rather than critical engagement with important ideas and debates, the latter of which has been SFU's traditional *forte*. But addressing such learning needs need not mean funneling scarce resources into expensive "hands on" media production courses and tracks. The School's historical commitment to progressive values – critical thinking, political and economic equity, social justice, community engagement – provides an ideal scaffolding for the integration of theory, research, and critical scholarship with pedagogies that require students to take action and use their knowledge to advance these values in the communities they care about: in short, **teaching for *praxis***.

In addition to rigorous critique and written communication skills, a short list of relevant competencies in a *praxis*-centered curriculum might include media analysis (the mastery and application of critical literacies, e.g., in effective alternative message design), public presentation and advocacy across media platforms, negotiation and group communication skills, risk and conflict intervention, critical technology assessment, advanced search and information/content evaluation, policy scenario building, critical data visualization, and so on.<sup>2</sup> Few of these would necessarily entail major capital investment, but certainly community organizations, government agencies, cultural institutions, trade unions, and private-sector firms who value these competencies in SFU's Communication graduates could be approached to underwrite scholarships, intensive workshops, specially-equipped classrooms, and so on to support *praxis*-driven teaching.

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<sup>2</sup> The expansion of critical media literacies and pedagogies is the focus of several major communication-based research programs. See, for example, the *Learning Through Digital Media* project at the New School in New York City, headed by Trebor Scholz (<http://www.learningthroughdigitalmedia.net/>) and the *New Media Literacies Project* at the University of Southern California, headed by Henry Jenkins (<http://dmlcentral.net/resources/3756>).

It is important to point out that the seeds of this approach already exist within the School and FCAT. The Minor in Dialogue, for example, could be a point of departure for teaching and learning about negotiation, intervention, and group process. The co-op program, which by all accounts is extraordinarily effective, has a strong record of mentorship and engaging students in the community during their studies and in subsequent postgraduate placements. A closer integration of co-op into the curriculum, including more required student involvement and granting course credit for co-op activities, would go a long way toward cultivating the spirit of *praxis* in teaching and learning in the School. In addition, relevant integrated (theory-action) pedagogies certainly already exist within FCAT, for example in art and design courses. The School would benefit from closer collaboration with its sister units to develop innovative, cross-cutting pedagogies.

**3) The criteria for evaluating program success should shift from an emphasis on quantity and “throughput” and toward a primary focus on excellence in all aspects and modes of teaching and learning, to achieve an enrolment level commensurate with major requirements and available resources.** The popularity of an academic program is not always a good indicator of its intellectual merit or predictors of student achievement or success. This is especially true for fields like communication, whose association with popular media culture may attract generalist students or those seeking alternatives to more rigid disciplines like business or psychology. A reliance on capitation as the principal measure of program strength, and the concomitant idea that any single academic program can offer “something for everyone,” only encourages inflated enrolments, the accretion of outdated courses and content, and a reluctance to prune courses or concentrations as necessary to keep up with changes in the field and (more critically) faculty expertise. Any faculty must decide what types of graduates they want to produce, in specific terms of knowledge, values, attitudes and practical skills; then they must design coherent, uncluttered, non-redundant curricula and pedagogies that make those types of learning possible. A shift from quantity to quality will necessarily entail considerable effort and commitment from every active member of the faculty. Once established, however, a focus on excellence will transform the academic and research climate of the School and provide ample justification for maintaining enrolments at a level more in keeping with full-time faculty workload.

**4) Clear, consistent, long-term measures of program performance and student outcomes should be instituted to help manage enrolment over time.** The School (or university administration, as appropriate) should begin to capture more types of information that enable them to understand and manage demand for its academic programs. At a minimum, the School should collect its own data on student placements (employment or postgraduate academic work), if such data are not provided by the University. Presently only the co-op program has compiled consistent placement data for its undergraduate participants. As another example, we received no separate data documenting the figure of 2-3% of undergraduates continuing to graduate study that was cited by several members of the faculty.

Other useful measures might include annual exit surveys or focus groups of all graduates to learn more about their experiences in the School and their expectations for the future; regular, required reporting of graduate student conference presentations, publications, special awards, or other achievements;<sup>3</sup> and frequent reports from advisors (minimum once per year, preferably each semester) on their students' degree progress, particularly at the graduate level, to help maintain a consistent and supportive sense of "press" toward completion.

