



OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT, ACADEMIC AND PROVOST

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ATTENTION Senate **DATE** June 16, 2015
FROM Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic and Provost, and Chair, SCUP **PAGES** 1/1
RE: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences: External Review Report of the Department of Humanities (SCUP 15-25)

At its June 3, 2015 meeting, SCUP reviewed the External Review Report for the Department of Humanities. The Department will produce an Action Plan and forward it to SCUP and Senate by July 2016. The report is attached for the information of Senate.

c: J. Craig



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ATTENTION SCUP **DATE** May 26, 2015
FROM Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic and **PAGES** 1/1
Provost
RE: External Review of the Department of Humanities

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jon Driver', written over a horizontal line.

The Office of the Vice-President, Academic approves Dean Craig's pragmatic approach and looks forward to what comes in due course. In the meantime, the Department of Humanities can take advantage of good advice in the review and move forward wherever possible.

Attachments



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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Jon Driver, VP, Academic	DATE	26 May 2015
FROM	John Craig, Dean	PAGES	1/1
RE:	External Review of the Department of Humanities		

To: The members of the Senate Committee on University Priorities

I have given close consideration to the recommendations found in the External Review of the Department of Humanities. Our office has taken seriously the claim made by the reviewers that 'with imaginative restructuring, University support and reforms in current practice, the department will more effectively continue to make its special contributions to its mission and to that of Simon Fraser University.' We have been discussing a number of options with the Department of Humanities and anticipate that these discussions will result in the kind of imaginative restructuring envisaged by the external reviewers. In light of this, we have refrained from proceeding to a final Action Plan with the Department of Humanities.

Sincerely,

John Craig,
Dean

JC/jl

cc: Gord Myers, Associate Vice President, Academic
Glynn Nicholls, Director, Academic Planning and Budgeting

**External Review of the Department of Humanities
Simon Fraser University**

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Report of the External Review Team

Debrah Bokowski, Marylhurst University

John Contreni, Purdue University (chair)

Eric Fong, University of Toronto

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Tom Grieve, Simon Fraser University (internal)

Wiebke Strehl, University of North Carolina, Asheville

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Site Visit: April 2-5, 2014

Report Submitted: May 5, 2014

INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS AND SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

If viewed from afar, the Department of Humanities¹ at Simon Fraser University would seem to lack the coherence of other more traditional academic units, e.g. departments of History, English, or Sociology. Indeed, its history is characterized by internal transfers to the core humanities element of other SFU units and personnel that for various reasons did not “fit” well elsewhere in the University. Now in its fifteenth year, the department and the University are faced with critical decisions regarding the future shape of the department.

While it would be accurate to state that the department in its current configuration “would not fly today,” (in the words of a senior administrator), we believe that with imaginative restructuring, University support, and reforms in current practice, the department will more effectively continue to make its special contributions to its mission and to that of Simon Fraser University.

We are impressed that the department combines effective and passionate teaching to its majors and other students enrolled in its courses with a high level of individual research that has been recognized nationally and internationally. It is especially impressive that the department has planted itself in significant ways in the Vancouver community. It is difficult to imagine a unit in FASS that can challenge the department in terms of “Engaging the Community.” The department is strong, despite its history and its odd structure, in teaching, research, and community engagement. It is an attractive program with great potential.

The department fulfills a key role in humanities education in the University and community. It would perhaps be helpful for administrators to revisit assumptions about the department, e.g., that humanities courses are simply “great books” courses and that the Graduate Liberal Studies program is a “hobby,” in order to better appreciate the contributions the department’s various programs make to SFU.

In the immediate short term, we recommend that the University address the issue of faculty and staff “burn-out,” which can only be demoralizing and compromise the potential of the department and its programs. Burn-out is attributable to at least two factors we observed. There may be others. The first is the “volunteer” work that many faculty and instructors engage in that is wearing and seems not to get counted and thus misrepresents the actual impact of the department’s programs. This work is administrative and instructional. It consists of complex administrative assignments for which no course relief is offered and voluntary teaching overloads that faculty take on for the sake of their students. Staff overloads have occurred when new units (e.g., LTI) were brought into the department apparently without the additional staff to support them. The recent loss of the GLS manager, for example, has resulted in the appointment of a program assistant with additional supervisory duties added to the workload of the department’s manager.

The Department of Humanities and no doubt other departments across the University’s three campuses depend heavily on the work of sessionals. The sessionals with whom we met impressed us as highly qualified and dedicated. The teaching evaluations we reviewed for their

¹ Hereafter, “the department” to underscore that the department’s activities encompass more than the humanities.

courses were strongly positive. It is likely in the face of future budget challenges that sessionals will become an even greater part of the instructional mix at SFU as elsewhere. To that end, the department and the University could work together to enhance the working conditions of sessionals. One way (expressed to us in our meeting with them) would be to include sessionals on the department's Web site. More pressing, the sessionals to a person testified to the "anxiety" attendant upon not knowing in a timely fashion about future term employment.

