

**Report of the Panel**  
**for the Administrative Review of the**  
**Glenn Roy Blundon Centre for**  
**Students with Disabilities**

**Memorial University of Newfoundland**

**July 25, 2007**

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## Executive Summary

The Glenn Roy Blundon Centre for Students with Disabilities was opened early in 1992 and was named for a former student of Memorial who advocated for the rights of students with disabilities. Glenn Blundon, from Bay de Verde, passed away in 1984 and his memory is kept alive by the hard work and dedication of those who assist students with disabilities every day at Memorial University. Even current student clients of the Blundon Centre who were born since Glenn passed away, respect that memory and are passionate about the Centre being named for him.

In the early days of the Centre, there were very few students who needed or requested services and accommodations. The numbers have grown exceptionally since then and particularly within the past few years.

In November 2005, the University's Senate struck an *ad hoc* committee to review the appeal of a student who had been a client of the Blundon Centre. The review addressed a number of issues around the Senate procedures for appeals, but it also identified that more staffing and expertise may be needed at the Blundon Centre and therefore recommended that this particular issue be addressed. The Dean of Student Affairs and Services accepted the recommendation and expanded it to include a complete administrative review of the unit, following a tailored version of the Procedures for Review of Administrative Units (which are normally followed by units falling under the Vice-President (Academic), hence the reason they were tailored).

The unit's Self Study was conducted between March and May of 2007 and the site visit occurred in mid-June. The review panel took as broad an approach as possible in gathering information and has made recommendations in the areas of: Staffing, Services, Space, Budget, Technology, Systems, Community Service, Promotion, Facilities, Faculty Rights. These recommendations appear throughout the report and are summarized, for convenience, at the end.

The Blundon Centre is a model of student service delivery. Every in-person or written submission to the review panel described the Centre as exemplary in its service delivery, a real credit to the staff who are employed there. To continue to be one of the areas that contributes so significantly to Memorial University's success, the Centre needs more resources, particularly in the areas of staff, space and budget and these are described in more detail in the sections that follow.

## **Background and Methodology**

The panel conducting the Administrative Review of the Glenn Roy Blundon Centre (hereinafter referred to as the Blundon Centre) comprised:

Donna L. Ball (Panel Chair)  
Senior Policy Analyst  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Professor Vivienne Kuester  
School of Human Kinetics and Recreation  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dr. Allyson Harrison  
Clinical Director, Regional Assessment and Resource Centre  
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The panel received the Blundon Centre's Self Study on June 5, 2007 and additional documentation following that including: electronic versions of the registration data for the Centre, the University's Policy on Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities, sample forms used in the Blundon Centre, revised tables showing Memorial's benchmark position relative to the eight universities included in the benchmarking analysis, the Blundon Centre's "Guidelines for Invigilators" and "Scribing and Reading Guidelines".

Ms. Robyn Saunders of the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning at Memorial assisted in the coordination of the Site Visit and attended all sessions. The Site Visit occurred on June 18 and 19, 2007, during which time the Panel met with a total of 32 individuals from the University and the broader community, representing many constituencies - senior administration of Student Affairs and Services, staff of the Blundon Centre, staff of the Counselling Centre, student employees of the Blundon Centre, student clients of the Blundon Centre, members of the Dean's Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities, academic administrators, faculty, Registrar's Office, School of Graduate Studies, campus coordinators at the Marine Institute (MI) and Sir Wilfred Grenfell College (SWGC), Facilities Management, Housing, Food and Conference Services, Instructional Development Office, and the Library and Commons area. See complete list in Appendix A.

In addition to personalized invitations to meet with the Review Panel, there was a general call, across Memorial's *Newsline*, for anyone in the University to contact the Chair of the panel to set up a meeting time or to make a written submission. There were 3 written submissions. See Appendix B for the Guidelines for Written Submissions.

The panel is grateful to all those who met with us or made written submissions. Their input was invaluable and their honesty and openness enlightened us. The panel is particularly grateful to the staff of the Blundon Centre for their thorough and comprehensive Self Study.

## **Staffing**

### *1. How well are staff resources being used?*

The Blundon Centre was established in 1992 with one full time permanent staff member, Student Affairs Officer, a position commonly referred to as the Blundon Centre Coordinator and which we will refer to as the Coordinator. The duties of this position include; strategic planning, advocacy, information dissemination, administrative and clerical functions, consultations with and workshops for faculty, graduate students and staff, arranging diagnosis and accommodations for students and much more. From 1991-1995 there were three contractual positions, supported by external grants, who ran a high school transition programme.

Since 1992 undergraduate students have been employed on a semester basis mostly from MUCEP grants. Over time the numbers employed have increased as more students registered with the Centre. The duties of these student employees include: clerical and reception duties; research; reading; proctoring; scribing tests and exams and assistance to students in using adaptive technology. In 2005 a new contractual position, Academic Programme Assistant (later retitled Academic Programme Administrator), was created to alleviate the workload of the Coordinator. Since 2004 an Assistant Professor in Counselling (Psycho-Educational Testing Service), hereinafter referred to as the Assistant Professor, has been available on a part-time basis through the Counselling Centre. As well, this person provides learning disability assessments, on a fee-per-service basis. Other staff from the Counselling Centre, including a Learning Specialist, are also available for consultations.

#### **A. Use by students**

Students who use the Blundon Centre were unanimous in praising the work of the Coordinator, and the Academic Program Administrator for their hard work, commitment, and dedication to the office. It appears that students with disabilities feel comfortable approaching the Blundon Centre and asking for assistance. The difficulty appears to be that there are far more students needing to use the services of the Blundon Centre than when it was established (See Appendix C), and the staffing complement has not kept pace with this increased demand. As a result, we heard from students that it is difficult to get an appointment with the Coordinator because her days are fully booked already. This creates problems for students who have urgent problems or issues that have to be dealt with in a time-sensitive manner. One student voiced frustration at the fact that the only person on campus qualified to assist with a particular problem has no ability to help when problems need to be solved fairly quickly.

Students described a bottleneck situation in the Blundon Centre, where each student with a disability must register each semester and verify their specific accommodation requirements with the Coordinator, which is through a personal interview for first-time registrants. Given that the Blundon Centre now deals with approximately 200 students a semester, this means that many students are required to wait weeks or months in order to update their profile or register for the first time. While students all seemed to appreciate that this was due to lack of manpower, they remain frustrated by the time needed to deal with their disability-specific needs each term.

Students not only utilize the staff resources of the Blundon Centre as clients, but many of them work there as student assistants, a dual role that has good and bad points. The student assistants working there observe that there is a high staff turn-over rate in the office, not simply because the student assistants are only able to work a certain number of hours/week, but also because many of these students find the pace and demands on staff time in the Blundon Centre to be too onerous and overwhelming. If students working as receptionists feel this way, the

panel could only wonder what the permanent staff in the office experience.

Because the Blundon Centre organizes and invigilates all term tests and final exams for students with disabilities, their office is particularly busy during certain times of the year. While student clients again were grateful for the opportunity to write these assessments in a more "disability-friendly" environment, we heard from some students that overcrowding and slow service are significant problems during exam period. Waiting 15-20 minutes to be seated for an exam due to an understaffed office was just one of the complaints voiced, although this same student was quick to praise Blundon Centre staff for being able to handle as many exams as they do without making mistakes.

Students also noted that a centre such as this should be able to help students with disabilities evaluate the latest assistive technology to help them make informed and appropriate purchases of such devices or software. This is not possible, due largely to lack of staff time available for this assistance.

Students also suggested that staff resources could be better utilized if registration for the Blundon Centre were available on-line, so they did not have to fill out their accommodation and personal information forms by hand each term.

#### **B. Use by staff for advice**

University staff members whom we interviewed all discussed the willingness of the Coordinator to give of her time and expertise to help with any problem or answer any question posed. The Coordinator offers assistance and advice when issues of student housing are raised. Concern was voiced by staff about the hours that Coordinator must keep in order to meet the demands imposed by the Blundon Centre, including regularly replying to mail late at night or coming in early to deal with issues affecting students with disabilities or with questions posed by staff.