Once obtained, it is also crucial that relevant data be used to justify and make appropriate programmatic decisions. For example, the Self-Study Report says that approximately 50% of the School's doctoral graduates since 2004 have obtained positions as tenure-stream faculty at other institutions, as post-doctoral scholars and researchers, as temporary instructors (many within the School itself), or in other capacities in non-academic research organizations. It seems reasonable to ask whether any social science-based Ph.D. program able to place just half of its graduates in academic or related positions should consider adjusting enrolment to reflect the real market for its graduates.

**5) The undergraduate Honours program should be renewed and expanded as the exemplar of undergraduate education and achievement in communication studies at SFU.** An Honours degree is an important distinction that gives recipients a clear advantage in their future endeavors. Honours students should be prominently recognized within the School and promoted as part of the School's public profile (see Outreach and Visibility, below). For a program as research-centered as Communication at SFU, there seem to be relatively few opportunities in the current curriculum for bright, motivated undergraduates to participate meaningfully in rigorous research projects or in-depth scholarship under close tenure-track faculty mentorship. The Honours program is the logical avenue for such mentorship and to involve the most highly qualified undergraduates in research and scholarship. However, as noted previously less than 1% of Communication undergraduates are Honours majors. Eligible students may be discouraged by the fact that many of the School's most distinguished faculty appear to be reluctant to supervise Honours students, due to the workload involved. As a result, the Honours program was recently converted from faculty supervision and directed study to a course-based format supervised mainly by temporary instructors. In our view, these are steps in the wrong direction. To put the Honours program at the center of undergraduate study in the School, it is also crucial that Honours advising and mentorship be recognized and rewarded as an expected and valued part of faculty effort.

**6) The School should implement a consistently high and competitive GPA requirement for admission to the major.** As the UCC Report rightly observed, the establishment of higher entrance standards is one of the quickest and most effective ways to manage enrolment at the undergraduate level, and is clearly suited to the School's expectation that students master theory and research. A higher GPA requirement and enrolment cap were major recommendations in the previous review, but as noted

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<sup>3</sup> The list of student publications and presentations included in the Self-Study Report was an excellent example, although the Report noted that it was based on a one-time survey with a 25% student response rate.

previously raising the GPA to 2.5 has not significantly affected the continued rise in enrolment. Thus a new GPA requirement (set at a high enough level to cap enrolment effectively at a target number) is still needed. If necessary, it could be phased in over several years in order to have time to shift student expectations and give aspiring applicants time to meet the new requirements. But in our view new, more rigorous standards are long overdue, and should be featured and promoted in the School's public communications. Not only would such a move help regulate enrolments; it would also make the major *more* attractive and increase its cachet among the most talented students, draw them from a wider range of other fields, and create a larger pool of students eligible for Honours. In short, the program should move toward new standards and expectations that will pay off in the form of superb students and higher visibility for the School's programs and graduates within and beyond SFU.

**7) Research and teaching (especially undergraduate teaching, given its sheer presence in the School) must be resituated together as essential and expected aspects of workload for all tenure-track faculty, from the most recent hires to the most senior professors and CRCs.** The dual demands of research and teaching are the perennial challenge and conundrum of academic workload. But in a time of ever greater resource cutbacks, the balance – indeed, the symbiotic relationship – between research and teaching must be reassessed realistically so that teaching duties are distributed equitably, without any derogation of teaching as a secondary or low-reward activity. Even if it did not contrast with the School's progressive, social equity values, and even if budget were suddenly available to hire a new rank of full-time lecturers, the creation of a two-class system would not seem to be the best solution to a situation in which students already have little opportunity for engagement with the most prominent, senior members of School faculty.

Top communication programs in North America commonly require that all faculty members teach courses at all curricular levels (lower and upper undergraduate, Master's, Ph.D.) on a regular two- to three-year cycle, for example, with releases being the case-by-case exception rather than long-term rule for the most senior faculty. Moves in this direction would do a great deal to ameliorate the chronic problems of equitable teaching load, over-reliance on graduate students and recent graduates as sessional and limited-term instructors, shortage of seats in undergraduate courses, and undergraduate and graduate time to degree problems.