Turning to teaching assistants, it is urgent that the salaries of TAs in LTI be topped up as a matter of equity. The model for TA salaries in LTI, we learned, no longer obtains. TAs in LTI perform work at the same level as TAs in other units. We also learned that TAs in LTI receive spotty training before stepping into the classroom. Proficiency as a native speaker of a language does not prepare one to become a classroom instructor. We recommend, again in the immediate short term, that the matter of TA training in LTI be explored and made a top priority.

We also recommend that the Dean of Graduate Studies request a strategic program review of the MA in Humanities following the appointment of a new department chair. The strategic review should include all aspects of the program (enrollment, curriculum, budget, capacity for growth, etc.) The review should provide a plan that would include restructuring and/or new resources required to make the program more viable.

At several junctures during our time on campus, we heard comments to the effect that the department should perhaps just continue on as it is. We also heard the assumption expressed that the department is being allowed to die by attrition as scarce University resources are directed elsewhere. Whether these perceptions of the future of the department are accurate or not, we cannot say. We do believe that the immediate short term (one-three years) will be a critical time for the Department of Humanities. With new leadership coming on, this will be a time of opportunity to address fundamental administrative and structural issues and to re-position departmental activities.

SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) **The quality of the unit's programs** (graduate and undergraduate) is high and there are measures in place to ensure the evaluation and revision of the teaching programs.

Humanities

The educational goals set for Humanities (Self-Study, p. 29) are rigorous and appropriate. The undergraduate curriculum emphasizes the study of texts and appears to be Eurocentric and traditional with its emphasis on the "Classical, Medieval, Renaissance, and Modern" periods. In practice, however, the curriculum is flexible and supports course work on a wider variety of topics and themes, e.g., the great cities course centered on Kyoto (HUM 340) and the HUM 312 course on Pieter Brueghel's work and world. This wider focus, especially the study of images as documents of a different sort, might be incorporated explicitly in the description of the Humanities curriculum. World civilizations left rich visual records as well as textual records. Students need to learn to read both records.

The glaring omission from the curriculum is offerings in science and technology. Not only do modern students need to be conversant with science and technology as a matter of general principle, it also is the case that the cultures they study in their Humanities courses also were conversant with science and technology. To focus only on literature, philosophy, theology, history, etc. is to present a skewed introduction to the human experience.

The curriculum could also be enhanced by building in opportunities for experiential learning, especially since opportunities exist within the department (in the Institute for the Humanities, the Woodsworth Chair, the David Lam Centre, etc.) for students to engage in project- and community-based learning. Several Humanities students told us that they participate in the IH programs quite often. Valuable curricular experiences might be fashioned out of this interest and proximity.

Undergraduate student teaching evaluations of faculty and sessionals in Humanities courses are quite positive. It is clear from these reports that student respondents appreciate the personal involvement, enthusiasm, and knowledge of their instructors (even when they judged some of them to be hard markers!). Amid this clutch of superlative instructor evaluations one stood out as indicating need for mentoring or pedagogical counseling. Student ratings for this instructor were unusually low and comments revealed a pattern of poor organization, poor communication skills, lack of preparation, tardiness, and vague expectations. Again, this instance is exceptional, but it would seem to require intervention given the high expectations and performance of the instructional corps in Humanities.

The stated M.A. educational goals are appropriate and rigorous. The program requires an interdisciplinary thesis as a stepping stone to doctoral research work. The Humanities program is to be applauded for insisting on a thesis in a time when other graduate-level programs are turning to “direct-to-PhD” admissions. Preparation of an M.A. thesis enables the student to hone skills that will come in handy when doing doctoral research (or, to learn at the M.A. level that significant research and complex writing are not the student’s cup or tea, thus learning something important sooner rather than later).

The Humanities curriculum is supervised by the chair of Undergraduate Studies and by the Graduate Chair.

There seems to be no mechanism in place for determining whether the educational goals at both levels are being met. Faculty and administrators are aware of current trends in higher education to document learning outcomes and to implement plans for outcomes assessments. Many universities have initiated programs to assess student learning outcomes in response to parental and legislative pressures. Centrally organized and funded, such initiatives take into account disciplinary criteria when assessing student learning and build degrees of flexibility into their programs. Nevertheless, assessment programs are centrally organized. It is not recommended that Humanities launch its own student learning assessment initiative absent a campus-wide program.

The Humanities Master of Arts program

This is a thesis based, interdisciplinary master's degree mainly designed to prepare students for PhD work. Students are admitted to the program only if a suitable Senior Supervisor from the department is available. The available faculty are limited, not only in quantity, but in capacity to add to their already full workloads, which for many include significant administrative roles. It is not clear if this plays an important role in the small cohorts which have been admitted (2010:6, 2011:3, 2012:2, 2013:4) or if there is little demand for the degree.