Facilities Management talked about the close working relationship their department has with the Blundon Centre, and the many projects and devices they build or repair for students with disabilities at no cost to either the student or the Blundon Centre. They certainly appear to make use of the expertise available at the Blundon Centre, and communicate regularly about disability-specific physical-plant issues.

The Coordinator also appears to play a key role in assisting indirectly with the provision of disability supports at two other campuses – MI and SWGC. She is available as a resource if any questions about disability-related issues arise. This is especially true when these offices are required to determine if requested accommodations are fair and reasonable given the unique nature of some of the programs offered at the MI, for example.

The panel heard that the Coordinator is too busy at present to provide more general support to many of the staff who deal with students with disabilities on a daily basis, and who hoped that this review would allow time to be freed up so that she could offer more staff training and information sessions.

#### **C. Use by faculty (including academic administrators) for advice and expertise**

Faculty reported that in general they rely on the Blundon Centre to make appropriate and reasonable recommendations regarding accommodations for students with disabilities in their programs or courses.

Issues arose, however, with respect to whether or not the accommodations recommended were always equitable, especially when this meant that the professor had to make up a different (but hopefully equivalent) exam for students who write exams "every other day", or when extra time is provided for students in exams/tests who will not then be permitted additional time for tasks when they graduate and become employed or during their work terms.

Another contentious issue was identified with respect to accommodating students with severe behavioural problems. While faculty at the MI are notified ahead of time if a student with high needs will be in his/her class (although the student is not specifically named), and faculty at SWGC are given more specific information ahead of time about various students with specific disabilities in their upcoming classes, no such system exists at the main campus. If a student with a serious disability chooses not to identify him or herself to the professor, the faculty member in question can be "blindsided" by in-class behaviours that threaten not only the physical plant of the class, but also the welfare of other students. One academic administrator interviewed was particularly worried about the ability of the Blundon Centre to set limits on the types of behaviours that needed to be accommodated by faculty.

The Blundon Centre has attempted to deal with such behavioural issues by instituting a "triage committee", comprising representatives from the Blundon Centre, a counsellor with expertise in the areas of learning and behavioural issues, and the Learning Specialist from the Counselling Centre. This team has focused mainly on providing support services to the one student about whom we heard who has a significant behavioural problem and would respond to "calls for help" from faculty members and administrators who tried to manage this student's disruptive and worrisome in-class behaviour. Reportedly, there were six such "calls for help" this past year, where the professor and/or departmental administrators were at their wit's-end and needed advice. Faculty still seemed to feel that more help is required if they are to deal with such students on a more regular basis as part of their teaching load. It was noted that the University's Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities was void of any statement of faculty rights.

**Recommendation #1** A statement of faculty rights with respect to students with disabilities be developed in consultation with the Director of Faculty Relations and MUNFA. This could be incorporated into the University's Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities or be developed separately. Appendix D contains a sample statement of Faculty Rights from the University of Wisconsin – Platteville, adapted from a document produced by Dr. Harrison, which could be used as a guide or a starting point for discussion.

Faculty wished that more disability-specific training, advice and support was available from the Blundon Centre, but appreciated that the Coordinator currently does not have the time to devote to such activities. Nevertheless, the general feeling was that the expertise of the Coordinator could be better utilized in a role of educator and advisor to the University, by hiring additional staff to tend to the day-to-day running and managing of the Blundon Centre itself. Faculty felt that the Coordinator's expertise could be directed towards activities such as the new faculty orientation, so that incoming faculty could receive some specialized training in the most appropriate ways to accommodate and support students with disabilities. At present, such input is not possible.

## *2. How successful is the unit in implementing University employment equity policies?*

As far as the panel could tell, the Blundon Centre is implementing the University's employment

equity policies appropriately. They have hired international students and students with disabilities (both visible and invisible in nature). Reasonable job accommodations have also been provided for some of these individuals.

### *3. Are staff workloads equitable and appropriate to the unit's mission?*

Compared to other Disability Offices at comparable-sized universities, the panel unanimously felt that the staff workloads at the Blundon Centre were neither appropriate nor equitable. Although there is a question as to exactly how other similar-sized institutions actually count the number of students they served, it was clear from the benchmarking survey undertaken by the Coordinator (Appendix C of the Self Study) that the Blundon Centre is woefully understaffed and underfunded. Although the Blundon Centre provides all the same services offered at other similar-sized institutions, they do so with 33% of the staffing complement available at these other universities, and with a fraction of the operating budget. To put this in perspective, the average operating budget for the two comparable institutions responding to this question was \$381,538. By contrast, the operating budget for the Blundon Centre in 2006-07 was \$141,639.

In this national benchmarking survey, which was answered by 8 institutions, the total number of employees in their disability offices ranged from 3 to 13. When looking at the 4 institutions that were deemed to be most similar in size to Memorial University, the average number of full-time permanent staff working in disability services was 5.5. Of interest was the fact that, even though these offices have far more staff than does the Blundon Centre, one of their main concerns identified was staff workload, which was increasing in proportion to the growing number of students with disabilities attending university.

The panel was surprised and concerned to learn of the amount of overtime required of the Blundon Centre staff in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. At present, the office has been able to meet the University's human rights obligations to reasonably accommodate students with disabilities mainly by working inappropriate, excessive amounts of overtime. While some of this overtime is "regular", meaning that the Coordinator and her one staff member take equivalent time "in lieu", even this is not enough to meet the demands placed upon the office. The panel learned that the Coordinator and Academic Program Administrator work 60-hour weeks for more than 26 weeks of the year and 80-hour weeks for at least four weeks of the year. They describe this as "volunteer overtime". Especially at times when students with disabilities are writing exams proctored and run by Blundon Centre, the Coordinator and the Administrator must be available well beyond the normal work day to deal with any issues or crises that arise in a timely manner. They carry a cell phone for this on call.

With the increase in the numbers of students being identified as having a disability, including other categories of disability e.g. autistic spectrum disorders, this workload pressure can only increase. The overwhelming evidence from the Self Study and site visit sessions is that the Blundon Centre staff are overworked and stressed and that more permanent staff are needed to more effectively deliver services. When staff are working long days in order to do everything that needs to be done it must reduce their efficiency to meet all needs. In addition, the University has placed itself at enormous risk in that if one or more of the staff became ill for any period of time, the Blundon Centre would in effect, have to shut down. There would be no services to meet the University's human rights obligations.

The panel agrees that at least 3 new permanent positions should be established, and additional funds should be identified to increase the number of days the Assistant Professor is available to serve students with disabilities.

**Recommendation #2:** Hire a permanent full-time Learning Strategist (or facilitator or advisor). This professional should have a background in Education, Occupational Therapy or Psychology. Establish the position as a staff position, so as to reduce any conflict of interest should there be disputes about accommodations or supports recommended to faculty. This position should work with and report directly to the Coordinator, and should provide counselling and support to students registered with the Blundon Centre and work with faculty on students' needs and accommodations.

**Recommendation #3** Confirm the contractual Academic Program Administrator position as a permanent position to deal with accommodation issues and technical support questions and to assume full responsibility for supervision of student assistants.

**Recommendation #4** Hire a permanent full-time Administrative Assistant to assume clerical responsibilities, answer telephone, take appointments, file, collect and copy tests and exams, etc.

**Recommendation #5** Increase to two the number of days per week that the Assistant Professor is working out of the Counselling Centre. The panel felt it was vital that this position be seen as operating at "arms-length" from the Blundon Centre, especially since this person will be doing assessments of students referred from the Blundon Centre for documentation of a disability. The panel was also of the opinion that this person should undertake the vetting of any disability-related documentation of a psychological nature.

**Recommendation #6** Re-title the Coordinator position as Manager of the Blundon Centre and provide the incumbent formal professional development training in the area of managerial skills and delegation of responsibilities. The position should be less involved in the daily operations (leaving those duties to the Administrative Assistant and the Academic Program Administrator) and more responsible for oversight of the Centre and the University's policies and plans for students with disabilities. Specific responsibilities would include: managing the operations of the Centre, promoting the Centre, advocating for students with disabilities, training University faculty and staff in disability-related issues, advising the University community appropriately, liaising appropriately with external groups, researching retention/graduation rates of students with disabilities, etc.