**8) Improve the management of graduate enrolments.**

The School enrolls over 80 graduate students at all stages of progress, with a fairly high ratio of PhD students to M.A. students (54 of 83.5, or over two-thirds, in University figures from 2010). This is partly the product of increasing time to degree rates for PhD students, which according to the Self-Study Report averaged nearly 18 “active” (registered) semesters, or six years, during the present review period, not including terms when students are on leave or working independently. The School currently admits between 17 and 25 new graduate students each year, averaging about 20 per year. Absent new resource commitments, the School should consider lowering its intake of graduate

students, particularly at the doctoral level. In addition, the School should also consider taking more explicit steps to advance a course-only M.A. program.

### **Technology Infrastructure and Integration**

Any leading communication program today must use media and information technologies effectively across all aspects of its operations – research, teaching, community outreach, creative work, administrative duties, student services and recruitment, and so on. The School is no exception. However, as with many programs dealing with reduced resources, technology needs may become a low priority when basic teaching, research and personnel demands seem much more urgent.

But up-to-date infrastructure is not merely a dispensable luxury or a set of “toys” to play with. Information and communication technology is an inextricable element of the academic enterprise: it is a basic tool of scholarship and research, a platform for instruction, a medium for representing the academy’s interests and activities to wider publics, for situating programs, faculty and students relative to their peers, and not least, an important object of study in itself – especially within the communication discipline.

We found that new media and information technologies are central research and creative interests for many of the School’s faculty; some employ digital and web-based resources in their teaching. Students use computers and myriad other digital devices and services as a matter of course in their studies and everyday lives. The School’s technical staff seem to be doing their best to provide what services and support they can given the basic, and sometimes dated, systems and software capabilities already in place. Nonetheless, our sense is that technology is often considered to be a secondary concern or a sideline to the “real” work of the School -- a view which deserves a thorough reappraisal. We have a few main suggestions along these lines.

**1) Digital media and internet-based technology should be more thoroughly integrated into the curriculum, both as an object of study/critical analysis, and as a mode of instruction and learning.** This may seem particularly pertinent for the graduate and undergraduate Technology and Society concentrations, but the use and analysis of technology is relevant in other areas as well. We were surprised to find how many courses at SFU, including many core courses in the School, are still designed around paper syllabi and photocopied course readers that students are required to purchase. This familiar form of course delivery may inadvertently, and unnecessarily, be shifting costs to students for materials that SFU already licenses and thus should be available to them online at little or no charge. In addition, course management systems such as Moodle (already available at SFU) or Blackboard can provide instructors with helpful tools for evaluation and communicating with students that can simplify course oversight and save time, especially for very large classes and those that are taught frequently.

Of course, not all course content or instructional goals necessarily call for the same types of technology (or any technology at all, e.g., a small advanced seminar). Not all instructors (or students) are likely to be sophisticated users at the outset, and “learning curves” can be strong disincentives to trying new methods. (Instructors at all levels may

want to take advantage of the professional advice and support regarding instructional technology available from SFU's Teaching & Learning Centre, which was praised during our visit). But some of the difficult teaching workload issues cited by faculty during our visit might be ameliorated by the thoughtful application of technological support that is already available.

We also want to be clear that we are *not* suggesting that the School embark on a major distance-learning scheme. Properly designed and implemented, distance-learning programs can produce strong student learning outcomes. But such programs are extraordinarily capital- and time-intensive to develop, and require extensive, regular updating on a fairly short cycle to stay current and ensure that learning is at least comparable to "live" instruction. At present, the School does not have the resources to devote to such a substantial project, but it might benefit by continuing to provide some distance education course instruction. Distance education aside, more could be done to enrich existing instruction with available technology infrastructure and budget.

