SFU Academic Vision, Outcomes and VPA Goals for 2013

Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic, June 2009

SFU SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
THINKING OF THE WORLD

1. Introduction

Simon Fraser University has experienced considerable growth during the last decade. A new campus in Surrey and new buildings in Burnaby and Vancouver accommodate a larger student population. New residences and UniverCity have transformed the ambience of Burnaby Mountain. Hundreds of new faculty and staff positions have been created and hundreds more new faces have replaced retirees. New programs have been developed and Faculties have been reorganized. Research funding and output has increased dramatically and dozens of research chairs have been appointed. Surveys, external reviews and accreditation processes of various kinds suggest that we have a good reputation nationally and internationally.

As we move into the second decade of the 21st century the environment is changing. In BC the population of 18 to 24 year olds is stabilizing at a time when many new universities have been founded. We can expect a reduced rate of growth in the traditional student population and more interest in post-secondary education from mid-career students and new immigrants, who may have diverse educational goals. Confidence in the world economy has declined, as have returns from investments, and this will affect funding from governments and donors.

This slowdown in growth and funding provides us with an opportunity to think about the future of the University in two ways. First, we can revitalize SFU by reflecting on our collective purpose. How can we best meet the educational needs of our students? How does our research benefit the communities that support it? What can we do to make our work more effective? Second, we should consider how the University as an institution can become sustainable, not only financially, but in other ways, such as environmentally, ethically, and socially. Being distinctive is an important component of sustainability – what makes each of our programs outstanding? These two themes will direct the planning that we undertake over the next few years.

This is not to say that no growth will occur. We expect undergraduate and graduate student numbers to grow, and demand from international students will probably increase. There are also many opportunities to serve non-traditional students. All of these factors may lead to the development of new programs. We are also committed to completing programs that we have started, such as Health Sciences, Mechatronics and Environment, to building programs in the Woodward's building, and to doubling the student numbers in Surrey. Revenue-generating programs can also be developed.

In a time of funding restraint we will have difficult decisions to make. For many areas of the University the only opportunity for change will be through re-allocation of resources, and allocation will have to be based on the alignment of a unit's priorities with those of the University. For this reason, it is important that planning take place at all levels, and that broad discussion and consultation occur as priorities are set. Every academic and support unit on campus should be preparing to evaluate how it can improve its service to students, where it wishes to take its research, and the role it plays in the wider community.

Following a variety of consultations, the Vice-President Academic has developed a statement of vision, outcomes and goals for 2013. This document will guide the planning process in 2009 that will result in a strategic academic plan for 2010 to 2013. The document consists of three sections. The "Academic Vision" reflects the long-term goals of the University. "Outcomes"

describes some key characteristics of the University to which we wish to pay particular attention for the next few years; each academic unit will be expected to define a process for achieving these outcomes. Finally, the "VPA Goals" are objectives that the Vice-President Academic must support in order for academic units to implement their own plans.

Every academic and support unit on campus should be preparing to evaluate how it can improve its service to students, where it wishes to take its research, and the role it plays in the wider community. The planning process for academic units will be led by Faculty deans. Faculty plans will be integrated to create an overall plan for the University that will be released towards the end of the fall semester, 2009.

2. <u>Academic Vision</u>

The following activities make SFU a top international choice for students, staff and faculty, who believe that research and education are central to a healthy society:

- **Commitment to excellence in teaching, learning, research and community service in a wide spectrum of academic disciplines across our 8 Faculties, with a particular emphasis on multidiciplinarity and the ability to anticipate or respond to emerging areas of higher education demand.**

- **Supports scholarship as the creation, advancement, application, transmission and preservation of knowledge, and the stimulation of critical and independent thinking.**

- **Enables students to reach their goals and potential and become ethical, responsible and informed citizens.**

- **Employs effective, efficient, and innovative approaches to teaching, learning, research, service and administration.**

- **Creates an intellectually stimulating and culturally vibrant environment.**

- **Has a global perspective with a local orientation and is an active and highly valued partner in the social, cultural and economic life of the community.**

3. <u>Outcomes 2013</u>

- o **The University will facilitate admission, support and success for students of all ages.**
  - *We must ensure that people who have the ability to attend SFU have access, and we must assist and support all students including those who are having difficulty in meeting their full potential. Access to University should be possible for people at various stages of their lives and careers. All students should complete in a timely manner with the knowledge and skills expected of a world class graduate.*