**Recommendation #7:** The Director of the Counselling Centre, who is in effect the Director of the Blundon Centre, take a lead role in managing the staffing growth recommended in this report. The staff has become entrenched in operating the Blundon Centre with excessive amounts of overtime. With the addition of new staff positions, the overtime can be reduced and perhaps eliminated, but transitioning away from the longstanding practices will be a challenge, which should be spearheaded by the Director.

4. *Are administrative decisions made and administrative tasks carried out efficiently and effectively?*

When the only full-time permanent employee at the Blundon Centre is regularly required to invest 12 hours a day in order to keep up with demands for services and supports, one would assume that administrative decisions and tasks would not be carried out efficiently or effectively. While the panel felt it was astounding that the Blundon Centre could complete all that it does, it is our opinion that this office is not presently working in the most efficient and

effective manner possible. Even the student comments cited earlier indicate that the use of the University's on-line student system, Memorial Self Service, for registering and requesting accommodation would greatly increase the efficiency of the unit.

5. *Are the staff associations with regional, national, and international units compatible with the mission of the unit?*

The mission of the Blundon Centre is:

*To coordinate services and programs that enable students with disabilities to maximize their educational potential and to increase awareness of inclusive values among all members of the university community. The Centre assists students by facilitating access to information, services, and campus facilities. It carries out its mission in partnership with faculty, staff, and students at Memorial University and off-campus agencies including disability community organizations.*

This mission statement specifically encourages and indeed obliges partnerships within and outside the University. The Blundon Centre has representation on a number of University committees and working groups and in some cases has initiated the establishment of committees to fulfill its mandate. Regionally, the Centre is represented on the provincial government's new Working Group for Disability Services, a White Paper initiative and the Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Blundon Centre staff has participated in national associations as well: the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services, the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education, the National Educational Association of Disabled Students and the Association on Higher Education and Disability.

The panel concludes that the staff associations are quite appropriate to the Centre's mission and therefore should be maintained. International opportunities could be explored once the Centre's under-resourcing issues are addressed.

## **Community Service**

1. *Is the unit fulfilling opportunities to serve the community? (MUN community and greater community - schools, province etc.)*

### **A. Service to Students**

Throughout the discussions and reading the Self Study there is a strong sense that the Blundon Centre is serving the student community well, considering its minimal staffing levels. As one student client said 'The Blundon Centre gives students with disabilities confidence'. Today the Centre is serving more students than it did 10 years ago and has attracted some students with disabilities from outside the province. Though the majority of students served have learning disabilities the number of students identified with other conditions e.g. mental health conditions and autistic spectrum disorders has risen which is consistent with other Canadian centres

The present structure of reporting within the Counselling Centre has enhanced the Blundon Centre's ability to serve students. This new organizational structure has meant better coordination of services leading to better student experiences. For example, the Coordinator and the Counsellors have been able to offer group workshops on coping and/or learning strategies where students can share their ideas and help one another.

Students pointed out that the current system of registering for test accommodations is outdated and cumbersome (“antiquated” was the term used), necessitating that a student make at least 4 trips to the Blundon Centre in order to arrange for 1 exam. With many courses a semester, students felt this took up too much of their time.

**Recommendation #8** Students be permitted to register (or withdraw their registration) with the Blundon Centre and each semester be able to request their accommodations through the on-line system they currently use, Memorial Self Service.

There are a number of benefits of this recommendation. The data collection would be streamlined for students, using technology that they are already comfortable with and the services of the Centre can be promoted. For example, if at the end of a student’s first time registering for course at Memorial, there were a message about the Blundon Centre and the University’s services for students with disabilities, students could become registered with the Centre and have their accommodations established before classes begin. Routinely now, accommodations are not established until at least five or six weeks into the semester and many new students take at least one semester (often a difficult semester) to discover the Blundon Centre and the disability services that exist. Also, class rosters could be used to indicate, with or without anonymity (with appropriate permissions), that there are students registered in the course with behavioural or other disabilities.

#### **B. Service to Faculty and Staff**

On campus, information needs to be available not only to students, but to faculty and staff as many may not be aware of the available services. Workshops are offered for faculty and graduate students but more needs to be done to educate faculty, graduate students and staff about the Blundon Centre as well as specific disabilities and how to facilitate student learning by making adaptations to teaching strategies. Through DELT’s Instructional Development Office, graduate teaching assistants receive information on the services of the Blundon Centre and disability issues from the Coordinator. The feedback from the graduate students is very positive. Faculty/staff need forewarning about certain disabilities e.g. autistic spectrum disorder so that they can implement strategies to help students. The Coordinator is willing to help faculty/staff and has been able to assist some instructors to help students but more of this should occur. Information re Blundon Centre services and disability issues should be included as a part of the orientation process for new faculty and more seminars should be available to all faculty and staff.

The Centre should provide greater service to faculty in training them to be prepared for students with disabilities. It does a very good job now through the Instructional Development Office. The student clients of the Blundon Centre, in particular stressed the need for faculty to become more aware of types of disabilities, types of needs and accommodations and the University’s Policy on Academic Accommodations.

**Recommendation #9:** The Coordinator continue providing training sessions through the Instructional Development Office, begin giving training sessions during the orientation for new faculty, and develop plans to ensure all instructors, including lab demonstrators, sessional lecturers, graduate teaching assistants, etc. are better informed about and prepared for students with disabilities.

### **C. Service to other University units**

As a result of collaborations between the Blundon Centre and the Library there are more adaptive technology services available for students but there is a need to ensure that duplication of equipment by the Blundon Centre and the Library is avoided.

Part of the mandate of the Blundon Centre and the Dean's Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities is to advocate for an accessible environment on campus. Members of the Committee feel that they are effective and are currently conducting an accessibility audit. However, environmental accessibility/modification issues are limited by the level of funding. Together they have been instrumental in achieving many environmental improvements thus ensuring greater accessibility. Much of this involves close collaboration with Facilities Management and whenever funding becomes available, improvements are made according to their priority 'wish list'. These adaptations have been many and include: the making of accessible student tables/chairs; emergency evacuation adaptations for the hearing impaired; ramps and elevators; changes to some residence spaces to accommodate students with disabilities; door handles and automatic doors.

Recently the University announced funding over a five-year period for new elevators and renovations to existing elevators. The panel applauds the senior administration for this commitment. The University also announced new monies for a new residence. It will be important for the Blundon Centre to continue to work with Student Housing on the design of the new building.

**Recommendation #10:** Funding be made available on an annual basis from the University budget so that planned modifications to existing infrastructure, as identified through the accessibility audit and advocated for by the Blundon Centre and the Dean's Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities, can be made on an ongoing rather than *ad hoc* basis.

As well as the work with Facilities Management, Housing, Food and Conference Services, the Library and the Instructional Development Office, the Blundon Centre is currently involved in a legal and risk assessment of the accessibility of the Harlow Campus. The evidence is clear that the Blundon Centre is doing a great deal to enable students with disabilities to access and receive appropriate services, by liaising with other units within the University.

### **D. Service to Prospective Students**

From 1991-1995 as a result of external funding three individuals were employed to run the Blundon Centre's high school transition programme, GOAL - Get out and learn. The panel heard that the University needs to reinstate such a transition program for students with disabilities. Other provinces successfully provide on-line programs which utilize supervised teacher-candidates. This would be an opportunity to help students become aware of the Blundon Centre and its many services before they begin classes.

**Recommendation #11:** The Blundon Centre partner with the Faculty of Education to establish an online (or in-person) transition program for students with disabilities entering Memorial University. To reduce the need for additional resources, the program could utilize supervised teacher candidates who benefit by learning more about on-line teaching and learning, and by being introduced to adaptive technologies currently used by students with disabilities.

We also believe that the Blundon Centre should be doing much more to communicate with applicants. We learned from the Registrar and the Manager of the Academic Advising Centre of the recent institutional efforts toward applicant-to-student conversion, specifically the Establishing Student Relationships project which has a number of communications with applicants. The Blundon Centre message needs to become part of these communications, to promote Memorial as a University with excellent and committed services for students with disabilities and to help students become aware of those services much earlier in the cycle. We also learned that many students who were diagnosed with learning disabilities in the school system are reluctant to share that information with the University, for a variety of reasons (some believing that once they graduate high school, they no longer have a disability). The messages in the communications should consider the sensitivity of this.

