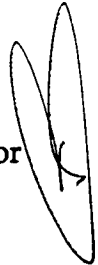


**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY**

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT**

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Senate  
**From:** Michael Stevenson, President and Vice-Chancellor  
**Subject:** President's Agenda  
**Date:** October 18, 2000



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Attached are my objectives and priorities for the next year which were discussed with the Board of Governors on September 27, 2001. I am forwarding this document to Senate for comment and discussion.

Attachment

# THE PRESIDENT'S AGENDA: SFU AT 40

Michael Stevenson  
September, 2001

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### The Past

*In the thirty-six years since its founding, Simon Fraser University's accomplishments have been extraordinary.*

Best summarized by the repeated first-place ranking in the Maclean's survey as Canada's premier comprehensive university, SFU's achievements are the work of superb faculty, staff and students. These achievements reflect the development of a unique institutional culture that was forged in the tumultuous '60s and is now defined in the University's Statement of Values and Commitments: SFU is distinctive in the depth of its commitment to intellectual and academic freedom; to openness and inclusion in order to assure these commitments; the value it places on responsiveness to the community; its belief in the interconnectedness of discovery, diversity and dialogue; and its willingness to encourage risk and innovation.

These values and commitments must anchor any agenda for the future as we continue to find ways to provide

- the best teaching and research in the liberal arts and sciences;
- the most innovative interdisciplinary and professional programmes;
- the most creative community outreach and partnership.

When doing so, we also must continue to champion the value of curiosity-driven, basic research in expanding the foundations of knowledge.

As we go forward over the next 5-10 years, we can derive confidence and guidance from our past commitments and achievements. At the same time, however, we must examine the changes and innovations required to sustain our leading position in the years to come.

This Agenda statement is intended to guide that examination. I hope that all members of the community will see it as a stimulus to thinking about what SFU should look like in its Forties. This statement is also a description of the

strategic priorities I intend to pursue in continued consultation and collaboration with the Board of Governors, the Senate, and other constituencies within the University.

### The Future

*A number of changes in the environment will have a significant impact on SFU during the next decade.*

- 40% of our current faculty and staff retire within 10 years
- 20% increase in applications from high school graduates
- increasing academic labour market competition
- increasing competition from the private sector in the delivery of post-secondary education
- greater competition from other post-secondary institutions in providing distance education through IT innovations
- greater competition among Canadian research universities for increasingly targetted and differentiated government funding
- changes in the political economy throughout North America, including the "New Era" in British Columbia, entailing a greater reliance on private sources for improved funding
- increasing demand by government for performance-measured accountability

Simon Fraser University needs a strategic response to these environmental challenges that is built upon four elements: new programs; expanded infrastructure; the best faculty, staff and students; and growth funding.

## **2. PROGRAMMING FOR THE FUTURE**

*SFU must identify and develop distinctive new programs that respond to growth and change.*

The Three-Year Plan of the Vice-President, Academic, along with the detailed Faculty and Departmental plans, are the core documents governing SFU's academic future. These documents focus comprehensively on improvements to the full range of our programmes, and there is a danger that strategic clarity about specific priority changes can be lost in the weight of detail. In this Agenda statement, therefore, I want to indicate the broad priorities I read in our academic planning documents, and to indicate where I think the attention of the central administration should concentrate.

## Curricula Review

Given the shifting environmental pressures that are bringing increased choice and competition to post-secondary education, SFU must ensure that its academic programmes display the highest academic quality while proving attractive to students. Potential faculty recruits must see SFU programmes as offering a uniquely challenging interplay between research and teaching in

dialogue with superb colleagues and students. Potential private donors must see SFU programmes as the most innovative and responsive to social, cultural and economic needs.

The *Ad hoc Committee to Review and Develop the Undergraduate Curricula (UCC)*, will be instrumental in addressing these challenges. Because the UCC is fully engaged in its work at present, I do not wish to speculate about its recommendations other than to express my confidence that there will be a clear assessment of key issues, including:

- programme distinctiveness
- innovative and effective pedagogy
- student-centered learning
- experiential learning
- research-intensive learning
- information access, applied technology skills, and perspectives on technology

## Internationalization

No matter what new directions are taken in curricula and pedagogy over the next five years, I am convinced that a university education in an era of ever greater global interconnection must provide a sophisticated understanding of international and intercultural diversity. All students should be expected to acquire some direct experience of a different culture and society, and they should be supported in finding ways to do so that will be reflected in academic credit.

The multicultural reality of our urban environment and of our own institutional demography alone cannot be assumed to provide this experience, although properly used it should facilitate the internationalization of our programmes. Likewise, our location on the Pacific Rim gives us a unique opportunity for international partnerships and regional focus, especially in Asia and the American hemisphere.

In all fields, we should be building on our successful record for international partnership and for securing development assistance funding. We should be

more proactive in facilitating applications to programmes that support trilateral partnerships and mobility linked to NAFTA and the EU, and we should be aggressive in pursuing other multilateral partnerships and mobility opportunities in strategic areas of research and instruction.

