Mini Project #3: Research

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The notes below are a composite of four meetings held on Feb 4, Feb 9, Feb 14, Feb 23, 2005.

1. There are several items in the Research section of the draft academic plan that we flag as either problematic or as missing information. They are:

a. Concern that we are emphazing the "inter/multi-disciplinary" discussion at the expense of the disciplinary focus- all academic foci are necessary to academic excellence. Some faculty members question the source of this interdisciplinary thrust.

b. Confusion about the term "integrate" and "integrated" as it related to integration of teaching and research. What does this mean exactly when it is operationalized?

c. Facilitiating integration requires a commitment to institutional support and restructuring which is not really clearly laid out (although we realize details may be beyond the scope of the Academic Plan). Nonetheless, we feel that there should be a new item somewhere in this section about infrastructure specifically, under which several action items could be listed. See below re: Develop infrastructure.

d. The reference to "silos" is problematic; most of us don't really see this as a problem that exists here, although it may be an issue elsewhere. The suggestion to "avoid silos" is prescriptive and makes an assumption. As well, the idea of silos becomes problematic if a silo is seen as a disciplinary (as opposed to interdisciplinary) focus.

e. Likewise, on p. 13, there is an assumption that there are structural barriers to interdisciplinary research and learning; is this necessarily true here? We suggest deleting the very last heading on p. 13.

f. There is no place in the document that articulates principles for future hirings or for development of programs. It may be that these activities will be left up to the total discretion of individual departments; still, we may want to consider these items for inclusion somewhere.

2. Sidebars

a. Possible sidebars that could be included:
The institution as a whole needs to be flexible and responsive to research opportunities as they arise.
UBC Okanagan will develop a Strategic Research Plan that anticipates these opportunities

b. The sidebar re: Interdisciplinary should take into account that sometimes "interdisciplinary" means one individual working with multiple specialities. Delete 'most conventionally" and say: "This occurs when an individual works with multiple specialties or when two or more specialists work together to solve a problem…."

3. We recommend that some type of research advisory committee should be struck (building on a former OUC committee) to work with the incoming VP Academic & Research. Perhaps this should be a standing committee of Senate (reporting to Senate)

4. Our suggested changes would result in the following restructuring and revisions in the Research section pp 9-12. This is how we envision this section, more or less- some items have been deleted altogether because they seem weak or confusing. In some sections, we suggest a better balance between the disciplinary and interdisciplinary discussion. In brief, our view is that we do not want to emphasize the interdisciplinary at the expense of those faculty whose research and teaching are rooted in disciplinary excellence.

Facilitate a Broad Spectrum of Research

"The Okanagan provides a fertile environment for research across many disciplines, and in many cases the people and industries of the Okanagan Valley hunger for the solutions that our researchers may provide. Like UBC Vancouver, UBC Okanagan is destined to become a regional economic engine. Many faculty and researchers will grapple with issues that look further afield, or with local issues that have global implications."

Support basic research
Explore all funding opportunities (action items would include developing budgets for start-up or upgrade grants)
Develop mentorship and incentives as ingredients of success
Recognize opportunities for interdisciplinary work
Ensure that UBC Okanagan is represented within UBC system-wide Research Services

Encourage the application of research
Nurture collaboration, external partnerships
Search out international opportunities
Explore the creation of a community liaison office to coordinate information between institutional and external partners

Develop infrastructure to support UBC Okanagan Research
Provide adequate support for all research support committees: Research Ethics, Animal Care, Radiation and Biohazard Safety
Evaluate current and projected space for animal care facilities
Educate faculty: workshops for faculty (ethics, grant-writing)
Centralize IT support for research
Develop research data centres that house servers (a physical space for computing power)
Connect to Optical Research Advance Network
Develop strategies for Research Centres that help facilitate institution-wide research needs and outreach
Streamline through VP Research office the administration of grants
Centralize on-site institutional research support services: GIS, statistics, analytical services, electronics
Space for animal care facilities

Engage the community
Develop UBC Okanagan research opportunities through internal and external discussion

Celebrate and reward research
Hold an annual scholar's reception
Create nominating committee for external awards
Publicize research findings, applications of research, etc.

Integrate Teaching & Research

All good teaching uses research to inform it. Research has the capacity to enrich the undergraduate experience. Undergraduate contributors can bring energy, intelligence, and open-mindedness to the research challenge. As UBC Okanagan celebrates excellence in teaching and research, it also promotes overlap between the two.

Use research to inform the learning experience
Encourage innovative teaching and analysis of pedagogy
Promote scholarship, basic research as well as application to practice
Ensure that graduates and undergraduates alike are exposed to a wide variety of research and research methods
Timetable field trips as social science research projects

Support and reward the integration of research and learning [this bullet could highlight the points related to the undergraduate experience]

Establish an interdisciplinary undergraduate research committee to foster, create and coordinate research opportunities for undergraduates
Create research projects cost grants as an incentive for students and faculty
Establish a peer review publication for undergraduate research
Promote and communicate undergraduate research projects through community programs

Learning technology infrastructure [we agree that this section belongs here, inclusive of its bulleted points]

Nurture Themes, Programs and Collaborations

The complexity of modern science is such that many research advances are occurring at the cusp of disciplines- or at least demand the input of more than one specialist. Accordingly, UBC Okanagan will: recognize both disciplinary and interdisciplinary challenges when hiring; create institutional venues that capitalize on the interdisciplinary interface; keep research space flexible; create communal space that promotes interaction among faculty to increase potential for collaboration.

Support and continue development of new programs
[missing from list on p. 12: Environmental Sciences, Graduate studies, Faculty of Creative and Performing Arts]

Encourage and facilitate collaboration
Create incentives to assist research teams and research centres
Sponsor internal colloquia
Research reception to honour collaborations and partnerships
Seed funding for collaborative grants

Develop UBC Okanagan as a research hub in the humanities and the performing arts
[We're not really sure why this heading is included insofar as it singles out certain faculty members, or a faculty; plus, the bullets underneath don't really seem to map on to the heading].