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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION: Senate

FROM: Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic and Provost

RE: TFFE Action Plan

DATE: April 4, 2016

Introduction

In January 2016 Senate reviewed the final report of the Task Force on Flexible Education, as well as comments from Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning. Senate then passed a motion asking the Vice-President, Academic to bring back to Senate an action plan to implement the recommendations of the TFFE. The recommendations of the TFFE were as follows:

> **R1** *Provide opportunities for community engagement or practical experiences within all SFU programs*
> **R2** *Create a foundational experience in learning for life for all SFU students*
> **R3** *Use research on teaching and learning to guide, develop and expand innovative teaching and learning practices across SFU*
> **R4** *Provide better professional development opportunities for all instructors*
> **R5** *Proactively research and explore digital learning and teaching systems, and develop and implement a digital infrastructure for the creation and distribution of instructional resources across SFU campuses*
> **R6** *Create renewed spaces for student life and learning across SFU campuses*
> **R7** *Appoint a senior administrator to guide and facilitate a strategic approach to learning and teaching across all learning units at SFU*

Consultation and Background

I have considered these recommendations in the light of what I think we have already achieved at SFU since the report of the Task Force on Teaching and Learning (2010) and as a result of a stronger focus on teaching and learning in an earlier (2010 to 2013) and current (2013 to 2018) Academic Plans and the associated plans for Faculties and other units: http://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans.html

I have also consulted with academic administrators and senior staff in a number of different portfolios, and I have reviewed various documents that report on SFU's progress in achieving its strategic goals, including:

(a) the University Planning Framework:
   http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/finance/Planning-Analysis/University%20Planning%20Framework_Dec%202015.pdf

(b) Institutional Accountability Plans submitted to the provincial government:

http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/finance/Planning-Analysis/University%20Planning%20Framework_Dec%202015.pdf

and
http://www.sfu.ca/pres/administration/PastIAP.html

(c) the Annual Strategic Review:
http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/finance/Planning-Analysis/AnnualStrategicReview2014.pdf

(d) the websites of units with responsibilities for various aspects of teaching and learning, including:
http://www.sfu.ca/tlc.html
http://www.sfu.ca/istld.html
http://code.sfu.ca/index.html
http://www.lib.sfu.ca/about/branches-depts/slc
http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicadvising/difficulty.html
https://www.sfu.ca/celltr/about.html
https://www.sfu.ca/students/studyabroad/fieldschools.html
http://www.sfu.ca/itservices/elearning.html
http://www.sfu.ca/wil.html
http://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/curriculum.html
https://www.sfu.ca/students/get-involved.html
http://www.sfu.ca/dialogue/semester/

In addition, I was reminded about various standing committees that have responsibility for these matters, including Senate Committee on University Teaching and Learning, Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, Senate Graduate Studies Committee, and various committees supporting IT Services. I was also reminded that many individual instructors are already incorporating new approaches to teaching and learning in their courses. Finally, I was encouraged to ensure that graduate students were recognized both as learners and instructors.

Existing Capacity
Most individuals with whom I spoke referred to the fact that SFU is already implementing some aspects of the TFFE recommendations, and that we already have committees and units who can take on the responsibility for implementation of these recommendations, as indicated in the examples below.

TFFE Recommendation	Examples (not exhaustive) of potentially responsible units
Provide opportunities for community engagement or practical experiences within all SFU programs	Director, University Curriculum; Work-Integrated Learning; Teaching and Learning Centre; most academic units; individual faculty members; Semester in Dialogue
Create a foundational experience in learning for life for all SFU students	Director, University Curriculum; Teaching and Learning Centre; SFU Orientation/SFU 101; most academic units; CELLTR; SCUS
Use research on teaching and learning to guide, develop and expand innovative teaching and learning practices across SFU	Teaching and Learning Centre; Institute for the Study of Teaching and Learning in the Disciplines; faculty teaching fellows; educational consultants; SCUTL