**2) The School's web presence needs an update.** A website is the primary entrée for anyone who wants to know about an academic program and its accomplishments, spirit and sensibility (see also the section on Visibility, below). While the School's web pages seem to be consistent with the overall look and feel of SFU's other sites and graphic standards, and generally are simple and easy to read, the architecture of the site is not intuitive and can be difficult to navigate without resorting to the browser "back button." The site also doesn't reveal where the School "resides" within SFU. (Curiously, there is no link to FCAT on the School's home page!) Many pages are no more than long text blocks or bullet lists that must be scrolled or clicked through serially to find relevant information, and the priority and interrelatedness of topics, or the path of links the visitor has already followed, is not always indicated. Overall, the site feels somewhat static, more like a catalog than the essential, first-choice resource for everything and anything to do with the School, its people, and its activities.

For example, the caption below the heading photo on the home page includes a two-line list of the School's specialization areas, separated from one another by vertical lines (the "pipe" character, or |). Ordinarily, pipe separators indicate that the items are live links; however, none of the specialization labels actually links to anything. Or: visitors to the home page who click on the featured "Undergraduate" link is directed to a page headed by a long list of bullet-point links (and in alphabetical order, suggesting that they all have the same level of importance) for topics that differ widely in scope: Undergraduate Orientation, Course Outlines, Checklists & Forms, and Sick Notes are all given the same emphasis. The bullet list on the "Graduate" page is a bit more consistent, but in either case the visitor who clicks on a bulleted link and arrives at a third-level page must back up to the prior page (through the browser) to go to any other topic on the original list.

Obviously, these are textbook web design problems. "Dead end" links tend to proliferate as new information and pages are appended to an existing site. Individual web pages are often treated as though they are simply print documents on a screen rather than a dynamic

set of interlinking, multimedia resources in themselves that should encourage visitors to explore and browse. These and other problems can be addressed by the School's web master, possibly in consultation with a website designer or information architect from the artists and designers inside FCAT or from Vancouver's thriving creative community who can help reconfigure the site's underlying architecture and update the look and navigability of the site while remaining faithful to SFU's image standards. It is also important to remember that the School's uses of technology are key models for the ways that students learn about and use technology themselves.

### **Outreach and Visibility**

The School deserves much greater visibility in Vancouver and British Columbia, and across Canada and internationally: perhaps more than any other unit at SFU, it has the potential to embody the University's mission of "engaging the world." The School has a remarkable and distinguished history, as well as exciting new directions for the future, with new programs, new faculty, and a new organizational home within FCAT. All members of the School of Communication and others who support its continued success – students, faculty, staff, alumni, community partners, FCAT colleagues – should be enlisted to identify and tell the story of the School's accomplishments and strengths to a variety of audiences, in a variety of media. Clearly the School has many relevant activities and efforts already underway, but these should be brought together and built upon to raise the visibility of the School's mission and purpose. Telling the School's story is not only essential for its own institutional well-being; the "story" in many ways helps to define the academic and professional identities of the School's students, alumni, and faculty (perhaps especially new faculty drawn by its legacy of critical scholarship, engagement, and activism).

**1) The School must engage more actively with the large and accomplished family of SFU Communication graduates in Canada and throughout the world.** The School's alumni are one of its most important, yet largely untapped, resources for student mentorship, development advice and financial support. Alumni can also be a powerful voice for the School in its engagement with University administration and external audiences, and provide important external perspectives on School initiatives. The Committee was mildly surprised not to have an opportunity to meet with local alumni, whose views might have enriched our understanding of the School and its strengths. We would recommend that, at a minimum, the Director form and regularly meet with an informal group of local alumni to hear their views, ideally with student representatives present, to explore ways that active alumni might contribute to a range of activities within the School. In addition to such meetings, an even stronger approach would be to hire or assign a half-time (or more if possible) staff member to cultivate alumni relations and opportunities for alumni involvement in School activities (this individual might also serve as an overall public communications officer for the School). An investment in alumni relations could produce a large and important return, particularly in a time of increasingly scarce resources.

