

**Administrative Response
to the
External Review Report
Faculty of Forestry
University of Toronto**

21 January 2010

Overview

The Faculty of Forestry sincerely appreciates the service of Professors Jack Saddler and Bruce Bare to the Faculty and University of Toronto (UofT) in their role as external reviewers. Their report is an accurate review of the challenges and opportunities facing the Faculty of Forestry.

The review team noted that the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the review were altered upon their arrival on 17 November 2009, and that their modified TOR were not adequately supported by data concerning relative performance metrics and expense budgets of other divisions at UofT. Furthermore, they were instructed to provide only brief comment on the seven questions addressed in the Faculty Self Study, and instead, to focus on possible reorganization options and appropriate leadership to successfully implement a new structure. Their input to the review process will contribute positively to reorganization discussions that UofT is undertaking; however, given the way in which the review process was modified and conducted, one can conclude that the basis for recommending two options for reorganization (e.g. relocate to FAS or UTSC) could not logically follow on from the external review process. Reorganization consideration was therefore less a conclusion that was reached than a primary charge to the review team. This suggests that more focus be applied to the fundamentals necessary for increasing undergraduate and graduate student enrolment, which would, in turn, drive increased revenue, growth in the faculty complement, and increased relevance of an academic unit to the broad-based forest and natural resource conservation sector. We agree that a satisfactory reorganization alternative needs to be identified.

Our faculty is keen to contribute positively to reorganization discussions across the tri-campus that will allow Forestry to implement financially attractive and viable options that are consistent with our excellence in teaching and research. It is, of course, logical for the faculty to continue to work with colleagues in the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS), Centre for Environment, the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, UTSC and UTM to identify ways in which our contributions to academic programs can be increased and financially supported. To that end, the Faculty Working Group is engaged in consultation across the tri-campus. Any reorganization outcome should logically build upon current productive and cooperative teaching and research conducted by the forestry faculty, and of relevance to the broad-based forest and natural resource conservation sector. Such an outcome would therefore also build upon current strong collaboration in teaching and research with the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering. Leadership by the Provost will be critical in allowing any new academic unit to develop new programs for which it would receive additional BIU-related revenue and develop a solid business plan.

This report represents the outcome of a consultative process involving feedback and suggestions for revision to draft versions of this report, received from Faculty of Forestry's academic staff and the chair of the Faculty Advisory Board, Robert D. Carman (5T4).

Response of the Faculty to specific sections of the external review report

1. Quality and Priorities of the Faculty's Education Activities

The review team noted the high value that undergraduate, professional masters [Masters in Forest Conservation (MFC)], and research stream masters and doctoral students place on their educational experience and support provided for their programs by the Faculty. Students further noted the strength of linkages with cognate divisions in science and engineering. However, it was noted that the Faculty undergraduate and MFC programs are not sustainable under the UofT budget model; and that it was a challenge to reconcile current programs with the budget model.

A central priority of the Faculty is to develop a new business plan. It is concerning that the report suggests divisional academic planning priorities may have been compromised by the current budget model; we recommend that careful attention is paid to maintaining academic excellence and divisional prerogatives.

2. Relevance of the Faculty's Research Activities

The review team noted the significance of the diversity, quality and competitive funding success of our faculty, and complimented the faculty on the high caliber of their grantsmanship, publications and citations. Close and effective research collaboration with cognate divisions with mutual benefits was noted.

Careful coordination of research with the needs of the broad-sense forest and conservation sector and related economic, social and environmental criteria of sustainability will remain a priority.

3. Nature of the Faculty's Relationship with Cognate Units of the University

The Faculty agrees with the importance of the need to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of all possible restructuring alternatives to "build on" current productive and cooperative research conducted by the forestry faculty.

4. Nature of the Faculty's relationship with External Government, Academic and Professional Organizations

External organizations expressed concern that UofT not further erode a "forestry focus" and that restructuring and relocation may exacerbate an already fragile situation. Their request that they be consulted as reorganization options are considered should be honored. The report noted that the new budget model makes an already difficult situation even more problematic.

Again, it is concerning that divisional academic planning priorities may be compromised by the new budget model, this time in relation to external stakeholder relations.

5. Faculty Organization and Financial Structure

The Faculty is pleased that the review team noted the high dedication of staff to our future success; this is reflected in student feedback, as well.

The review team noted the need for additional faculty complement given the multidisciplinary nature of contemporary academic units focused on forest and natural resource conservation and biomaterial science, our strategic education and research goals, and the growing needs of the province and sector internationally. It is recommended that these strategic priorities be given higher attention by UofT, and that the university regain focus on the importance of related education and research programs.