- o **SFU respects and values diversity in scholarship; academic units define their own research and pedagogical strengths and plan accordingly.**
  - *The University values and supports diverse research strategies. Academic units will define the research fields for which they wish to be best known. This may include identification of new priorities as well as current strengths. Creating a research "identity" will assist in planning and decision-making, and should be reflected to some extent in the curriculum.*

- o **SFU faculty members will create a culture of critical inquiry and their transmission of research skills and research results will add value to each student's education.**
  - *Research is a fundamental activity of the University, and students at all stages of their education should understand the linkage between research and knowledge. Different kinds of research characterize different disciplines, and as students become more specialized we would expect their knowledge of a particular research field to deepen. Sustained contact with active researchers should be a characteristic of all degree programs and start at the earliest opportunity. Graduate students play a special role as they contribute to research, learn how to become better researchers, and assist in undergraduate education.*

- o **Students will know the learning purposes and opportunities for each program, can find straightforward information on program requirements, and can plan and complete their programmes in a timely way.**
  - *Academic units should define the outcomes of their programs in terms of disciplinary knowledge, relevance to the wider community, and broadly applicable skills. These outcomes should be planned into the curriculum. Navigation through degree requirements should be as simple as possible,*

and students should have the assurance that required courses will be available on a defined schedule

- o **Students will learn through a wide variety of pedagogies that expand the traditional classroom experience and extend learning into local, national and international communities. They will participate in a wide variety of experiences that develop long-term skills in learning, analysis and communication.**
  - *People learn through many different processes, and diverse processes foster a broader range of abilities. Although the details will vary by program, all academic units should offer opportunities for different learning methods and experiences, and these should be planned into the curriculum The University should support faculty members and graduate students who wish to develop specific teaching skills or implement new pedagogies.*

- o *SFU graduates will understand the importance of being ethical, responsible and informed citizens, through engaging in complex contemporary issues and examining questions from different perspectives.*
  - *Local, national and global problems of the contemporary world should be linked to curriculum whenever possible. Knowledge and understanding of many issues can be approached through a variety of disciplines, and academic units will seek opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teaching and research.*

- o *Academic units will make their teaching and research relevant to the broader community.*
  - *Ultimately we must justify what we do as learners, teachers and researchers by demonstrating its pertinence to the world beyond the University. The research that SFU faculty members undertake need not necessarily be 'applied research' but it should have value for society in general.*

4. VPA Goals

4.1 Continual and Innovative Curricular Review

4.1.1 Ensure that all programmes and courses offered are of the highest quality, remain current, and meet the demand of the students and society SFU serves.

4.1.2 Ensure that innovative pedagogy is employed to best suit the student needs, including the recognition of real world experiential learning and the appropriate use of technology in delivery.

Objectives to include;

- **Develop high level degree structure** – review credits, prerequisites, mix of learning experiences, WQB, lifelong learning opportunities.
- **Revise discipline curricula** – learning outcomes, learning methods, program structure, disciplinary content re global perspective and local orientation.
- **Review pedagogy** – on-line options, group work, experiential and service learning, research opportunities
- **Provide adequate infrastructure** – support and processes required to implement curricula.
- **Initiate new programming** - areas to include health, the environment and other identified program areas; support opportunities for new and interdisciplinary program development.

4.2 Student Experience & Success

4.2.1 Provide an outstanding student learning experience and support students to realize their full potential and academic objectives.

Objectives to include;

- **Support distinctive programs at each campus**
- **Improve academic support** (learning spaces, TAs etc)
- **Maintain faculty renewal**
- **Improve administrative services**

4.3 Academic Excellence

4.3.1 Recognize excellence in teaching at the graduate and undergraduate levels, excellence in research, and service contributions to our community by students, staff and faculty.

Objectives to include;

- Establish an award system to promote the recognition of excellence
- Consider and implement proposed recommendations from the Teaching & Learning Task Force
- Establish support mechanisims/structures to promote interdisciplinarity in teaching and research

4.4 Administrative Efficiency

4.4.1 Ensure business processes are streamlined, bureaucratic administrative loads are reduced and serve the users (students, faculty and staff) efficiently and effectively.