**2) Unite existing outreach efforts and public events into a compelling, ongoing calendar of activities and opportunities for interaction and engagement within**

FCAT, across SFU, and in the world beyond. During our site visit we were struck by the range of public activities in which the School's members participate, and which could be included as part of a larger overall program of public engagement. A short list would include:

- Media Democracy Day
- FCAT's annual research forum
- Undergraduate research forum
- Honours presentations
- Lecture series and guest speakers
- Community activism/outreach projects
- International initiatives/academic programs
- Faculty and student publications, presentations, recognitions
- Graduate student defenses
- Research center projects

**3) The School's unique and invaluable collections of scholarly and media materials should be organized, preserved, and made accessible (digitally where appropriate) to researchers and the public throughout the world, and not least, prominently associated with the School.** During our visit, we were introduced to several collections that would seem particularly appropriate for such efforts; it is likely there are many more:

- The Dallas Smythe archive
- Barry Truax's collection of soundscape audio recordings
- Research collections of alternative/underground media
- Publicity materials for Media Democracy Day events

We were impressed by the proactive, enthusiastic attitude of the SFU library staff members we met, and their desire to help the School manage its collections. The library already offers many types of assistance and services to the School's students, faculty, and staff. However, we would urge the School to enter into an even more active partnership with the library to insure that the School's unique resources and collections are not only properly managed and preserved, but also represent the School's teaching and research to global audiences.

### **School Climate**

Some of the threats of over-enrolment that befall departments and schools of Communication—such as inattention to curriculum development in the face of urgent delivery demands—are beginning to be addressed at SFU. The work of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee marks an impressive step in the right direction, particularly in initiating an accountability system evident in the timeline/checklist document, which tracks initiatives undertaken, completed, and to be addressed. Both the Undergraduate and Graduate committees, moreover, involve individuals across faculty generations, and are possessed of an *esprit de corps* that is essential to focus, consensus-building, and follow-through. Overall, we discovered a sense of solidarity and of renewed possibility in the school. We also discovered, however, certain collective dispositions that

could threaten future development, and we would like to comment especially on a refrain of malaise, frustration, and complaint, especially from the precincts of more senior faculty, a concern across rank about gender enfranchisement, and the overall sense of delicacy that prevails amid optimism about the future of the School.

Part of the optimism comes from general consensus that FCAT is a strong new home, with better fit, better recognition, and stronger, more creative and suitable leadership than had existed in Applied Sciences. The move to the new building, moreover, has been a significant positive development. These are deep resources, but they can be squandered by inattention to collective mood.

*Senior faculty malaise:* We were surprised and concerned to learn of a sense of disconnection from several of the most senior colleagues in CMNS, people who are working on their own projects in their own spaces with a sense of disenfranchisement or detachment from the core work of the school. While we recognize changeable cycles and contradictory pressures in the life of any institution, we also believe that it is critical for senior faculty members to contribute to all areas of CMNS operation. The successful operation of the school requires the accountability of all faculty members—especially the most senior—to all of these activities, even if some take a leadership role and others do not.

**1) All senior faculty, including those with research-intensive appointments, should be expected to teach at the lower division of the undergraduate curriculum.**

Admittedly, generational distance from new technologies makes this difficult, but that means it is time to re-skill, not withdraw, and it is clear that SFU has support from its Teaching and Learning Center. Senior faculty with grant-seeking responsibilities should be producing grant proposals. Senior faculty with area expertise to offer should be offering it to undergraduate and graduate students; that expertise should not be underutilized. If using it requires more co-operative forms of faculty participation to build trust, then faculty can be held accountable to that. Institutional life is no less complicated, in human terms, than other forms, but it is better regulated by basic expectations of professionalism and accountability. We encourage involvement from the appropriate human resources office to raise these questions and to steer this discussion with senior colleagues, perhaps in conjunction with the Director of the School. A laissez-faire or nothing-can-be-done disposition will mean that precious (and scarce) resources are underused and that malaise will reproduce itself and undermine existing energy for change. Senior faculty must offer leadership, and are not exempt from everyday life or decision-making in School.

*Gender enfranchisement:* Several women and some men expressed concerns about the difficulties women face in trying to bring about gender equality in the School. Specifically, there were concerns that women face greater challenges in taking leadership roles in the School and are called on to shoulder a disproportionate share of the workload. Most of these references were to historical patterns in the School that were in the process of changing. It was recognized that women are now taking on greater leadership responsibilities. Nevertheless, feelings of exclusion persist and need to be addressed.