The review team logic model recognized the need to increase undergraduate enrolment related revenue through new program development. They noted the conundrum associated with UofT upper administration urging for new program development and associated new revenue working against competitor divisions pushback preventing new “applied environmental science” program development. It is therefore important to resolve related conflicts, and recommended that discussions to identify financially viable options with other units across the tri-campus be continued.

Points that arise from the following statement on page 4 of the External Review Report -- “the Provost appears committed to finding a solution wherein the forestry faculty can continue to educate more undergraduate students while maintaining a strong focus on graduate and professional education”, especially as linked to the previous sentence – “Recent attempts to redefine the FF as an ‘applied environmental science’ faculty unit with the goal of increasing undergraduate enrollment (primarily on the St. George campus) have not met with success” deserve attention. The history of this Faculty being stonewalled by other UofT divisions, which have thwarted our efforts to increase UG enrolment, clearly indicates the importance of leadership by the Provost in supporting the development of new programs for which a reorganized Forestry academic unit would receive additional BIU-related revenue and develop a solid business plan. Considering reorganization of the Faculty within UofT at this point in time will not result in “finding a solution” to our budget issues unless the underlying structural issues are also addressed. Without a clear commitment by the Provost to allow a reorganized Forestry academic unit to increase UG enrolment in its programs, the new unit will continue to run up against the same stone walls that have prevented at least three previous deans since the 1980s from solving the structural budget deficits facing the Faculty.

6. Long Range Vision of the Faculty

It is pleasing to see the general support for evolution of the Faculty of Forestry into a new unit with a focus on applied environmental (or whatever term is acceptable to other divisions -- such as forest and natural resource conservation) and biomaterial science. The importance of collaboration with FAS, the Centre for Environment, and the Faculty

of Applied Science and Engineering to realize our Faculty's undergraduate education potential and to continue to build strong graduate programs that are highly competitive in attracting the brightest and best domestic and international students is noted.

7. Recommendations of Previous External Reviews

Our faculty are disappointed that the 2004 external review recommendations to resolve the organization problems of environmental programs on the St George campus are still unresolved. And we note with dismay the review team comment about the elusive nature of financial recognition for undergraduate teaching conducted by the Faculty of Forestry.

We recommend that related issues be addressed concurrently with discussions related to reorganization of the Faculty of Forestry. Furthermore, we are concerned that the strategic goal of Forestry to transform and rebrand our education programs away from marginalized views of "traditional forestry" to meet the evolving needs of contemporary society have been suppressed by other divisions at UofT and not supported by upper administration; a concern that is not new, but has occurred at UofT since the mid-1980s (see Kuhlberg 2009).

External organizations should be consulted during reorganization discussions.

8. Summary and Recommendations

The Faculty is concerned that the revised TOR were not well supported by documentation provided to the review team.

Faculty are pleased that the review team stated the quality of the Faculty of Forestry is "unassailable"; and note their support for our strategic goal to contribute to the "greening" of the economy and our efforts to be a global player in conservation and biomaterial science.

Faculty are also pleased that the review team noted that our students are impressive and appreciative of the Faculty's learning environment; we are concerned that such a learning environment may not be sustainable in the current budget environment. This again suggests that application of the new budget model may be in conflict with academic priorities, in spite of academic priorities being clearly stated as the highest priority when the new budget model was approved in 2005.

Our faculty are seeking support to resolve the four forces noted by the review team that have prevented us from developing a viable business plan: the UofT budget model; graduate enrolment; lack of an undergraduate program; and the rapidly changing landscape of forest resource (and we include natural resource conservation and biomaterial science) academic programs internationally.

The faculty will explore the list of reorganization suggestions, and note the importance of financially attractive and viable options, and the need to consult externally to review any recommendations.

Next Steps to Go Forward

The Provost has appointed a Working Group, chaired by Professor Sandy Smith and including Professors Mohini Sain and Shashi Kant from the Faculty of Forestry, to discuss the options for moving forward. Vice-Provost Academic Cheryl Regehr will support the group, as required. The Working Group has initiated consultations with other UofT divisions and a broad array of stakeholders, both internal and external to the Faculty and university, in order to identify the optimal strategy for Faculty reorganization. The Working Group will assess the pros and cons of the potential alternatives and submit their final report to the Provost 1 July 2010 outlining the recommended option.

References

Kuhlberg, M. 2009. One Hundred Rings and Counting – Forestry Education and Forestry in Toronto and Canada, 1907-2007. University of Toronto Press. 334 p.