### Research Coordination

Differentiation and competition among universities is perhaps most marked with respect to research. The research funding environment in Canada has increasingly favoured applied science, health science and technology research programmes. Targetted funding to such programmes has been very significant in the last decade, while there has been far less improvement in funding for basic research in the liberal arts and sciences. The funding environment is biased in favour of universities with medical schools and large health sciences and engineering programmes, and against universities like SFU with a large concentration of activity (and excellence) in the liberal arts and sciences. This bias also gives a competitive advantage to the larger institutions (even in the liberal arts and sciences) by allowing a greater measure of financial flexibility and cross-subsidization to support basic research.

If we are to maintain our position as the most research intensive comprehensive university in Canada, we will need to focus greater strategic effort on securing research support. Although we must find ways to do even better in the core research competitions run by SSHRC and NSERC, the real test will be our ability to capitalize on research opportunities where targetted funds are available through initiatives such as SSHRC's New Economy programme, the Centres of Excellence initiative, the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Major Collaborative Research Initiatives programme.

In order to meet this test, we must move quickly to develop strategic plans for each discipline and to establish clusters of excellence in key areas. In this regard, I am committed to making our Institute for Health Research and Education (IHRE) a flagship initiative that will promote new research opportunities across our science, applied sciences, humanities and social science programmes.

The Vice-President, Research, working with the Deans, should establish reasonable targets for improving our success in basic research funding competitions and in targetted research programmes. They should examine the adequacy of our present research support and find ways to coordinate applications on the large scale proposals now favoured by many Federal programmes. Finally, the development of an overall research strategy should take place in consultation with the new Research Advisory Board.

## New Programmes

Universities have always played a key role in helping build the societies which support them, but their contribution to learning and innovation in the "Knowledge Society" is finding a new resonance in the public imagination and in public policy. This contribution is especially important in British Columbia where investments in university education have lagged behind other jurisdictions in Canada and (even more so) in the United States. The shortfall has resulted in BC producing 10% fewer university graduates per capita than the other Canadian provinces, and the overall imbalance is particularly marked in graduation from applied and professional programmes. Coupled to the demographic surge in demand for university education, itself amplified by recognition of the increasing demand in the economy for higher educational qualifications, the historical lag in university investment makes an urgent argument for the development of new programmes and enrollment in the areas of highest demand.

Over the next three years, SFU should concentrate on meeting the increased demand for enrollment, especially in the Applied Sciences, Business and Health Studies.

- Technology  
Play a central role in the "Double the Opportunity" initiative and give priority attention to acquiring the funding needed to double the physical infrastructure, double the faculty resources and double graduation rates in Computing Science, Engineering Science and related liberal arts and sciences programmes.
- Management  
Expand graduate and executive Business programmes within the next three years. The expansion should be strategically directed to niche programmes such as the Management of Technology initiative and the proposed programme in Global Asset and Wealth Management. Assuming that the expansion of graduate professional programs in Business will generate additional resources, these resources should be available to help develop innovative new undergraduate programmes in cooperation with other disciplines such as the recently approved B.Sc. in Molecular Biology, Biochemistry and Business.
- Health  
Direct concerted effort at identifying and implementing new instructional programmes in Health Studies using the IHRE as the development platform. Opportunities are present in the areas of public health and health promotion, health policy and management, and complementary non-medical health services.

When developing new programmes and enrollment, we must pay particular attention to quality and we must not undertake new developments if the supply of resources needed to sustain quality is uncertain. Growth also must be coordinated with an eye to the consequences for other programmes. Cognate curricula affected by growth in Applied Sciences, Business Administration or Health Studies must be as well resourced as the new programmes themselves.

### 3. PEOPLE FOR THE FUTURE

*All plans for the future depend for success on SFU's ability to recruit and retain the best faculty, staff and students.*

Our planning should presume that the academic quality and reputation of a university is a direct function of the intellectual ability of its students, and that a diverse student body, representative of the population, selected only by appropriate indicators of intellectual ability, not influenced by economic capacity, is the only proper objective of enrollment policy.

In order to achieve the most representative, diverse and intellectually first-rate student body, SFU must be able to offer student financial assistance which is as good or better than other Canadian universities.

- Priority over the next ten years will be given to achieving a significant increase in our student assistance budgets and to providing increased access to affordable student residences.

The retention of good students is as important as their recruitment -- it would be a false economy to invest heavily in the recruitment of the best students only to lose them in significant numbers through migration to other institutions before graduation. Retention requires development of the distinctive programmes, curriculum and pedagogy discussed earlier. It also requires student services and support that add quality to the campus experience beyond for-credit learning. Simon Fraser currently devotes less resources to student services than other leading Canadian universities.

- Priority will be given to improving Student Services budgets after first determining where other universities spend more, whether these expenditures are effective and how they are financed.

## Faculty and Staff

The very high retirement rate among faculty and staff over the next decade, added to the demand for enrollment growth, requires special attention to recruitment and retention in a highly competitive market. The history of wage restraint and other regulatory controls in British Columbia, along with the trend toward targeted improvements in grant funding, have placed us at a competitive disadvantage.

- Over the coming year, it is my intention to act as an advocate for free collective bargaining and for the autonomy of the University to manage its employment relationships without regulatory interference.