**2) We recommend the intervention of the Dean and the appropriate human resources office to assist with establishing standards of professional accountability and respect. Attention to governance agreements in decision-making is also essential for general enfranchisement and trust.**

*The fragility of progress:* Several faculty expressed concern about the fragility of the new positive culture in the School. Again, this is not surprising. Positive change usually seems fragile, and old antagonisms usually seem entrenched.

**3) In order to preserve the benefits of positive changes in the School, the Committee recommends the establishment of a clear set of guidelines for leadership review and succession. This applies primarily to the position of Director of the School but should also be considered for the other key leadership positions in the School.**

As communication scholars, we know that culture is real in its effects, and must be attended to, in order to make the best use of the School's creative, scholarly, human, economic, and reputational resources.

### **Planning**

The Committee was struck by the lack of institutionalized planning in the School. The consequences of no systematic near- and long-term assessment are evident throughout the program- in curriculum, enrolment, resource allocation, workload distribution, alumni engagement, relationship to the other units of FCAT, etc. Along with planning for leadership succession, these matters need careful consideration. To that end, we **recommend a faculty retreat or similar planning exercise to establish a strategic plan to address the short- and long-term needs of the School. At the very least this would address leadership succession, curriculum, enrolment, workload distribution, resource allocation, alumni engagement and relationship to FCAT.**

### **Conclusion**

The Committee is confident that the School of Communication can draw on its considerable strengths to meet the challenges it faces. Along with several internationally recognized scholars, the School has a creative collection of junior faculty, including promising new hires, and a committed staff of administrators, advisers, and technicians. The appointment of a new Director, the relocation to the Shrum Science Centre, and the move into a new Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology have given the School additional grounds for optimism. Moreover, the School has an excellent record of community engagement in Vancouver and across British Columbia. Building on an established commitment to international research and teaching, the School has initiated important new programs, including collaboration with the Communication University of China in Beijing. Alongside its large undergraduate and co-op program, the School has built a substantial graduate program with a strong cohort of doctoral students.

The School has a good foundation to take up a number of difficult challenges and turn them into opportunities to improve. The primary challenge is to address excessive and unsustainable enrolment growth. Expansion at all levels, but especially at the undergraduate level, threatens to undermine the quality of all of its programs. We recommend an immediate commitment to add two full-time positions to the faculty complement. Even if it were to receive such a commitment, the School needs to do much more to address enrolment and related curriculum issues. Specifically, the School would benefit from curriculum revisions that would give some emphasis to the professional dimension of communication. In addition, the School requires measures that track qualitative as well as quantitative performance and better assess long-term program performance. Moreover, the School needs to pay more attention to the undergraduate Honours program, establish a higher GPA for admission to the major, and implement enrolment targets commensurate with the School's commitment to excellence in the undergraduate and graduate programs. The School also needs a better balance between research and teaching. In particular, teaching, like research, needs to be recognized as the responsibility of all faculty at all levels of the program. Furthermore, the School needs to improve its use of technology, including in management of the program and in how it presents the School to students and to its wider community. The School would also benefit by addressing the malaise among senior faculty, the perception of gender exclusion, and fears about its ability to sustain recent progress. Finally the School needs to do a better job of planning for the future by institutionalizing a planning process.

Addressing these requirements is admittedly a major task. But it is important for the School to recognize that no one is expecting it to make changes on its own. The School has extensive resources to draw on within SFU and the wider Vancouver community. We strongly urge the School to reach out to FCAT and its sister departments and the Dean, to the administration, including Human Resources, to its many alumni, to the community organizations faculty and students work with, to the library, to instructional services, and so on.

Moreover, no one is expecting the School to bring about these recommended changes all at once. To begin the process of designing its future, the School should organize a planning retreat to set priorities and allocate tasks to faculty sub-groups. Recognizing the need for change is a starting point, but planning for how to bring it about is equally essential. However this is done, we are confident that the School of Communication has the imagination and creativity to carry it out successfully.