**Recommendation #12:** The Coordinator work with the applicant-to-student conversion projects to promote, through appropriate communications, the services of the Centre as an attractive feature of life at Memorial and to encourage students with disabilities who decide to attend Memorial to contact the Blundon Centre for consultation as early as possible.

#### **E. Service to the High School System**

We learned that the extent to which the Blundon Centre can work with the high school system is the mailing of a Blundon Centre brochure to guidance counselors. There are many communication access points to the high school system. It is important that the Blundon Centre avail of these to increase awareness, among parents and guidance counselors.

**Recommendation #13:** The Coordinator work with the Academic Advising Centre and the Office of Student Recruitment and Promotion to increase the profile of the Blundon Centre in the High School system through activities such as Mainsail newsletter, Parents Nights, conferences with Guidance Counsellors, the high school interview process, etc.

#### **F. Service to the Province**

As part of the White Paper Initiatives, the provincial government recently established the Public Post-Secondary Student Services Advisory Committee and that Committee's Working Group for Disability Services. The Blundon Centre is represented on both of these. Since these formed only recently it is too early to assess their success, but the panel saw these as good partnerships for learning, networking and for leadership opportunities for the Blundon Centre.

#### **G. Service to Community Disability Groups**

Unfortunately, there was very little representation from Community disability groups during the site visit, so it is difficult to comment comprehensively on the Centre's Service to the disability community. However, we note that there is very good and broad representation of community groups on the Dean's Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities. The one community organization representative who spoke with the panel had high praise for the Blundon Centre's relationship with his group and believed strongly the University has a leadership role to play in disability services and programming in this province.

#### *2. How does the unit's mission respond to the needs and priorities of the community?*

As noted earlier, the Blundon Centre's mission statement encourages community partnerships, within the University and with external agencies. From the input we received we conclude the mission does respond appropriately to the community's needs and priorities. We also

acknowledge that with more staff the Blundon Centre can strengthen its relationships with external community groups.

## **Entrepreneurship**

### *1. Is the unit seeking and pursuing appropriate opportunities for entrepreneurial activities?*

Presently, the unit cannot seek and pursue many such opportunities due to lack of time and resources. The Coordinator has attempted to maintain collegial ties with other similar disability offices, both by electronic means and by attending conferences when feasible, but she lacks time to do more than this.

### *2. Is the unit seeking a wide variety of activities in order to generate external funding appropriate to its mandate?*

There are very few places where external funding for this office could be accessed. The Coordinator appears to have done her best to identify any funding agencies to which she could appeal, as reflected in her track record of obtaining funds to pay for a number of services, supports and programs in the past. In addition, she also utilizes student assistants to offset personnel costs in the office. The panel is not aware of any other types of activities in which the Coordinator could be engaging in order to generate additional, externally-provided funds. However if there are funding opportunities, with existing staff workloads, we cannot see how staff at the Blundon Centre could find time to investigate and pursue these for additional programs and services.

We did learn that there are funding opportunities for students with disabilities. The staff try to keep apprised of these to guide student clients to seek them and apply for them. Again, with existing staff levels, this is a challenge.

## **University Support**

### *1. Is the unit receiving adequate resources from its Division and from the University at large?*

Without an in-depth analysis of the budget of the Student and Affairs and Services, it is difficult to know whether the Blundon Centre is receiving adequate resources from the Division. It is our understanding that budget planning is done by the senior directors of Student Affairs and Services using a consensus-type model. If this is the case, the senior directors should take a very careful look at redistribution of the Division's limited budget dollars. It was noted in the Self Study that \$24,865 was transferred from one unit's budget within the Division into the Blundon Centre's budget one year. This raises the question of whether the Student Affairs and Services budget could be distributed differently across its five or six units. If one unit can "afford" to give up that amount of money, can the scarce budget dollars be distributed more equitably? More analysis is needed to answer this.

**Recommendation #14** The senior administration of Student Affairs and Services, through its consensus model of budgeting, review and analyze the growth of the Blundon Centre, compared with growth in its other areas to assess the difficult question of whether opportunities exist to redistribute any of the Division's budget allocation.

The Blundon Centre is definitely not receiving sufficient resources from the University and consequently the University is at risk for human rights violations. The services of the Blundon

Centre are mainly around academic accommodations. They relate very directly to completion of course requirements whether that is a service to a student or assistance to a faculty member who has students with disabilities in his/her course. These services are quite different from those of other units within Student Affairs and Services, say, Career Development or Student Success Programs. These latter units provide important services and supports for students, but they are extracurricular, in nature, i.e., if these units and services did not exist, course and degree requirements could still be met. This is not the case with the services of the Blundon Centre. Students availing of academic accommodations could not, in most cases, complete their course and degree requirements (with a "level playing field") without the support of the Blundon Centre. It is probably the only unit within Student Affairs and Services that provides direct academic support and service. This raises the important question of whether part of the funding for the Blundon Centre should come from the academic envelope.

**Recommendation #15:** In recognition of the significant growth in the numbers of students needing services of the Blundon Centre, to ensure the University meets its obligations under human rights legislation and its own policies in providing direct academic support to students with disabilities and in keeping with the five core values and principles of the strategic plan, particularly Equity, Equality, and Diversity and Accessibility the senior administration of the University increase resources to the Blundon Centre as recommended throughout this report.

The alternative is to take the purely academic supports and services of the Blundon Centre and assign them either within academic units themselves (which is the case for some services at SWGC) or place them within a central academic support unit. The latter is the case at other Canadian universities, where for example, the unit responsible for exam scheduling and invigilating is also responsible for the exam accommodations for students with disabilities. The panel believes that the test/exam service that the Blundon Centre provides should remain with that unit (there are many benefits to keeping services for students with disabilities centralized) but that adequate funding be allocated for this and other academic services. If a suitable arrangement cannot be made, then the Dean of Student Affairs and Services may need to consider "downloading" test and exam services to academic units, to manage the workload demands of the Blundon Centre staff, brought on by large increases in students with needs.

*2. Are its facilities adequate? Attention should be paid to space, equipment, computing, laboratory and library resources.*

The student services building was designed around the former organizational structure of Student Affairs and Services. The Blundon Centre was part of the Department of Student Development, at that time. Around the time that the building was opened, the organizational structure changed such that the Blundon Centre became part of the Counselling Centre, however, it remains physically within the Career Development area. With the increase in demand on services of the Blundon Centre, the facility is far from adequate. On any given day as many as 60 students may pass through the Centre, many of them waiting in an area that can hold perhaps two or three at a time.

An area of the Counselling Centre was converted recently into space that could be commandeered for tests and exams. While students appreciated that the Blundon Centre staff do the best they can with the rooms available, one student talked about the "less-than-ideal" conditions present in some of these rooms, including temperature problems, poor ventilation and noise. Could more test/exam space be assigned within the Counselling Centre area such that all the staff could be assigned to the current Blundon Centre area? Is more space available

in the Counselling Centre for the recommended additional staff? Alternatively, could all the staff of the Blundon Centre (current and proposed) be moved to the Counselling Centre and the current Blundon Centre space be used for test and exams and/or other services or would some combination of these be feasible? Can space from other areas of Student Affairs and Services be repurposed for the use of Blundon Centre services?

**Recommendation #16** In the long term, greater physical space be allocated for the Blundon Centre and to determine the amount and its layout the University fund a functional space study such that the specific needs can be determined and that options for expansion can be identified and then pursued.

**Recommendation #17** In the immediate, the test area within the Blundon Centre be fully soundproofed. It seems that when soundproofing was added, it was placed only on three (interior) walls, missing the fourth exterior wall where most sound transfer occurs.

### 3. *Is it adequately staffed?*

There has been significant growth in the numbers of students needing accommodations (see Appendix C) and there has been diversity in the disabilities which means diversity in the types of accommodations needed. Yet, the staff complement has remained virtually unchanged. The Centre's coordinator has been employed there since 1992. An additional staff position was created in 2005, on a contractual basis. Financial administrative support is provided within the Counselling Centre and a psychologist was hired part-time (20%) in 2004.