Designed as a two year master's program, no one has finished in two years. From the 2010 cohort two have finished and from the 2011 cohort one has finished. The reason given for this is "personal circumstances," however, every graduate student in any program has "personal circumstances." The small numbers do not allow for any cohort critical mass. The average class size of two does not allow for best pedagogical practices. When we spoke to the MA students, they indicated that about half of their coursework was done through directed study. Again, this limits the kind of graduate student interaction that enriches graduate study and places a heavy burden for a huge portion of the coursework on faculty goodwill (because they are not compensated or given release time for the work).

There are only two courses required of all the students: HUM 800-5 Theories and Methods in the Humanities and HUM 801-5 Research and Development Seminar. HUM 800-5 is a very broad, survey type course. That and HUM 801-5 have no stated outcomes. The rest of the courses are related to the student's individual interests and thesis work. While the required thesis (80-100 pages) easily meets the Educational Goals and the related specific sub-goals, which are clearly stated, the rest of the curriculum needs outcomes which align with programmatic goals.

Given that there is a thriving interdisciplinary studies master's currently in GLS, SFU needs to seriously consider if there are the resources for both programs.

Language Training Institute

The Language Training Institute should play an important and essential role in an institution that bears the motto "engaging the world." Cultural understanding and global competence are most often initiated in the language classroom. It is vitally important that students are informed about the role of language learning, that faculty do not separate language learning from cultural understanding, that the academic community understands the language mission, and that the administration supports the efforts of the Institute. Part of an active effort to support the University's vision in educating engaged global citizens through the foreign language classroom includes providing an infrastructure that leads to well-organized course sequences, adequate teacher support and training, engagement in the profession, and the department.

At the beginning of the review process, the department seemed to be an unusual site for the Language Training Institute. However, in light of its history, current situation, and its future, it seems to us now to be positioned fairly well within this unit. We do, however, strongly encourage the Institute to work more closely with the French and Italian language programs, since ideas, teaching approaches, and resources could and should be shared among departments and programs with many similar missions and issues.

There is currently no language requirement for all Simon Fraser University students and therefore the LTI attracts mainly students who have an interest in learning a new foreign

language or continuing language training that they began before entering the University. This pattern is reflected in enrollment numbers, which would be much higher if there were such a requirement and it is also reflected in the attrition rate. Students often tend to discontinue courses of study in classes that require what they consider too much work unless such courses meet a requirement. Nevertheless, the eight languages offered within this unit manage to attract and retain over 2000 students annually. The courses offered range from the beginning levels through advanced and special purpose courses in some of the languages and are taught mainly by lecturers and graduate assistants. The teaching staff that we talked to was very open in our conversations and impressed us with their energy and love for teaching their language as well as their professional engagement and subject matter knowledge.

The CVs of the faculty members in LTI document a high degree of research and professional activity that is both solid and rather impressive.

Graduate Liberal Studies Program

The Graduate Liberal Studies Program at Simon Fraser University functions as an autonomous entity within the department. The program is best described as “affiliated” with the Department of Humanities. Administration of the GLS is the responsibility of the director, who is selected by the program’s Steering Committee. The Steering Committee and director have jurisdiction over curriculum, teaching faculty, admission of students and the operating budget (funded mainly through endowments).

The GLS is uniquely situated as the only liberal arts master’s degree in Canada offering mid-career adults the opportunity to engage in an interdisciplinary study of texts and ideas integral to the humanities (see SFU strategic goal 1.1.8 Programs for mature, returning and non-traditional students). The program has continued to thrive despite the lack of marketing beyond word of mouth. The program has an excellent reputation for quality that extends beyond Canada. The director, Stephen Duguid, has served on the board of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs. Simon Fraser GLS students have consistently presented at AGLSP conferences and at West Coast GLS Symposia.

Educational Goals:

Goals 2 (to acquire an intellectual grounding in ideas and values which have shaped human cultures) and 3 (to encourage an interdisciplinary perspective by integrating ideas from a variety of perspectives and fields of study) are clear and can be easily seen to align with the course descriptions of all GLS courses, so assessment of them should be very doable. Goals 1 and 3 need to be simplified so that they are demonstrable given the content of GLS courses. Some of the specific skills (ability to do graduate level research, etc.) should be part of Educational Goals.

Program Quality

Curriculum: The curriculum is designed to explore issues that are perennial to the humanities and touch on contemporary issues. All of the courses are interdisciplinary in content and design. The cohort structure begins with two core seminars, *Reason & Passion I* and *Reason and Passion II*. Elective course topics cover ethics, science, math, religion, epistemology and more. Readings are rigorous.

There are a number of options for completing the degree which include an additional course option, two extended essays or a final project. How these complete programmatic goals

and how they may be seen as equivalent to each other is not spelled out, but should be considered as SFU moves to NWCCU accreditation and more specific program outcomes.