## EXTERNAL REVIEW – ACTION PLAN

<b>Section 1 – To be completed by the Responsible Unit Person e.g. Chair or Director</b>			
Unit under review  .....Communication.....	Date of Review Site visit Feb. 22-24 2012	Responsible Unit person, Alison Beale	Faculty Dean Cheryl Geisler
<p><b>Note:</b> It is <b>not</b> expected that every recommendation made by the Review Team be covered by this Action Plan. The major thrusts of the Report should be identified and some consolidation of the recommendations may be possible while other recommendations of lesser importance may be excluded.</p> <p>Should an additional response from be warranted it should be attached as a separate document.</p>			
<b>1. PROGRAMMING</b>			
<p><b>1.1 Action/s (description what is going to be done):</b></p> <p><b>1.1.1 Undergraduate:</b></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">a) Enrollments: Recommendations 3 and 4 (page 11) of the Report concern enrollments in the undergraduate program. The School agrees that no further growth in undergraduate enrollment should be planned and is actively pursuing a strategy to limit enrollments to present levels (semester 1121, Spring 2012), concurrent with efforts to maximize enrollments within scheduled courses, attract and retain excellent students, and improve the School’s faculty/student ratio. Expansion of the School’s offerings in the NOW program to a full Major (as one of four SFU departments participating in this 2012 initiative) and further course development in the CODE program, also underway, will also enhance course access while maximizing resources and accessibility.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">b) Curriculum review: The School will complete in 2012-13 the curriculum review begun in 2011. The review focuses on reducing course overlaps, simplifying prerequisite chains, updating course content and adding or deleting courses to reflect faculty interest and changes in the field. Through working meetings of faculty at all ranks teaching in the three focus areas of the School progress has been made toward these goals, contributing to the focus and emphasis on “quality over quantity” recommended by the reviewers’ report ( item 3, p.11). This curriculum review is complemented by a project initiated in Spring 2012 with the assistance of IRP to improve course scheduling in Communication to identify and reduce bottlenecks in course access for majors, and facilitate more effective and predictable course scheduling year over year and semester to semester.</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">c) Teaching for for <i>praxis</i> (Recommendation 2 page 10) . The School will improve the visibility of the many courses we offer across the curriculum (a majority) in which experiential learning, applied learning, and community-based learning are featured. This goal will be achieved a) by a review of teaching methods in our courses (per course outlines) followed by a revision of calendar, website and recruitment literature and b) by participation of individual faculty and faculty teams in pedagogical innovation facilitated by Teaching and Learning and by FCAT. We will collaborate with the Co-Op program and with other FCAT schools to provide a degree of</p>			

professional training, work to enhance the accessibility of internet-based technology training (p.14) in courses within the limits of our lab infrastructure, and consider collaborating with external partners such as BCIT to provide further options for our students, such as certificate programs.

**1.1.2 Graduate Programs:**

Through its admissions process in 2013 the Graduate Program in the School of Communication will address in the short term the temporary imbalance of MA to PhD students (Recommendation 8,p.13). The program will also expand mentoring and professional development opportunities for doctoral candidates. We will continue to work with our Director of Advancement to improve student funding from non-TA sources (one major scholarship- B.C. Egg Marketing Board has been added since the External Review report was received.) The double Master's degree in Global Communication with the Communication University of China in development since 2010 was approved by Senate and Board of Governors in July 2012 and the admission process begins in December 2012 for the first cohort for September 2013. Following the initiation of this degree the School will also begin to consider offering a course-based MA degree. The School's recruitment, fundraising and general information will feature more details about our successful MA and PhD graduates, and the School will also increase efforts to track alumni and take advantage of its global community of graduates. Alumni profiles are scheduled to be developed by current students as part of the preparations for our 2013 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year and associated promotion and events and a database of graduates will be developed from 2013 building on this initiative.

**1.2 Resource implications (if any):**

SFU/CUC double M.A. degree resource commitments are outlined in the degree proposal.