The benchmark survey conducted during the Self Study (Appendix C of the Self Study) concludes that for comparable size- and scope- universities, there are on average 5.5 full-time staff in the equivalent centres. Memorial's FTE complement is 2.2, clearly under-staffed.

### 4. *Does the reporting structure ensure managerial efficiency and administrative effectiveness within the unit?*

In reading the Self Study, the panel was initially skeptical about the new reporting structure (i.e., the Blundon Centre reporting within the Counselling Centre), thinking there had been little integration of the two units. However, it became clear through the site visit sessions, that having the Blundon Centre within the Counselling Centre is mutually beneficial to both Centres and more importantly, beneficial to the students who are served by both units. The Counselling Centre administrative staff position does all the financial transactions and manages the budget for the Blundon Centre. This seems to work very well. The Counselling Centre is growing into an inter-professional clinic, where specialists in many areas can rely upon each other's expertise for service to students. We believe it is to the benefit of students with disabilities if the Blundon Centre continued reporting within the Counselling Centre to avail of these important linkages.

**Recommendation #18:** The Blundon Centre continue to report within the Counselling Centre.

## **Plans, Goals and Resource Allocation**

### 1. *Are the objectives of the unit appropriate to the mission of the University?*

As stated earlier, the mission of the Blundon Centre is:

*To coordinate services and programs that enable students with disabilities to maximize their educational potential and to increase awareness of inclusive values among all members of the university community. The Centre assists students by facilitating access to information, services, and campus facilities. It carries out its mission in partnership with faculty, staff, and students at Memorial University and off-campus agencies including disability community organizations.*

Strategic objectives are set for the Blundon Centre on an annual basis as part of the annual planning and accountability process of all units within Student Affairs and Services.

The new mission of the University is:

*Memorial University is an inclusive community dedicated to creativity, innovation and excellence in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and to public engagement and service. We recognize our special obligation to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Memorial welcomes students and scholars from all over the world and contributes knowledge and shares expertise locally, nationally, and internationally.*

What is perhaps more pertinent in the University's strategic plan is the Vision, an extract of which states:

*Above all, Memorial will remain a highly accessible and comprehensive institution that is true to its core values. It will be an exciting place to work and study and will boast of a highly supportive environment where students, faculty and staff can thrive. It will be inclusive but at the same time sufficiently focused so that the university builds on its natural advantages/strengths and on the needs of the province.*

The terms "highly accessible" "highly supportive" and "inclusive" are very encouraging to those responsible for the delivery of student services at Memorial and particularly important to those delivering services for students with disabilities. It appears, the Coordinator was instrumental in getting these phrases added to the statements. The mission of the Blundon Centre aligns very well with the University's mission and because of its long history of success at Memorial, the Blundon Centre is very well positioned to support the University's new Mission and Vision.

Furthermore, in reviewing mission statements of many other disability offices across Canada and the United States, it is clear that the mission of the Blundon Centre is compatible and consistent with offices providing similar services.

## *2. Is the unit trying to do too much?*

There are those who believe that in service to students one can never do too much. The staff of the Blundon Centre practice this tenet, every day. It is admirable and makes the Blundon Centre and its staff well respected throughout the University. A better question might be: *Is the unit trying to do too much given the resources it has?* Unequivocally, the answer is yes and the issues regarding increasing those resources are addressed in various sections of this report. It must be stressed here, though, that there is very little the Centre does that strays from ensuring that basic rights of students with disabilities are met. There are ways to accomplish their work more efficiently, which are described in other sections of this report, but the Centre's main focus on students with disabilities is honoured.

3. *What has been the “value-added” of the unit in the context of the overhead and other costs borne by the University on behalf of the unit?*

The Review Panel heard numerous accolades for the Centre's provision of services for students with disabilities. The staff of the Blundon Centre are not only hard working and compassionate, but they are highly responsive to students' needs and to newly-identified needs and to changing needs. When it appears a solution does not exist for a student with a particular need, they create a solution. We have every reason to believe that students served by the Blundon Centre have had positive experiences.

One student client's story is particularly revealing. She described that she initially enrolled in another university within Atlantic Canada on the basis that that university had advertised itself as having excellent services and programming for students with disabilities. Within a few days of attending she discovered there was little truth to the ads and she could in fact find no services for her disabilities. She then enrolled at Memorial, only because it has the lowest tuition in the area. From the first day, she discovered staff who were knowledgeable and understanding of her particular circumstances and a unit committed to meeting her needs. There is no doubt in our minds that she will be lifelong friend of Memorial, because of the Blundon Centre.

Although, this is but one story, it is very representative of many students' stories. The Blundon Centre is quite beneficial for Memorial's reputation. This needs to be exploited with respect to recruitment of new students (which is addressed in another section of this report.)

Persons with disabilities often struggle with having their rights recognized or understood. Memorial clearly recognizes and understands these rights. Without the Blundon Centre's focus on and due diligence toward these rights, the University would be at risk for human rights violations and complaints. The fact that the University has had none or very few of these and yet thousands have required services and accommodations is another clear demonstration of the value-added the Blundon Centre provides Memorial.

4. *How might the unit resources be redistributed to realize its goals and those of the University?*

The resources of the Centre cannot be redistributed. The Centre simply needs more resources. Some of its responsibilities could be redistributed, though.

With the increase in hours of the Psychologist in the Counselling Centre, the Blundon Centre should transfer the vetting of documentation to the Counselling Centre, as recommended earlier.

We learned that adaptive/assistive technologies are becoming increasingly mainstream and increasingly blended. For example, commonplace MP3 players are used as assistive technology for students with hearing impairments and reading software is used by the visually impaired as well as those with reading disabilities. Currently, much of the institutional responsibility for adaptive/assistive technology, outside the Blundon Centre, rests with a MUCEP student in the Commons area. There are too many risks associated with this and yet it is an extra burden for staff in the Blundon Centre to become technology experts along with everything else they do. By assigning responsibility for adaptive technologies to another unit, the University will promote inclusiveness, one of the objectives of the new Mission and Vision.

**Recommendation #19:** Institutional responsibility for adaptive/assistive technology be assumed by either the Learning Technologies division of DELT or by Computing and Communications through the Commons, in recognition of the blending of these types of technologies with mainstream learning technologies. This will promote inclusiveness and will ensure that overall responsibility is properly assigned to other than a student assistant (whose knowledge and expertise leave when she graduates). This responsibility should include maintaining current knowledge of advances in adaptive/assistive technologies; training students in use of these; maintaining software and hardware and identifying and sourcing solutions as various students' needs are presented, etc. The Blundon Centre should maintain close ties with the unit by referring students and advising on new technology needs as they present.

5. *Should the unit continue in its present form?*

The Blundon Centre should continue offering the high quality services and support that it does. However, changes will be needed in a number of areas. The number of students needing services and accommodations has grown and will continue to grow significantly. The diversity of types of accommodations required will grow as well. The University plans to grow its overall enrollment, which means even if the proportion of students with disabilities remains the same (and it is not predicted to do so), the total number of students with disabilities will grow. The stigma historically attached to persons with disabilities, all kinds of disabilities, is disappearing. Students (although not all) are no longer timid or nervous about self identifying. The school systems have changed radically in that they are graduating students with disabilities who are meeting eligibility criteria for postsecondary study and society in general has become more knowledgeable and understanding and therefore more inclusive and welcoming of persons with disabilities. Collectively this means that the demands and pressures on the Blundon Centre will increase. Its volume of work has increased from 7 test-exam services provided in the 1991-92 academic year to over 2100 services in 2006-07.

In order to meet this increasing demand, the Centre will need more staff (as outlined throughout this report). Also it will need more space and purposed space. The Centre cannot be expected to accommodate over 2000 test-exam services and its many other services from the 700 sq. ft. area in which it is currently housed. The students physically do not fit there.