Faculty: The GLS faculty come from a wide range of SFU departments and bring with them the breadth of scholarship that is one of the educational goals of the program. The review team met with some of the faculty. They expressed their strong commitment to the program and enthusiasm for the students. Course evaluations indicate overwhelming positive feedback from students on their class experiences. The scale used in the GLS course evaluation form does not match that used in the Department of Humanities. Some consideration of consistency in measurement will be needed as SFU moves to NWCCU accreditation. Also, other indicators of faculty teaching quality beyond course evaluations need to be considered, for example, systematic peer evaluation/feedback.

Student course evaluation comments included:

All expectations met. Challenging, rewarding, stretching me further still. Thank you.

The approach and the reading encourage critical analysis and meaningful discourse that result in changing or enhancing mindsets or understanding about issues/topics.

Students: Enrollment in GLS remains at a constant, healthy level for a cohort-based, liberal arts master's program. On average, students take 4.46 years to complete the program. The completion rate is 80%. While the program is not particularly vocationally oriented or specifically a precursor to a PhD program, as indicated in student and alumni surveys and in our meeting with students, GLS is uniquely situated to fill a profound need for intellectual enrichment in the mature student population with a bachelor's degree. Comments from students and alums include:

- The breadth of reading was pertinent to each course. For example, in a religious studies course that I took, there were many authors with differing points of view and from different historical perspectives. This was conducive to a great deal of discussion and contemplation. I couldn't ask for more than that.
- I never expected to find a "community of learning" set up in such a way as the GLS program. This is the cornerstone of GLS, and no matter how exhausting a work day, or teenager problems at home, or a writing deadline, I went to class excited knowing I had three glorious hours of discussion, laughter, challenges and learning ahead of me.

Administration: The primary governing body of the GLS is its Steering Committee which includes the director, the associate director, the assistant to the director, at least eight appointed faculty members, three appointed student members and two alumni representatives. The chair of the Department of Humanities is an *ex officio* member. There appears to be ample opportunity for both faculty and students to have input in a wide range of program concerns including curriculum development and budget.

Of concern to the reviewers is a lack of administrative support dedicated to the program. As mentioned elsewhere, the department's manager is spread very thinly and now is expected to provide support for the GLS. Previously, an alumni coordinator position helped organize events for students and alumni, sent newsletters and produced a promotional film for the website. This is an important position that keeps student and alumni involved with the program through Friday night seminars and a weekend retreat and should be maintained if possible.

PhD. PhD students are part of the Dean of Graduate Studies Special Arrangements program (SAR). Currently there are eight students who have been admitted in the Liberal Studies PhD program, all graduates of the SFU GLS. This means that they all have a strong foundation in liberal arts graduate work. Research topics vary widely (economics, language and schizophrenia, human motivation for exploration).

It is not clear from the website or other material how the administration of the SAR program works, beyond the existence of a subcommittee of the GLS Steering Committee. Because the first cohort of 3 PhD students only started in the fall of 2013, it is too soon to evaluate the program.

There is a definite limit to the number of PhD students the program can handle. Already stretched faculty are not compensated for serving as dissertation advisors. Another issue is lack of financial support for PhD students. SFU needs to invest the resources needed to make this a successful program, especially with regard to mentoring these additional students who are coming into the program.

Asia Canada Program

The Asia-Canada Program suffers from two fundamental issues related to the program objectives. The mission statement of self-study report (p. 4) states that, “The Asia-Canada Program . . . offers students the opportunity to study Asia (especially East Asia) in a global and diasporic context, in particular, the connection between Asia and contemporary Canadian society.” The stated program objectives have not shown clear intellectual linkage between the Asia-Canada Program and its home department, the Department of Humanities. Thus, there is a need for colleagues associated with the program and colleagues of the home department to develop a better intellectual connection. This linkage would enable the Asia-Canada Program to draw on the intellectual strengths of the Department of Humanities to enhance its program development. It also would facilitate integration with the home department. Second, the mission statement and the “goal of the courses” of the program are not always consistent. Though the stated program mission is to understand Asia in a diasporic context, the self-report always refers to the program including Asian Canadian studies (pp. 5, 12, and 13). The program offers courses about Asian Canadians. The idea that the program includes Asian Canadian studies was mentioned numerous times in conversation with colleagues associated with the program. However, the focus on understanding Asia in a diasporic context is fundamentally different from Asian Canadian studies. The orientation of the program and the courses offered will be substantially different. The ambiguity of the stated mission and the actual implementation of the program requires clarification. The committee suggests that the director should re-think and re-align the program objectives and consider whether or not they should include the topic of Asian Canadians.