Objectives to include;

- Review administrative process & procedures
- Review academic policies and procedures
- Improve communication across all areas
- Reduce silo culture

4.5 Financial Sustainability

4.5.1 Ensure our resource levels are sufficient and well managed.

Objectives to include:

- Integrate planning, decision making and accountability at all levels
- Resource allocation based on strategic priorities
- Contain costs through effective position control
- Develop revenue opportunities
- Achieve enrollment targets

4.6 Community & Partnerships

4.6.1 Enhance and increase partnerships with local, national and international communities

Objectives to include:

- Engage with the community on important public debates
- Integrate teaching and research with real world community issues
- Increase partnerships with First Nations
- Develop strong relationships with Greater Vancouver
- Increase international partnerships

5. The Integration and Alignment of the Academic Vision, Outcomes and VPA Goals

The tables below indicate how the Outcomes support the Academic Vision and how the VPA Goals relate to the Outcomes expected.

	Excellence in Teaching Research & Service	Scholarship	Enable Student Success	Employ Effective Approaches	Stimulating Environment	Partner Community
Facilitate Student Success	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Create a Culture of Critical Inquiry	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Clarify Learning Purposes	✓		✓	✓		
Recognize a Variety of Learning Experiences	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop Informed & Ethical Citizens	✓	✓		✓		✓
Develop Research Priorities & Strengths	✓	✓				✓
Be Relevant to Community	✓		✓			✓

	VPA GOALS					
	Facilitate Curricular Review	Provide an outstanding Student Experience & Success	Recognise Academic Excellence	Ensure Administrative Efficiency	Ensure Financial Stability	Enhance Partnerships
Facilitate Student Success		✓		✓	✓	✓
Create a Culture of Critical Enquiry	✓	✓	✓			✓
Clarify Learning Purposes	✓	✓		✓		
Recognize a Variety of Learning Experiences	✓	✓	✓			✓
Develop Informed & Ethical Citizens		✓				✓
Develop Research Priorities & Strengths	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Be Relevant to Community		✓			✓	✓

Senate Guidelines for Academic Plans S.06-62

1. Each academic unit* shall prepare a three-year academic plan in the same year. Academic plans are intended to guide the operation and development of the academic unit and will be considered by the Dean and Vice President, Academic in making decisions on allocation of resources. Academic unit plans are to be completed by June 30 of the year in which three–year planning is undertaken.

   Departments, Schools, Programs. Parallel procedures will be used for plans of academic service units.

2. Each Faculty Dean will prepare a three-year academic plan on the same schedule. (For departmentalized Faculties these plans will utilize the three-year academic plans of academic units within that Faculty as a basis for planning). These plans are to be completed by the first Friday in October of the same year.

3. The Vice-President, Academic will prepare a three-year academic plan on the same schedule as the Faculty plans. This plan, which is to be completed by November 30 of the same year, will utilize the three-year academic plans of the Faculties and of academic service units. It will be submitted to SCUP for its review and forwarded to Senate for information.

4. Academic plans should give consideration to the elements in the Statement of Purpose for the University approved by Senate and the Board of Governors in 1998.

5. Content of Academic Plans

   5.1 Academic Unit: Plans should include the following information. The unit will determine the organization of the plan. The most recent unit external review should be considered in preparing the plan.

   (a) An assessment of achievements against the previous plan.

   (b) A statement of objectives for the current planning period.

(c) Programmes: A brief overview of the undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the unit, including program development and revision activities.

The participation of the unit in other University programs, including interdisciplinary activities as well as with Continuing Studies and Co-operative Education.

(d) Students: Recruitment and support issues for undergraduate and graduate students. Issues regarding International Students may also need to be addressed.

(e) Research: A summary of the research activities of the unit's members and how these relate to the SFU Research Strategic Plan.

(f) Resources: The adequacy of resources available to the unit in relation to their situation and objectives. This will include faculty complement, support staff, other instructional resources, operating budgets, equipment, and space. The plan should include a component for the renewal of the unit's faculty resources.

(g) Communication: An outline of the communication process to ensure all unit members are informed of the objectives and content of the plan.

5.2 Faculties: All faculties, including non departmentalized faculties, should submit a plan according to the template agreed between the Deans and the Vice President Academic.

6. Each academic year academic units, Faculty Deans, and the Vice President, Academic will prepare a brief update to their academic plan. This will be completed before November 30 of each year to feed into the formal Budgeting process. The plan update of the Vice President, Academic will be submitted to SCUP for its review.

7. The Office of the Vice- President, Academic, will provide statistical information for use in academic plans and plan updates. This will include an annual budget outlook.

May 2006