We were concerned by the use of so many student assistants, especially students who in turn were also users of the Blundon Centre. This would seem to be a dual relationship, and it was interesting that the only two long-time student employees of the centre were themselves also clients of this service. There are in excess of twenty-five students working within the Centre every semester. It is almost a full-time job to recruit them, train them, supervise them and account for their schedules and time reports. Few of them are re-employed from semester to semester, increasing demands for training. There are also risks associated with having so many students employed there, such as violations of privacy and discomfort on the part of students needing the Centre if they know that their classmate or dorm mate works there. While it may be that student assistants can fulfill a variety of roles within the Blundon Centre, we felt that they should not be staffing the front office or dealing with confidential information about their fellow classmates.

**Recommendation #20:** To reduce the risks associated with the dependence on student assistants the student employee complement should be reduced by at least half, which can be accomplished by the recommended increases in staff positions. Student assistants should not be staffing the front office or dealing with confidential information.

The Centre should reconsider its business processes and automate its record-keeping and information management which is currently completely paper-based.

**Recommendation #21** Modules be designed and built within BANNER Student to accommodate the record keeping and information management required by the Blundon Centre.

With the current paper-based system, access to students' records is completely controlled by the staff of the Blundon Centre and confidentiality and protection of privacy are of utmost importance to them. Storing records on BANNER Student will raise concerns regarding this protection. On the other hand, one academic administrator advised us that if she had had access to a student's disability information, she could have provided greater assistance to that student and in a more timely manner. The question of who has a right to this private information will need to be addressed and a balance will need to be found between access by those who should know and protection of the student's privacy and this balance should be adopted by the any new business processes.

We learned there are very few opportunities for students in the Corner Brook area to be assessed for learning disabilities.

**Recommendation #22:** Once or twice a year, establish an assessment "team" to go to SWGC to assess learning disabilities for students at that campus. The team should comprise the Assistant Professor and graduate students in Psychology who could provide supervised assessments for students needing testing.

Even though there has been enormous increase in the number of students with disabilities, concern was expressed about how aware students are about the University's services and whether the Centre is reaching all students who need services. The Centre needs to promote its services more effectively. Some earlier recommendations addressed this (e.g. communicating messages through Student Recruitment, Academic Advising Centre and high school connections), however, a formal effort toward marketing and promotion should be undertaken.

**Recommendation #23:** The responsibility for promotion and marketing of the Blundon Centre rest with the Coordinator and an innovative, creative communications plan be formalized through collaborations with Marketing and Communications.

Students told us that it was not appropriate to have messages about disabilities as part of the application form and that the reference to "Special Needs" on the form was meaningless, as it could be referring to special dietary needs, for example. Rather, messages about the Blundon Centre should be part of the recruitment and promotion efforts of the University and be obvious at the time of registration as well. The wording should be very direct and specific. The Centre can also be promoted better through the University Calendar. The on-line version allows easy access by keying "disabilities" into the search feature, but there is no similar index reference in the paper version. Two specific recommendations regarding promotion are:

**Recommendation #23a:** Reference to the Blundon Centre and "Special Needs" be removed from the paper application for admission form as well as the on-line application, as other recommended methods for promotion are implemented.

**Recommendation #23b:** Indexing of the Blundon Centre and services for students with disabilities be added to the printed University Calendar with clear identification of the campus coordinating centres.

It is our opinion that the Blundon Centre should be adequately supported, through increased staff, space and budget, so that it can continue to provide the superior service that it has for so many years. It should increase its activity in the areas of recruiting students, promoting the Centre and the University's services, liaising with the high school system, training and informing faculty and staff, automating its administrative functions, pursuing funding opportunities and conducting research on success/graduation rates of students with disabilities.

### **Supplementary Issues**

1. *Should the University establish a full-time, permanent position in the capacity of a consultant/facilitator/strategist with expertise in learning disabilities and other special needs?*

The benchmarking study showed that most disability offices have learning disabilities strategists or specialists. This coupled with the growth in the numbers of students with learning disabilities are the reasons our earlier recommendations on increasing staffing levels include the establishment of a Learning Strategist position. (See Recommendation #2).

2. *If the answer is "Yes", should this appointment be made as a faculty member, a staff member, or as an independent consultant?*

As recommended earlier this position should be a staff member, reporting to the Manger of the Blundon Centre.

3. *Should the University continue to contract out the on-campus transportation service to a local company?*

Presently, on-campus transportation for students with mobility disabilities is provided contractually by Wheelway Transportation Ltd. The costs of this service are met by the Department of Facilities Management and over the past two years this was \$1,112. Recently, a community representative on the Dean's Advisory Committee requested the University restore the previous practice of having Campus Enforcement and Patrol provide the service.

Since contracting out began over ten years ago, there have been no complaints received by the Blundon Centre about the service and it has had minimal demand. Only four students used it in the academic year 2006-7. Feedback to the panel by students and Facilities Management was that the present system works. Having an 'in-house' system might mean that students would be served in a more timely fashion as presently students must avail of the Wheelway timetable.

The present system seems to be cost effective whereas the purchase of a specially adapted van or retrofitting of an existing van would be an expensive proposition, considering maintenance, depreciation, and salary of a full-time driver. There appears to be little reason for the present system to be changed.

**Recommendation #24:** The University continue to contract out the on-campus transportation service for students with mobility disabilities.

## Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations appear throughout the report and are numbered sequentially. They are summarized below into functional categories.

### A. Staffing

**Recommendation #2:** Hire a permanent full-time Learning Strategist (or facilitator or advisor). This professional should have a background in Education, Occupational Therapy or Psychology. Establish the position as a staff position, so as to reduce any conflict of interest should there be disputes about accommodations or supports recommended to faculty. This position should work with and report directly to the Coordinator, and should provide counselling and support to students registered with the Blundon Centre and work with faculty on students' needs and accommodations.

**Recommendation #3** Confirm the contractual Academic Program Administrator position as a permanent position to deal with accommodation issues and technical support questions and to assume full responsibility for supervision of student assistants.

**Recommendation #4** Hire a permanent full-time Administrative Assistant to assume clerical responsibilities, answer telephone, take appointments, file, collect and copy tests and exams, etc.

**Recommendation #5** Increase to two the number of days per week that the Assistant Professor is working out of the Counselling Centre. The panel felt it was vital that this position be seen as operating at "arms-length" from the Blundon Centre, especially since this person will be doing assessments of students referred from the Blundon Centre for documentation of a disability. The panel was also of the opinion that this person should undertake the vetting of any disability-related documentation of a psychological nature.

**Recommendation #6** Re-title the Coordinator position as Manager of the Blundon Centre and provide the incumbent formal professional development training in the area of managerial skills and delegation of responsibilities. The position should be less involved in the daily operations (leaving those duties to the Administrative Assistant and the Academic Program Administrator) and more responsible for oversight of the Centre and the University's policies and plans for students with disabilities. Specific responsibilities would include: managing the operations of the Centre, promoting the Centre, advocating for students with disabilities, training University faculty and staff in disability-related issues, advising the University community appropriately, liaising appropriately with external groups, researching retention/graduation rates of students with disabilities, etc.

**Recommendation #7:** The Director of the Counselling Centre, who is in effect the Director of the Blundon Centre, take a lead role in managing the staffing growth recommended in this report. The staff has become entrenched in operating the Blundon Centre with excessive amounts of overtime. With the addition of new staff positions, the overtime can be reduced and perhaps eliminated, but transitioning away from the longstanding practices will be a challenge, which should be spearheaded by the Director.

**Recommendation #18:** The Blundon Centre continue to report within the Counselling Centre.

**Recommendation #20:** To reduce the risks associated with the dependence on student assistants the student employee complement should be reduced by at least half, which can be accomplished by the recommended increases in staff positions. Student assistants should not be staffing the front office or dealing with confidential information.

## **B. Space**

**Recommendation #16** In the long term, greater physical space be allocated for the Blundon Centre and to determine the amount and its layout the University fund a functional space study such that the specific needs can be determined and that options for expansion can be identified and then pursued.

**Recommendation #17** In the immediate, the test area within the Blundon Centre be fully soundproofed. It seems that when soundproofing was added, it was placed only on three (interior) walls, missing the fourth exterior wall where most sound transfer occurs

## **C. Budget**

**Recommendation #14** The senior administration of Student Affairs and Services, through its consensus model of budgeting, review and analyze the growth of the Blundon Centre, compared with growth in its other areas to assess the difficult question of whether opportunities exist to redistribute any of the Division's budget allocation.