Instruction in the program’s courses has relied on sessional lecturers, even for the core courses. For example, “ASC 101-3: Introduction to Asia-Canada Studies I” was offered by a faculty member from the Asia-Canada Program, while “ASC 102-3 Introduction to Asia-Canada Studies II” was offered by a sessional lecturer. The committee strongly recommends that all core courses be offered by Asia-Canada Program faculty members so that teaching materials can be consistent over the years. In addition, the core courses should be designed for students to learn about Asia from a diasporic perspective if that is the objective of the program. At this point, the

syllabi of the core courses do not reflect this objective. Similar suggestions have been made for other elective courses offered by the program.

The Asia-Canada Program offers about eight to 11 courses per year, and about 400 students enroll in Asia-Canada program courses each year. Given its limited resources, it is impressive that the program is still able to provide courses to such a large number of students. The evaluations of courses were favorable. Since the program relies heavily on sessional lecturers, the key to achieving educational objectives in the classroom is to recruit the best instructors. The committee strongly recommends that all sessional lecturers should have PhDs and should have conducted research in the areas of their teaching topics.

The courses offered have been mainly about China and Japan with emphasis on the cultural dimension. The committee recommends more diversity. Courses should include other Asian countries besides China and Japan. They should include economic, social, and geographic dimensions. One way to extend the topics covered without additional hiring would be to cross-list existing courses in related areas elsewhere on campus. However, with such a small program, the director has encountered difficulty persuading SFU colleagues to cross-list their courses with the Asia-Canada Program. For example, the chair of the Department of Humanities might provide support and assistance to the director of the Asia-Canada Program to arrange cross-listed courses.

Administration

The program has limited staff and budget. The program has three half-time faculty members, all cross-appointed. The director is also cross-appointed, with only half time devoted to the Asia-Canada Program. These arrangements clearly affect the amount of time that faculty members can devote to developing the Asia-Canada Program and to assisting students in the program. To facilitate further program development, at least one full-time faculty would be needed to plan and coordinate the program. However, the expertise of any such new hire should focus on social or economic dimensions so that the program becomes more diversified. If the realignment of program objectives focuses on Asian Canadians, then the research area of the new hire should be related to that focus.

The budget of the program is minimal. Given such limited financial resources, the program's achievements are impressive. To have a healthy program, the budget should be increased considerably. With a larger budget, the director could arrange activities to facilitate the student learning experience and to deliver a coherent program.

The director is relatively independent in planning. Discussions of the program with the chair of the Department of Humanities are infrequent. To facilitate the coherence and integration of the program with the Department of Humanities, the director and the chair should have regular meetings to discuss issues related to the program.

Faculty Research

All three faculty members of the Asia-Canada Program have been active in their research. Books were published in solid presses, such as Stanford University Press and Routledge Press. Papers were published in English, Chinese, and Japanese to reach diverse audiences.

David Lam Centre

The David Lam Centre has been extremely helpful in promoting the Asia-Canada Program and organizing events related to the program. The close collaboration between the David Lam Centre and the Asia-Canada Program should be encouraged and maintained.

The David Lam Centre organizes events with community groups. The director of the Centre participates in many activities organized by the community. Through all these events, the

profile of Asian studies at SFU has been raised among community members, and connections with the community have been built.

The director has been active in organizing academic events. These activities help connect colleagues of SFU with colleagues in other universities. They also raise the academic profile of Asian studies at SFU. However, most of the events have focused on the Chinese. The committee strongly suggests that activities should be organized to address other Asian groups as well.

During the visit, some concerns were raised about the use of space for the David Lam Centre on the second floor of the Harbour Centre, Vancouver campus. The space currently is designated for use by other groups and units of the University. Activities organized by the Centre now have to take place in rooms rented from the University. The committee recommends that there be clarification about the use of space on the second floor that was once assigned to and used by the David Lam Centre.

(b) The quality of faculty research

The 2007 external reviewers' report found the level and sophistication of faculty research in the department to be quite high and "commendable." Seven years on, we observe that the Humanities faculty maintain a high level of research productivity on a broad range of fronts. They publish books at a regular rate, contribute frequently to leading journals, and are recruited to contribute chapters to books. In addition, many serve on editorial boards of disciplinary journals or on committees of professional societies. What is especially striking about the faculty's research activity is the very large number of papers they give, both nationally and internationally—not counting numerous interviews and public lectures. The high level of research productivity is especially commendable given the commitment faculty make to teaching and to administration.

(c) Unit members participate in the administration of the unit and take an active role in the dissemination of knowledge.

Department members do take an active role in the dissemination of knowledge, both through their robust research activities and their lively community engagement, especially through the David Lam Centre and the Institute of the Humanities. In fact, we observed that some faculty are over-committed in terms of administrative participation, work that they take on for the good of the program, for their students, or for the community. Administrative assignments should be carefully reviewed to determine whether the work load is appropriate, recognized, and compensated.

