

For Information

S.00-101

Simon Fraser University
FACULTY OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chair of Senate

FROM: Ernie Love, Dean Pro-Tem, Faculty of Business Administration *Ernie Love*

DATE: October 19, 2000

SUBJECT: Learning Strategies Group (LSG) of the Faculty of Business Administration

At its last meeting, the Board of Governors approved in principle that the Learning Strategies Group (LSG) of the Faculty of Business Administration could proceed to become an incorporated unit, owned wholly by the University and operated by and for the Faculty of Business Administration. In moving forward on this plan, at a subsequent meeting of Senate, information on details regarding the purpose of LSG and the intention of this new structure was requested.

This memo is intended to provide information to Senate as to the activities/purpose of the LSG as an educational bridging enterprise of the Faculty of Business Administration as well as our rationale for proposing to the Board of Governors that the LSG be structured as an incorporated unit.

The Learning Strategies Group (LSG) reports to the Dean of Business through the Associate Dean for Harbour Centre Programs. The mandate of the LSG is to design and deliver customized management education programs and related educational services to business. The LSG specializes in managing educational relationships with client organizations on behalf of the Faculty of Business Administration. It does not market executive development programs to individuals, or conduct other activities that Continuing Studies manages for the Faculty.

The LSG has evolved out of initiatives which were first undertaken by the Faculty in conjunction with the Extension Credit program in Continuing Studies. These early projects showed that there was a need for university level programs that were tailored to the specific needs of employees within large organizations. Over time, it became clear that the main demand from most organizations was the need for more managerial knowledge and expertise and that a close working relationship with faculty members in this field was a critical success factor. For this reason, early in 1999, the LSG was formed within the Faculty of Business Administration.

As a unit of the Faculty of Business Administration, the mandate of LSG is to serve the teaching, research and community service missions of the Faculty by:

1. Providing advanced management education to businesses in British Columbia and beyond. The Learning Strategies Group acts as a "learning partner" to client organizations, helping to develop managerial expertise by providing "in-house" programs and other educational services that directly address the needs of the organizations and their employees. LSG seeks to respond rapidly and decisively to the business needs of its clients, drawing upon intellectual resources within the university and additional expertise as required. It also supports the Faculty's teaching mission by developing customized and industry-specific versions of existing programs. Academic authority for any credit courses or university-certified non-credit programs managed by LSG remains with the University.
2. Building opportunities for applied research. Educational links with organizations provide a good laboratory for studying knowledge development and learning in organizations. Many organizations have a strong interest in evaluating the impact of educational investments and are willing to support such research efforts. In addition, high level, customized education often points out the need for associated research into management practices, research which may provide opportunities for students and faculty members.
3. Increasing the visibility of Simon Fraser University and the Faculty of Business Administration with key constituencies. As an educational bridging enterprise, LSG assists the Faculty in building multi-layered relationships with businesses and with industry associations. Such relationships can create needed opportunities for student placements and jobs, for recruiting students to executive graduate programs, for applied research and case studies, and for executive teaching opportunities. In its bridging role, LSG is a substantive demonstration of the Faculty's commitment to responsive interaction with the business community. This aids in the economic development of the Province by ensuring that the research and management training skills of the business faculty are tailored to meet the needs of individual organizations; thereby enhancing their opportunities for change and growth.
4. Providing revenue to the Faculty of Business Administration. The demand for tailored educational services by business creates an opportunity to generate significant revenue that can support the broader teaching, research, and service missions of the Faculty of Business Administration.

Since its inception, LSG has contributed \$100,000 to other research and teaching activities within the Faculty while also paying for its start-up costs and building a contingency fund. The primary uses of this transferred money are the ongoing support of seminars and speakers, support for new course development and support for more primary research within the Faculty. Twelve faculty members and 5 regular sessional instructors have participated in LSG managed programs and/or applied research. External instructors and other industry experts have been used where appropriate to augment University expertise, as required.

In its first year of activity, LSG was primarily occupied with delivering a leadership development program to more than 250 ICBC managers in several locations around the B.C. It has also managed the delivery of two to four 500 level courses to managers and mining engineers at Cominco's Trail Smelters over each of the last 4 years. The courses at Cominco's smelters have been particularly successful in helping highly skilled engineers understand the managerial and business related aspects of their jobs in a way which contributes to the viability of a key enterprise in an economically challenged region of the province. This success has led to an ongoing educational relationship with Cominco, both at Trail and with the Explorations group in Vancouver.

LSG has also carried out several smaller projects for clients, including The Institute for Railway Technology, BC Gas, Digital Accelerator Corporation, Westport Innovations, Workers Compensation Board, and Discovery Software. It has also undertaken design support and management of the Foundations program for the Management of Technology MBA.

Major projects underway include the development of an educational partnership with the Technology Industries Association of B.C. and a partnership with an online supplier of services to the mining industry worldwide aimed at enhancing managerial capacity in mining companies. This last project involves developing a version of the on-line Graduate Diploma in Business Administration that is customized for the mining industry. This customization lies at the very heart of the LSG mission; permitting the Business Faculty to extend its reach and service to the community.

LSG has developed a distinctive approach to customized executive development programs, which involves extensive consultation with clients to identify strategic learning needs, followed by responsive design of educational initiatives that both advance the skills of individual employees and contribute to meeting key business challenges. One of its strategic goals is to build upon the accumulated experience of associated faculty to offer management education customized to specific industries. In addition, by establishing long-term educational relationships with major employers, LSG seeks to contribute to their overall organizational development and to expand the relationship that the Faculty of Business Administration has with the business community.

As it evolves, the Faculty of Business Administration believes that having a unit such as the LSG is critical to its success both in bridging relationships with a broader cross-section of the business community and in generating revenues in support of other, important under-funded aspects of its mandate. It believes that the status quo is unsatisfactory because LSG currently lacks the flexibility to adapt quickly to the needs and opportunities presented by client organizations and that while many businesses respect the knowledge and expertise of the University, they are suspicious that services provided through the University will not be delivered in an efficient and business-like manner. Incorporation will not decrease the amount of control exercised over the academic content and quality of courses delivered, the way in which instructors are appointed, or students are evaluated.

The Faculty has considered alternatives. One such alternative is to form a society under the B.C. Societies Act, as the University of Victoria has, in order to accomplish similar purposes. However, such a society does not provide the same level of clarity in terms of ownership and governance with respect to the University. Nor does it convey the same business-like intent to clients. Here we would note that in exploring this option, the University's lawyer also questioned whether a society is the appropriate form for an organization which is intended to generate revenue for the Faculty as part of its mandate.

The other approach, and the one we feel is most suited to the need we have is to seek the incorporation of LSG. Other universities have adopted this model, Yale and Duke Universities in the US, and several Australian universities, presumably with the same view of providing a model that is business-like in its flexibility while providing control and naturally, the benefits to the parent university/Faculty. The impact of this, for FBA, will be to establish a suitably entrepreneurial model under the clear ownership of the University and direction of the Faculty. We have a very great desire to see the LSG become a real engine of opportunity for the FBA. This incorporation, which is being considered by the Board of Governors, is to deliver on this mandate.