**Recommendation #15:** In recognition of the significant growth in the numbers of students needing services of the Blundon Centre, to ensure the University meets its obligations under human rights legislation and its own policies in providing direct academic support to students with disabilities and in keeping with the five core values and principles of the strategic plan, particularly Equity, Equality and Diversity and Accessibility the senior administration of the University increase resources to the Blundon Centre as recommended throughout this report.

## **D. Technology**

**Recommendation #19:** Institutional responsibility for adaptive/assistive technology be assumed by either the Learning Technologies division of DELT or in Computing and Communications through the Commons, in recognition of the blending of these types of technologies with mainstream learning technologies This will promote inclusiveness and will ensure that overall responsibility is properly assigned to other than a student assistant (whose knowledge and expertise leave when she graduates). This responsibility should include maintaining current knowledge of advances in adaptive/assistive technologies; training students in use of these; maintaining software and hardware and identifying and sourcing solutions as various students' needs are presented, etc. The Blundon Centre should maintain close ties with the unit by referring students and advising on new technology needs as they present.

## **E. Programs and Services**

**Recommendation #9:** The Coordinator continue providing training sessions through the Instructional Development Office, begin giving training sessions during the orientation for new faculty, and develop plans to ensure all instructors, including lab demonstrators,

sessional lecturers, graduate teaching assistants, etc. are better informed about and prepared for students with disabilities.

**Recommendation #11:** The Blundon Centre partner with the Faculty of Education to establish an online (or in-person) transition program for students with disabilities entering Memorial University. To reduce the need for additional resources, the program could utilize supervised teacher candidates who benefit by learning more about on-line teaching and learning, and by being introduced to adaptive technologies currently used by students with disabilities.

**Recommendation #22:** Once or twice a year, establish an assessment "team" to go to SWGC to assess learning disabilities for students at that campus. The team should comprise the Assistant Professor and graduate students in Psychology who could provide supervised assessments for students needing testing.

**Recommendation #24:** The University continue to contract out the on-campus transportation service for students with mobility disabilities.

## F. Systems

**Recommendation #8** Students be permitted to register (or withdraw their registration) with the Blundon Centre and each semester be able to request their accommodations through the on-line system they currently use, Memorial Self Service.

**Recommendation #21** Modules be designed and built within BANNER Student to accommodate the record keeping and information management required by the Blundon Centre.

## G. Promotion

**Recommendation #12:** The Coordinator work with the applicant-to-student conversion projects to promote, through appropriate communications, the services of the Centre as an attractive feature of life at Memorial and to encourage students with disabilities who decide to attend Memorial to contact the Blundon Centre for consultation as early as possible.

**Recommendation #13:** The Coordinator work with the Academic Advising Centre and the Office of Student Recruitment and Promotion to increase the profile of the Blundon Centre in the High School system through activities such as Mainsail newsletter, Parents Nights, conferences with Guidance Counsellors, the high school interview process, etc.

**Recommendation #23:** The responsibility for promotion and marketing of the Blundon Centre rest with the Coordinator and an innovative, creative communications plan be formalized through collaborations with Marketing and Communications.

**Recommendation #23a:** Reference to the Blundon Centre and "Special Needs" be removed from the paper application for admission form as well as the on-line application, as other recommended methods for promotion are implemented.

**Recommendation #23b:** Indexing of the Blundon Centre and services for students with disabilities be added to the printed University Calendar with clear identification of the campus coordinating centres.

## H. Facilities

**Recommendation #10:** Funding be made available on an annual basis from the University budget so that planned modifications to existing infrastructure, as identified through the accessibility audit and advocated for by the Blundon Centre and the Dean's Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities, can be made on an ongoing rather than *ad hoc* basis.

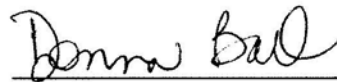
## I. Faculty Rights

**Recommendation #1** A statement of faculty rights with respect to students with disabilities be developed in consultation with the Director of Faculty Relations and MUNFA. This could be incorporated into the University's Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities or be developed separately. Appendix D contains a sample statement of Faculty Rights from the University of Wisconsin – Platteville, adapted from a document produced by Dr. Harrison, which could be used as a guide or a starting point for discussion.

## Concluding Remarks

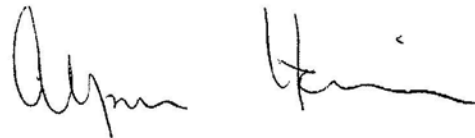
The focus of our review and report was the Blundon Centre, which we realize is a unit within the larger Division of Student Affairs and Services. We also recognize that it is only one of three campus coordinating centres for students with disabilities, as defined in the Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities and therefore we spoke with the coordinators at SWGC and the MI during the site visit. Some of the recommendations made in this report may be able to be applied at the other two campus as well, e.g. the systems recommendations, since students from all three campuses use Memorial Self-Service; faculty rights because these may be built into the Policy on Academic Accommodation or the faculty collective agreements; research into retention, graduation, success rates of students with disabilities; training for faculty (perhaps training materials could be shared.) While it was not within our mandate to review the services at MI or SWGC, we believe, that for the benefit of all students, these campuses should be given due consideration as the recommendations, specifically those which can be institutionally applied, are implemented.

Respectfully submitted,



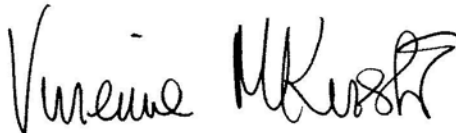
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Donna L. Ball (Panel Chair)  
Memorial University of Newfoundland



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Dr. Allyson Harrision  
Queen's University



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Professor Vivienne Kuester  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Appendix A  
Schedule of the Site Visit

Site Visit Schedule for Blundon Centre Review – June 18-19, 2007

**JUNE 18**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:00 – 9:00 am	UC4011	Dr. Lilly Walker (Dean, Student Affairs and Services) (breakfast provided)
9:00 – 9:15 am	UC4011	Review Panel meets
9:15 – 10:00 am	UC4011	Dr. Peter Cornish (Director, Counselling Centre)
10:00 – 10:30 am	UC4007	Toured the Blundon Centre and related areas lead by Ms. Ruth North
10:30 – 12:00 pm	UC4011	Ms. Ruth North (Coordinator, Blundon Centre), Ms. Kathy Skinner (staff member)
12:00 – 1 pm	UC4011	Mr. Lester Marshall, Dr. Lorraine Dicks (Counselling Centre)
1:00 – 2:00 pm	II2015P	Lunch (provided)
2:30 – 3:00 pm	II2015P	Dr. Noreen Golfman (Associate Dean of Graduate Studies)
3:00 – 3:45 pm	II2015P	Dr. Bob Davis, Head of Chemistry Department
4:00 – 4:30 pm	II2015P	Staff/faculty members - Janet Benger
4:30 - 5:00 pm	II2015P	Dr. Bob Hollett, Head of English Department
5:00– 5:30 pm	II2015P	Student employees and volunteers of Blundon Centre
5:30 – 6:00 pm	II2015P	Dr. John Quaicoe, Associate Dean of Engineering

**JUNE 19**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:30 – 9:00 am	II2015P	Mr. Cliff Chaytor, Facilities Management
9:00 – 9:30 am	II2015P	Dr. Maureen Dunne, Ms. Elaine Crocker, Instructional Development Office
9:30 – 10:00 am	II2015P	Ms. Angie Clarke on behalf of Mr. Gary Green (Guidance/Student Affairs Office at the Marine Institute and coordinator of disability services)
10:15 – 10:45 am	II2015P	Ms. Lorna Payne (Learning Centre at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College and coordinator of disability services) via telephone
10:45 – 11:45 am	UC2001	Student clients of Blundon Centre
11:45 – 12:00 pm	UC2001	Ms. Darren Newton, Student Housing
12:00 – 1:00 pm	UC2001	Dean's Advisory Committee on Students with Disabilities
1:00 – 1:30 pm	II2015P	Lunch (provided)
1:30 – 2:00 pm	II2015P	Mr. Glenn Collins, University Registrar; Ms. Roxanne Preston, Academic Advising Centre
2:00 – 3:00 pm	QE3016	Library/Commons staff – Mr. Shawn Pendergast, Ms. Karen Lippold, Ms. Shannon Gordon, Ms. Melissa Prunte Tour QEII Library/adaptive technology areas
3:00 – 4:00 pm	II2015P	Panel met alone
4:00 – 4:30 pm	II2015P	Dr. Walker for concluding remarks
4:30 – 5:00 pm	II2015P	Wrap-up and next steps

Appendix B  
Guidelines for Written Submissions

Questions to consider in making a written submission to the  
Review Panel of the Glenn Roy Blundon Centre.