At the same time, the duties of the department's extraordinarily capable manager should also be reviewed. For one thing, as new programs have agglomerated, additional responsibilities have been added to the manager's already full portfolio. The instance of the GLS program has already been mentioned. But, there is more here than a question of workload. Some of the manager's duties, especially those concerning budgeting, student advising, and program oversight, should be covered by faculty or by professional advisors.

(d) The unit's environment is conducive to the attainment of the objectives of the unit.

As already noted, the environment in the department supports high quality teaching, lively community engagement, and productive research. But, there are elements of the environment tugging in the opposite direction. Chief among them is the absence of a clearly articulated sense of what the Department of Humanities is. The observation that such a department “would not fly today” is shared by the department itself. The department realizes that it is a creature of circumstances, not of planned, systematic academic growth. This absence of certainty and a clear direction impacts morale and fosters the sense that the department, so useful in so many ways, is being left to attrite. Some department members voiced the opinion that they would be content to continue on as they are; others thought that through “benign neglect” and attrition the department would soon wither. The environment, thus, is anything but dynamic, forward-looking, innovative, entrepreneurial, that is, poised to adjust to the changing face of higher education today. A second element in the departmental environment has already been mentioned, but needs to be brought up in this context as well. The unreported administrative work that members of the department take on as well as the many reported tutorials or directed readings that they offer their students over and above their regular teaching loads is quite demanding. This was not apparent to us from studying the charts supplied by Institutional Research and Planning, but it did become apparent from meeting with department members.

Thus, on the one hand, the department is remarkably successful in its teaching, research, and engagement while, on the other, it is experiencing “burn out” in some quarters and a willingness to let matters just drift to some future conclusion (disengagement).

Focus Questions for Humanities Department External Review 2014

Humanities

Suggest ways for the Department of Humanities to continue its traditional role of offering core religious studies curriculum, as well as its core HUM 101 Introduction to the Humanities, until the associated teaching appointment has been renewed.

Regular faculty should commit to HUM 101 on a rotating basis among most dynamic, enthusiastic teachers since this is a vital feeder course for the department.

The religious studies curriculum, which includes a certificate program, is an important part of the curriculum and, we understand, offers the only opportunity in the University for students to learn about religions and their impacts in an academic setting. There is great interest in world religions among students and in society in general, especially in richly cosmopolitan areas such as Vancouver offers. We recommend that instruction in religious studies be regularized by an appointment at the faculty level or at least at the level of a continuing Lecturer.

In light of two imminent retirements, which areas should be priorities for ongoing faculty renewal?

Funding priorities for faculty renewal must be job #1 for the new departmental chair and departmental faculty. As already indicated, we believe that appointments in science/technology

and/or religious studies would be fully warranted. The more fundamental issue is that new colleagues themselves must be catalysts for renewal, that is, they must be engaging, energetic, forward-thinking in terms of new pedagogies, and conversant with cross-disciplinary research and teaching.

Is the current administrative configuration of Humanities and its associated programs optimal?

No, it is not optimal. For one thing, too much of the academic administration of the department seems to have shifted into the (capable) hands of the office manager. Also, given the autonomy of the associated programs, there seems to be little coordination across the department. For these programs the department is a department in name only.

For the department to develop the sense of community, coherence, and meaning inherent to it and essential for its future viability, it is essential that new departmental leadership assert greater coordination across the associated programs.

We recommend that as part of the new chair's package he or she should be given a modest annual budget (e.g. \$10K) that the chair would make available to the associated programs (through a proposal process) to undertake programmatic, curricular, or research initiatives. This would effectively strengthen ties between the department and the programs.

There is a proposal currently under review to expand the scope and responsibilities of the department. We support the discussions underway and urge that they be accelerated once new leadership is in place. The names "School of Humanities" and "School of World Literatures, Languages and Cultures," have been floated, however we suggest that other nomenclature be considered in rebranding the department. This is especially important since the new configuration combines humanities and social sciences with the possibility of adding a component in science and technology and curricular offerings in experiential learning. Our suggestions include:

- Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
- Department of Intercultural Studies
- Department of Interdisciplinary Humanities

Suggest roles for the Institute for the Humanities and the David Lam Centre in pursuing interdisciplinary community engagement?

The GLS program and the Woodworth Chair should be added to this mix since in various ways they are actively involved in interdisciplinary community engagement. Each of these associated programs are doing a great job in pursuing interdisciplinary community engagement.

Our recommendation here is that these activities develop a service learning component for students that would effectively tie the Centre, the Institute, GLS, and the chair integrally to the core curricular programs of HUM. HUM already interfaces with the Integrated Studies and Night or Weekend programs. The department's majors and minors are already involved with the programs of these associated units. Service learning courses for credit would also enhance the

offerings of the department and help to alleviate the problem of intermittent course offerings in a student's field of interest.

Future Leadership of Department of Humanities

We were not asked to comment on this matter, but since leadership is critical to the success of the department going forward, we think it appropriate to share our thoughts.