I will do so in the belief that the administration and the employee bargaining units working together without regulatory interference are in the best position to find solutions to compensation issues.

I also believe that effective recruitment and retention require us to explore how we can best develop non-monetary supports for teaching and research, professional development for all, and succession planning that allows the promotion into governance responsibilities of those best qualified. Creative attention to these issues involves a commitment to equity and collegiality, and to the promotion of a culture that facilitates empowerment, loyalty and identification with the institution by all employees.

- In cooperation with employee bargaining units, we will continue to explore ways to achieve non-monetary objectives for faculty and staff recruitment and retention.

## 4. BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

*SFU must build additional, high-quality infrastructure to meet current demand and to support programme growth.*

The University's top priorities for new capital spending direct relief to our most serious space problems that have accumulated over a long period in which capital spending was frozen and enrollment growth increased. Our priorities also must align with the Government's "New Era" strategy. The top priorities are:

- The Woodward's Project  
The School for Contemporary Arts occupies the worst accommodation of any programme at SFU. By relocating the School to the historic



Woodwards building, the space problem will be solved at the same time that SFU will continue its contribution to the revitalization of the Downtown Eastside through a project that offers a unique blend of housing and commercial development alongside a cultural and educational precinct.

- The Technology and Environment Centre (TEC)  
This project is designed to address the most pressing space problems resulting from increased enrollment in Computing Science, Resource and Environmental Management, Kinesiology, Earth Sciences and Communication.
- "Double the Opportunity" Initiative  
Beyond the need for additional space in the TEC project to accommodate current requirements in Computing Science, the "Double the Opportunity" initiative will need new space and infrastructure if we are to double the size of our programmes in Computing Science and Engineering. Tentative plans for transition space are being pursued with Discovery Parks along with other options that could provide a flexible response to opportunities.
- The Management and Executive Development Centre  
There is a need to expand space for high-demand programmes currently occupying the Harbour Centre campus. A priority focus should be on the expansion of those Business programmes that can generate the revenues necessary to cover the capital cost.
- Student Residence Expansion  
Priority must be given to expanding student residence space. SFU's recruitment efforts are less successful than they should be in part because we offer very restricted access to residence accommodation. We should plan to double the number of residence beds on Burnaby Mountain over 10 years. This can be achieved by building out in the existing residence complex and by providing a new supply of rental accommodation through creative design in the commercial housing development led by the Burnaby Mountain Community Corporation.
- Library Robotic Storage Facility  
The search for funding to build a robotic storage facility as an addition to the Library should continue. The facility would double the capacity of the existing Library and require an operating cost well below the current level.

- Residential College  
Work is continuing on a proposal for a Residential College to be located on Burnaby Mountain. The College facility would combine accommodation for faculty and graduate student fellows as well as facilities for an interdisciplinary, advanced studies programme associated with our leading research centres.
- Athletics and Recreation Facilities  
SFU currently ranks among the worst endowed Canadian universities in terms of its athletic and recreation space allocation relative to student numbers. This shortfall has a deleterious effect on the quality of student life and must be rectified in the next decade. We should begin immediately to plan an expansion of recreation and fitness facilities as part of the Vancouver-Whistler Winter Olympics bid and explore independent financing through private philanthropy and increased ancillary fees.

## 5. FUNDING FOR THE FUTURE

There is a significant gap between the operating funding per full-time enrollment at BC universities and funding enjoyed by equivalent universities in the rest of Canada. In order to address the agenda outlined earlier, this gap must be closed by some mix of improved grant funding and tuition fee income. A top priority will be to advocate for such funding improvements.

A particular component of operating revenue that advantages other Canadian and US universities is the availability of research overhead or infrastructure funding. In order to achieve our strategic objectives for research, it is essential that the one-time research infrastructure funding provided by the Provincial Government in the 2001/2002 Operating Budget is converted to continuing, base funding. This allocation provides necessary leverage for new Federal research monies as well as for research support from the private sector. SFU will continue its strong advocacy role in this regard.

Although government investment in university education is a fundamental public good and must be maintained, it is clear that there are fiscal limits to public support as well as a growing political consensus favouring greater private participation and partnership. With respect to this consensus, SFU will continue its lobby for a matching fund programme that will stimulate private endowments for student financial assistance, new facilities development, endowed chairs and other academic programme enhancements.

While private endowments must be encouraged, they also must be strategically aligned and subordinate to our academic priorities. Accordingly, we will formulate a new five-year fund-raising campaign that will give priority support to the following areas:

- Core Liberal Arts and Science programmes
- Student financial assistance
- The School for Contemporary Arts
- Doubling the Opportunity
- Graduate Business and Executive Development

Most of our objectives for the recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students will require improvements in operating funding. Some objectives, such as improved residence and recreation facilities, will require cost-recovery business plans based on rents and ancillary fees. Detailed and comprehensive financial planning in all these dimensions will need to be developed as a matter of urgency. With such planning in hand, there is no reason to doubt that SFU will sustain through its "middle age" the record of innovation and quality that has characterized its first 36 years.