Feel free to answer any or all of the questions below and to add any comments you feel appropriate. Alternatively, you may simply write your comments in free format. Send your written submission via email to [dlb@mun.ca](mailto:dlb@mun.ca), preferably before June 20, 2007.

**General:**

What is/has been your relationship with the Blundon Centre?

The Centre's mission is:

*To coordinate services and programs that enable students with disabilities to maximize their educational potential and to increase awareness of inclusive values among all members of the university community. The Centre assists students by facilitating access to information, services, and campus facilities. It carries out its mission in partnership with faculty, staff, and students at Memorial University and off-campus agencies including disability community organizations.*

Do you feel the Centre is meeting its mission? If not, why not?

How would you assess the programs and services the Centre delivers?

Are there services or programs it could be delivering but which it is not?

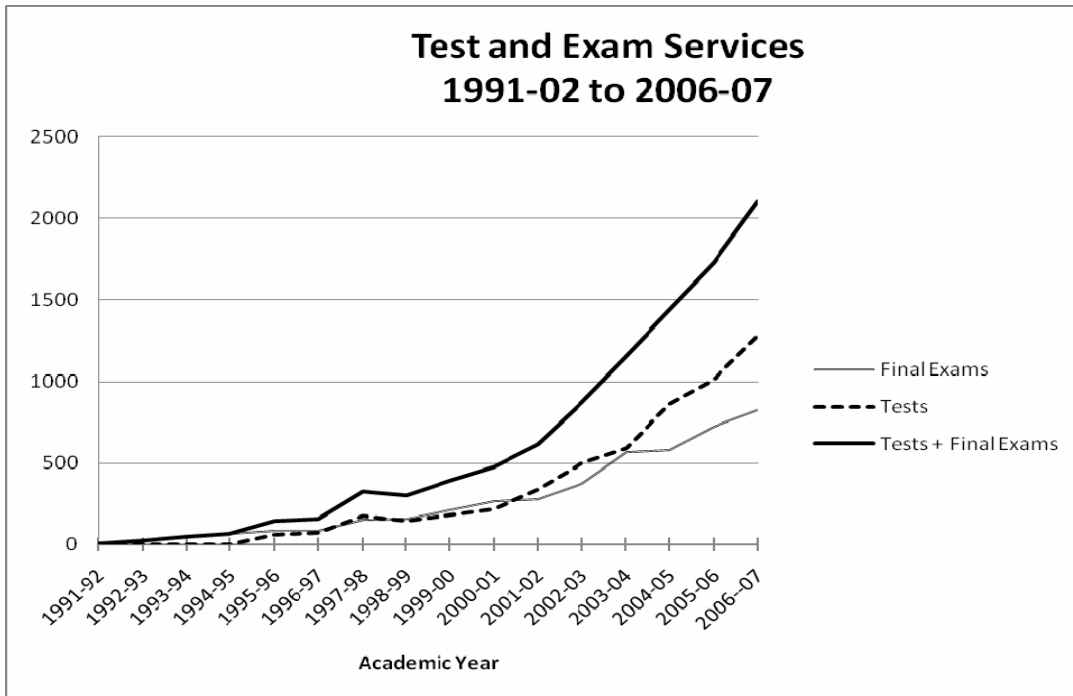
**Specific:**

Should the University establish a full-time, permanent position in the capacity of a consultant/facilitator/strategist with expertise in learning disabilities and other special needs?

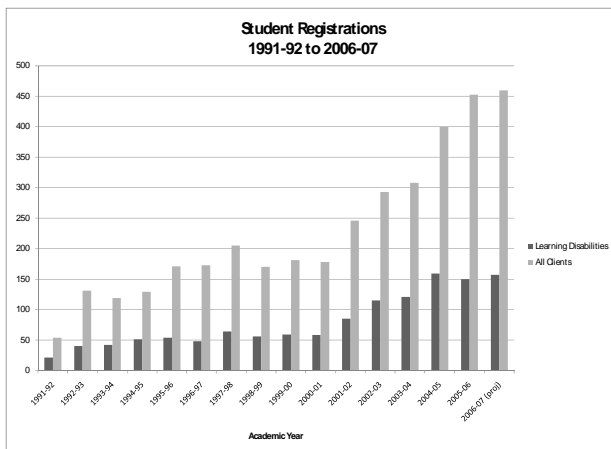
If the answer is "Yes", should this appointment be made as a faculty member, a staff member, or as an independent consultant?

Should the University continue to contract out the on-campus transportation service to a local company?

Appendix C  
Demand on Services of the Blundon Centre



Data projected for 2006-07



Students register each semester with the Blundon Centre; The data represent all registrations across the academic year.

Appendix D  
Sample Statement of Faculty Rights regarding  
Services for Students with Disabilities



Services for Students with Disabilities

## Faculty Rights

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As with students, faculty have certain rights and things they need to know. We hope you find this helpful in understanding the rights of your instructors.

Professors' Rights when dealing with students registered at Services for Students with Disabilities

### A professor has the right to:

- Determine course content and general methods of teaching.
- Make informed decisions about how best to adapt their teaching and assessment methods to accommodate all students.
- Reasonable notice of an accommodation request
- Ensure that requested accommodations do not fundamentally change the substance of the course
- Ensure that the standards in their course are not lowered or compromised.
- Ensure that a student has demonstrated mastery of the essential requirements of their course in order to obtain an appropriate grade.
- Fail any student if he/she does not demonstrate mastery of essential course requirements.
- Question a specific accommodation request if it is either inappropriate for their course, or if the nature of the request would alter the essential requirements of a course.
- Determine through consultation with knowledgeable professionals the most appropriate ways to adapt their course to the needs of a particular student.
- Be treated respectfully by all students in their class.

### A professor should know:

- That students registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities have provided adequate and appropriate documentation of their disability from a registered health care professional. Accommodation requests are based on this documentation.
- That trained professionals working through Services for Students with Disabilities are available to assist them should they wish advice or information about how to adapt their course to accommodate student needs.
- That they can receive support from Services for Students with Disabilities in implementing recommended accommodations or in changing/adapting requested accommodations if it is mutually agreed that such requests are inappropriate or unrealistic.
- That they can discuss alternative ways to assist students with disabilities, especially if they feel the requested adaptations are inappropriate or unrealistic.
- That some students with disabilities have academic or behavior problems unrelated to their disability. They are therefore not obligated to treat such problems any differently than they would for a non-disabled student.
- Their rights, the rights of the student and what the essential requirements in their course and/or program are. This will help us all make informed decisions about the appropriateness of certain accommodation requests, and will ensure that discussions are centered upon defined information.

### Points to remember:

- When in doubt about how to assist, ask the student directly and check the Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) and any letters provided to you by the student, from Services for Students with Disabilities. If you still have questions, call Services for Students with Disabilities at 342-1818.
- Flexibility may be necessary when applying attendance and promptness rules to students with health-related or mobility difficulties. Please discuss any concerns that arise with the student and, if necessary, with Services for Students with Disabilities.
- Confidentiality of all student information is essential. At no time should the class or any other individual be

informed that a student has a disability, unless the student makes a specific request to do so.

- The Student Code of Conduct regarding disruptive behavior applies to all students. Clearly state behavioral expectations for all students; discuss them openly in your classroom, on your syllabus, and with individual students as needed.

Please note that this is not meant to be an exhaustive list of the rights and needs of professors. We have tried to outline some of the rights professors, with the hope of fostering a dialogue between faculty, students and the staff at Services for Students with Disabilities.

Many thanks to Allyson G. Harrison for permission to use these guidelines, written while working at Ryerson University in Toronto. Copyrighted in 1996.

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