The next chair must have on his or her agenda the task to provide appropriate coherence, rationalization and structure to the department (remaining cognizant, of course, that interdisciplinary programs *ipso facto* are not as tightly structured as traditional disciplinary programs [e.g. History, Political Science, Sociology]).

The next chair should be entrepreneurial, i.e., a person who is able to recognize synergies across campus and in the community and to take advantage of these opportunities to enhance learning and research across campus and in Vancouver.

The new chair should have background in interdisciplinary studies so that she or he will recognize the value of everyone's work in the department.

The new chair should have community engagement experience.

The new chair should have a reduced teaching load during the first year (one course each semester) to engage in the leadership activities outlined above that will energize and re-focus the department.

Asia-Canada Program

How can the Asia-Canada Program best serve the needs of SFU and British Columbia and their roles as gateways between Canada and East Asia?

The Asia-Canada Program should play an important role as a gateway between Canada and East Asia in serving the needs of SFU and British Columbia. Through the coordination with the David Lam Centre, various research-oriented and community activities have been organized to meet the needs of SFU and British Columbia, especially Asian ethnic communities in the province. The close relationship between the David Lam Center and the Asia-Pacific Program should continue.

However, the minimal budget allocated for the Asia-Canada Program does not allow them to organize many activities. An important first step in enhancing the performance of the program is to increase the budget so that the Asia-Canada Program can develop a lecture series and/or other relevant activities.

The Asia-Canada Program should also offer SFU students short-term study trips to Asian countries. These study-trips would enhance the learning experience of students enrolled in the program.

Graduate Programs

Given limited resources what is the best way to run the Humanities M.A. program, and what should its relationship be to the Graduate Liberal Studies M.A. program?

While the MA in Humanities and the Graduate Liberal Studies MA are similarly based in the Humanities, they are very different in structure, content and purpose. The Humanities MA's purpose is to allow students to narrowly focus their research and thesis with the primary goal of preparation for a doctoral dissertation. Due to the nature of the program, the depth of scholarly content and the research skills each student achieves depends on the student and his/her committee. The GLS program has content rich breadth, not primarily geared for PhD preparation, although some do move on to PhD programs in GLS and elsewhere.

There is also a big difference between the Humanities MA requirement of an 80-100 page thesis and the various options for the GLS capstone. Should there be a "relationship" (integration?) between the two programs? This could only happen after serious curricular changes to both, with the likely outcome of diluting the strengths of each. Concerns about the viability of the MA in Humanities have been previously addressed and should be considered separately from the GLS program.

With a strong MA Program and an emerging PhD annual cohort what kind of administrative support is required for GLS?

Restoration of the Graduate Secretary position and, if possible, the Alumni Coordinator position. It is totally unrealistic to think that the current manager for the Humanities department could provide the needed support along with an already overly full workload.

Languages

What is the best administrative context for the Language Training Institute at SFU?

Currently the Language Training Institute functions as an independent unit within the Department of Humanities. Administrative support comes from the department and seems to be sufficient. Since this set up seems to be working for all involved there is no need to remove this unit or assign it to yet another department. Closer collaboration with the Department of French and Italian, as referenced earlier in this report, should however be considered. The Language Training Institute already has a language coordinator. This position should be retained as it is of vital importance for the unit as they move forward to have more inter-language collaboration and work as a unit on establishing a shared vision for learning outcomes, assessment strategies, outreach, teaching strategies, and University and community wide engagement.

In a university whose motto is 'Engaging the World', how can the teaching of world languages be strengthened?

The Language Training Institute, despite its best intentions as a unit, faces several challenges that need to be addressed.

The Language Certificates: The Language Training Institute currently offers a certificate in three languages – Chinese, German, and Spanish -- and is in the process of developing one for Japanese. The concept of a certificate is commendable, but the courses needed for each certificate need to be sustainable within each language. This means that staffing needs to be consistent and reliable. Each language should also consider which level of proficiency it expects students to achieve as a result of taking the courses needed for the certificate and set a GPA requirement. Without these requirements and learning goals there seems to be no need for the certificates to highlight student achievements. The Spanish certificate is labeled as a proficiency certificate, but does not indicate what level of proficiency students will achieve upon successful completion of the courses required.

Teaching Assistants: The LTI relies every semester on a number of teaching assistants recruited from other units across the University to support its teaching, a common approach in many large institutions. This practice, however, becomes problematic when training for these assistants varies, depending on who trains them, without any further guidelines or cross language coordination. Mechanisms exist in the University that the LTI might access to develop consistent training and supervision procedures. For example, the French Department offers a methods course for its teaching assistants. It might be worth investigating if the teaching assistants in the LTI could participate in this training. Leaving the training up to the individual languages is problematic since all language teachers would agree that the simple fact that someone is a native speaker certainly does not make that person a good language teacher (e.g., native speakers of English, without appropriate training, would not necessarily be effective teachers of the English language). Teaching assistants who most often are progressing from their undergraduate studies toward becoming accomplished graduate students and teachers and eventually teachers and professors need support and training in learning how to teach. Training to become an effective foreign language teacher is fundamentally different from training to teach in math or science. The University already recognizes this by training its French teachers in foreign language pedagogy and would be well advised to expand this formal training to the LTI teaching assistants. The payoff in better classroom instruction, higher enrollments, and happier teachers will strengthen the LTI.