Provide better professional development opportunities for all instructors	Teaching and Learning Centre; Academic Relations; Human Resources; Faculty Teaching Fellows
Proactively research and explore digital learning and teaching systems, and develop and implement a digital infrastructure for the creation and distribution of instructional resources across SFU campuses	IT Services; Centre for Online and Distance Education; Teaching and Learning Centre; individual faculty members
Create renewed spaces for student life and learning across SFU campuses	Facilities Management; AVP Academic; Student Services; Faculties; Surrey and Vancouver campus directors
Appoint a senior administrator to guide and facilitate a strategic approach to learning and teaching across all learning units at SFU	Board of Governors and President, on recommendation of Vice-President, Academic

Based on the above examples, SFU does not lack the capacity to move forward with the TFFE recommendations. Many of the people with whom I consulted suggested that implementation of the recommendations could be achieved through:

- assigning responsibility to relevant units;
- encouraging better communication between units about what has already been achieved and what is currently underway;
- integrating the TFFE recommendations into existing plans and planning processes;
- where appropriate, developing goals, targets and key performance indicators;
- assigning overall responsibility for overseeing the TFFE recommendations to a single individual or small group;
- using SCUTL as an advisory committee and reporting to them regularly on progress

Proposed Action Plan

The TFFE report provides a new focus and a set of priorities for units and individuals who already have responsibility for some key strategic and operational activities in the areas of teaching and learning. It encourages people to build on existing activities and plans, and the recommendations cannot be broken down into projects with easily defined end dates and deliverables. In most cases the outcomes of implementing the recommendations should be measurable as directional changes or progress on an ordinal scale, rather than achievement of a specific goal.

I therefore propose the following action plan:

1. All relevant units (including committees) will be informed about the report and asked to think about their individual and collective roles in implementing recommendations and moving the University as a whole in the directions recommended by TFFE. (Summer and fall semesters 2016)

2. Each unit will provide information on current activities relevant to the TFFE recommendations, so as to develop a current inventory of planned and ongoing activities and to help identify possible bottlenecks and areas of overlap. Each unit will also provide a plan stating how it intends to contribute to supporting the recommendations, the resource implications, the need for communication/collaboration/partnerships, and a preliminary list of goals/deliverables/performance indicators for the unit. In addition, other opportunities will also be investigated (e.g. whether the development of learning analytics programs in the University Strategic Initiative on big data could add value). (Fall 2016 and Spring 2017)

3. This will be coordinated initially through the VP Academic office, and the VP Academic or designate will ensure that moving towards implementation of the TFFE recommendations is included in high level strategic plans and accountability documents. A consolidated plan/report will be produced of the actions listed in 2 and will be distributed to all units and to SCUTL for discussion. The report should include an inventory of relevant activities, an assessment of overlap and redundancy, and prioritization of planned activities. (Late spring 2017)

4. Regular report back meetings with the relevant units, SCUTL, the Deans, and Chairs/Directors will be called by VP Academic or designate, to keep all informed, to ensure collaboration and integration develops where necessary, and that sensitivity to flexible learning opportunities across SFU grows.

5. Throughout the above processes, students, employee groups and other relevant parties will be consulted when appropriate.

6. The current VP Academic will second a faculty member as a special advisor to oversee steps 1 through 5. (Summer 2016). Based on that experience, the incoming Vice-President Academic will determine whether to create a new Associate VP (Teaching and Learning) (Recommendation 7), and will determine an appropriate set of responsibilities, should such a position be created.

7. Progress on implementation of recommendations will be included in institutional accountability documents and regular reports from appropriate units, such as Senate committees, service units etc.

Conclusion
As a result of many years of attention to teaching and learning, SFU is already well positioned to take action on the recommendations of the TFFE, and it is not necessary to create new organizations, units or governance structures at this time. Key activities, such as ensuring good communication and asking for updated plans, can be handled by a single individual with an appropriate level of support.

Motion: that Senate approve the action plan for the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Flexible Education