**1.3 Expected completion date/s:**

Undergrad: Enrollments: fall 2012 and ongoing

Curriculum review: fall/spring 2012-13

Experiential and professional training- initiate assessment of its presence in current curriculum 2012-13

Graduate: MA/PhD proportion through 2013 intake

PhD professional dev't 2012-13 academic year

Funding (scholarships) enhance through advancement and faculty RA positions- continuing

CUC Double Masters first admissions for fall 2013

Course-based MA- to be considered by Graduate Studies committee from 2013

## **c) RESEARCH**

### **2.1 Action/s (what is going to be done):**

The External Review report provided a *very positive* assessment of our strengths, reputation and innovation outlined on page 3 of the Report. Regarding research, the report was chiefly concerned with how faculty can balance the demands of research, teaching and service. The School agrees with the reviewers that we could provide more opportunities for undergraduates to participate in faculty-led research, for example by taking advantage of undergraduate RA funding programs.

In order to manage the resource demands of a research-intensive school we will continue to require faculty at all ranks to balance research with teaching and service. In addition we will seek an additional staff support position for the management of research budgets and reporting, create an annual review process of the assignment of lab space and other research infrastructure, encourage and reward mentoring of junior by senior faculty, and promote awareness of research activity through colloquia and School publicity. Permanent records of highlights of research and creation in the School, and of unique research resources (publications, recorded interviews, etc.) will be achieved in collaboration with the Library through the digitization of archived materials to begin summer 2012. We note that this work has already begun with respect to the World Soundscape Project, an initiative of the School.

### **2.2 Resource implications ((if any):**

Staff support for research budget management may be shared within FCAT. Funding for digital archiving available through the SFU library and archives will be sought in collaboration with our Librarian Sylvia Roberts.

### **2.3 Expected completion date/s:**

## **d) ADMINISTRATION**

**3.1 Action/s(what is going to be done) :**

**The School will complete its review of staff job descriptions/needs and workload, with particular attention to technical staff and their role in enhancing the School website for internal functions as well as external publicity and recruitment.**

**We will complete and implement a 2-year course teaching plan from Sept. 2012.**

**We will revise advisory committee structure in the School to add permanent and/or ad-hoc committees on such areas as space planning and technology review as part of a review of governance and the School governance document to be completed in the 2012-13 academic year.**

**3.2 Resource implications(if any):**

**3.3 Expected completion date/s:**

**As above.**

**e) Working Environment**

**4.1 Action/s(what is going to be done) :**

**In fall 2012 we will:**

**- hold a meeting of continuing Faculty to review the balance of service, teaching and research and other issues of concern to this group. Follow-up action will be determined at this meeting.**

**- hold a retreat/meeting for Staff regarding professional development, job descriptions, and staff renewal**

**A special meeting or meetings of members of the School Meeting will address the directorship and faculty renewal (fall/spring 2012-13).**

**4.2 Resource implications(if any):**

**4.3 Expected completion date/s:**

**As above**

f) ..... <b>Faculty complement</b> ..... (OTHER)	
5.1 <b>Action/s:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will present requests for the two faculty appointments recommended by our reviewers, aligned with the forthcoming (fall 2012) strategic plan and university priorities.</li> </ul>
5.2 <b>Resource implications(if any):</b>	
5.3 <b>Expected completion date/s:</b>	

The above action plan has been considered by the Unit under review and has been discussed and agreed to by the Dean.

<p>Unit Leader (signed)</p>  <p>Name Allison Beale Title.....Director.....</p>	<p>Date</p> <p>Aug. 20, 2012</p> <p>.....</p>
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**Section 2 - Dean's comments and endorsement of the Action Plan :**

I support the School's efforts to revise its undergraduate curriculum and keep enrolments flat over the next few years. The recent course access study will provide good input to the school's efforts to reduce bottleneck for majors. To address students' interest in more practical courses, the school is also exploring curricular collaborations across the faculty, specifically with Publishing and Interactive Arts and Technology.

The school's development of a joint masters degree with the Communication University of China is an important initiative. Efforts to improve degree completion at the PhD level have already been underway and should address the imbalance between the PhD and MA.

I will work with the school to better understand its needs in research budget management. As funding levels increase, this will become more important.

Efforts to revise the governance structure of the school are starting and I support this effort. A review of the technical staff roles is also a good idea in light of the changes in technical support needs in the school.

I am sympathetic to the school's need for an increase in faculty and will try to support strategies for financing this in light of the new budget model, but this may take several years to accomplish.

Faculty Dean



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Date

August 20, 2012

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