Under-compensation of LTI teaching assistants. Compensation is based on the outdated system in which language was taught in a lecture environment followed by drill sessions conducted by teaching assistants. Today, however, teaching assistants teach their own stand-alone language courses including grading. The current model of teaching assistant classroom work and teaching responsibility needs to be reflected in how teaching assistants are compensated for their work. In terms of how teachers value themselves and how others value what they do, appropriate compensation reflects respect, value, and fairness. The department should not be left to choose between hiring teaching assistants at the full regular teaching assistant stipend or offering more classes taught by underpaid teaching assistants. Equal compensation for equal work should be allocated teaching assistants across units.

Coordination between languages: Even though there is a language coordinator for each of the LTI languages, the individual language units need to improve communication and collaboration among them. It would be good to see more cross-language consistency in learning outcomes, for example, for similar courses and for goals for the certificates. As it stands, most syllabi do not state learning outcomes and students do not know what they will learn in a given class. Clear expectations in the form of learning outcomes, an explanation of what is expected for each course component (such as homework, tests, or quizzes), will help students realize that

these are academically challenging courses and show them what they will learn. Academic expectations should be presented consistently across languages to show that the LTI is indeed one coherent unit that offers similar approaches across languages.

Syllabi need also to reflect culture in their class content. To not include culture even in the most beginning language classroom is an outdated approach that is no longer viable. The LTI vision emphasizes innovation in pedagogy, programming, and curriculum as its goal, but at this point these are not reflected in their courses.

Currency of teaching materials used in courses. Approaches to teaching have changed drastically over the last ten years, but the texts used for Mandarin Chinese II and Spoken Mandarin for Speakers of Other Chinese Dialects I date from 2006. The text used in Mandarin Chinese IV is from 2001; the text for Spanish Vocabulary is from 2000. We recommend that each language unit review its textbook selections with minds open to new teaching approaches and recent developments in foreign language pedagogy. All the instructors in the LTI are active in their professional organizations, attend professional conferences, and present papers at meetings. With a staff so professionally active, it should not be a far reach to bring current developments back to SFU and to integrate them into the LTI curriculum.

Each language should also consider offering courses with a developed service-learning component, which could and should feed into the Institute for the Humanities activities and the David Lam Centre activities. Such linkages would strengthen ties within the department and support the efforts of the unit. Service learning is one of the most effective ways to connect students to the community and the community to the University and the students. At Simon Fraser it would tie the efforts of the Institute for the Humanities, the David Lam Centre and the Woodworth Chair together and could be mutually beneficial.

The addition of Punjabi and Arabic in 2013 increased the number of languages offered through the LTI to eight. The languages offered seem to reflect what students are interested in. Language departments and programs need to be cautious when it comes to adding languages for which there is only one instructor and seemingly no plan to develop an extended program of language study. Students might not be able to continue the study of these languages beyond a two-semester sequence, which leaves them at a barely functional level of proficiency. Most language programs now strive to have students reach a proficiency level of Intermediate Low if they need the language to fulfill a language requirement. In many languages, such as Arabic and Punjabi, this level can usually not be achieved in only two semesters of study. Students should be given the chance to engage in the study of a chosen language through a third year in order to achieve a functional proficiency level and to be able to engage in cultural content. Staffing new languages with part time teaching staff, who might not be continued or who change often, is not ideal in building up these new languages.

Language Training Institute as part of the Department: The language instructors were all enthusiastic when they talked about their students and teaching, but felt that they had no real voice within the department. They felt that the Department of Humanities is a better fit than the units they left, but they still don't feel that they are an integral part of the department. They enjoy their independence in terms of budget and curriculum, but also want to see themselves as part of the department. New departmental leadership should make an effort to integrate and include the languages in projects and ongoing outreach to create a shared platform for all members of the department.

Another area of concern mentioned repeatedly was the uncertainty of funding and position renewals, both causes for language faculty anxiety. Longer contracts or scheduling that

indicated that programs and courses would be taught regularly would ease this fear and give more consistency to the programs. With upcoming retirements in the language units there are opportunities for hires of energetic language professionals who can reenergize and bring new pedagogical strategies to language learning. With new concepts and innovative course approaches, links to the Institute of the Humanities and the Woodworth Chair, the Language Training Institute could take on a vital role in the education of globally educated, engaged, and language and culturally competent citizens.