

Memorial University of Newfoundland

Report of the Committee

To Review

The Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and Services

Submitted to

Dr. Axel Meisen

President

November 2007

1. Preamble

This report to Dr. Meisen outlines the process conducted for the review of the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs and the recommendations of the Review Committee.

1.1 Mandate

The mandate of the committee was to review the Office of the Dean of Students Affairs and Services with the view to assess and make recommendations on:

- a. The relevancy of its stated mandate;
- b. The adequacy of its financial, physical and human resources to allow the office to effectively discharge its mandate;
- c. The responsibilities and titles of senior positions, including the potential renaming of the position of “Dean of Students Affairs” as a vice-president or other appropriate title.

1.2 Membership

The committee consisted of the following members:

Ms. Angie Clarke, Office of the Executive Director, Marine Institute
Mr. James Farrell, MUNSU Executive Director of External Affairs and Communications
Dr. Mahmoud Haddara, Director (interim) of the Division of Cooperative Education
(Chair)
Ms. Nicole Kieley, President, Graduate Students’ Union
Mr. Brian Sullivan, Vice-President Students, University of British Columbia.

1.3 Process

The committee developed a document to outline the process for the review (Appendix A). The committee conducted a site visit for a day and a half on the 17th and 18th of September. In addition, the committee met with several stakeholders before and after the site visit. Mr. Sullivan was present during the site visit, and participated via phone during the other meetings. A list of the stakeholders that met with the committee is given in Appendix B. A number of stakeholders made written submissions, a list of which is given in Appendix C. Although the committee solicited input from a number of external stakeholders, no feedback was received from these individuals.

2. Mandate

The existing mandate for Students Affairs and Services has evolved over the last few years; however, it has never been more central than at this point in Memorial’s history. Pressures regarding competition for students, improved retention, deeper student engagement and strengthened relationships with the community are all paramount and SAAS has a key role in advancing each of these. There was some evidence that the mandate was new to members of the

university community and that it had not been developed in consultation with the community. The mandate is not stated clearly on the current SAAS website.

Most of stakeholders interviewed believe that the mandate is appropriate and comprehensive and that it is in congruence with similar mandates at other Canadian universities, with some exceptions. The Academic Deans and Directors were uniformly supportive of the mandate and of the efforts currently being made by SAAS. Existing partnerships between SAAS and the Faculties of Arts and Science were cited as successful examples of collaboration between SAAS and academic units. This model should be supported and extended to other academic units. A request was made for the development of a clear and proactive policy to address off campus student activities. Some stakeholders were critical of the language of parts of the mandate. These will be addressed in the committee's recommendations.

SAAS provides some services to graduate students e.g. health counseling services and professional development "EDGE". These need to be publicized preferably through a better Web page design. In addition, other services which are perceived to be exclusively directed towards undergraduate students need to be extended to graduate students as well e.g. orientation and career services. Existing partnerships between SAAS and the Faculty of Engineering and the School of Graduate Studies appear to be working and require support to continue and to grow. This model can also be extended to other academic units.

Independent student services units exist in several academic units of the University. The obvious ones are those at the Marine Institute and Grenfell College, the less obvious are the ones in the Faculties of Education and Medicine. The point made by several parties to resist the duplication of central services in these units deserves mention and support. The current role of SAAS in policy development, professional development, quality assurance, and mutual support at these units seems appropriate and is supported.

A great variety of opinion was received about advising, the only unanimity being that all concerned thought that this function, throughout the institution, was in need of a major re-think. Strong views were expressed from within and beyond the SAAS portfolio that deeper collaboration between the Academic Advising Centre and other parts of the institution was going to be essential for recruitment and retention efforts. A review of the current academic advising process should be conducted. Many institutions are moving to a holistic approach to strategic enrolment management and student learning and development that reflects the collaboration of various units within the university.

Generally, the current mandate of SAAS is considered by the university community as adequate and appropriate. There is also a general indication that SAAS is successful in implementing its mandate. While systematic consideration of SAAS' effectiveness was not part of the Committee's terms of reference, the findings and observations were generally supportive of this view.

Recommendations:

- The SAAS mandate statement should be linked to the University's strategic plan, especially strategic goal #1 regarding student success and retention.
- The language should be adjusted in the direction of "promoting a student-centered perspective" rather than "being the voice for students."
- The mandate should place more emphasis on the development of collaborative partnerships with other parts of the University. Areas of paramount importance that require such collaborative efforts are Student Success, Academic Advising, and Retention.
- SAAS should continue its role in policy development, professional development, quality assurance, and mutual support provided to independent student services units at academic units which have such services.
- The role of SAAS with respect to Enrolment Management should be enhanced and made better known. One way of doing this is for the Enrolment Management Committee to be co-led by the Vice President Academic and the Dean of Student Affairs and Services. This partnership should be reinforced at the working committee level.
- In a number of cases, a more defined formal relationship between functional areas and SAAS is recommended. Chief among them are Security Services, the Childcare Facility, The Works, Academic Advising and Graduate Studies.

3. Adequacy of Resources

The emphasis on competitiveness and retention, heightened expectations on the part of students and their families as clients, and the increased volume and range of demands arising from increasing enrolment, especially the larger number of non-traditional students, are highlighting the criticality of services to students and impact of resource constraints. It was frequently asserted that many programs in SAAS are getting to the point where they are overly-dependent on students for their delivery. Staff resources are stretched too thin to provide necessary training, supervision and leadership. Continuity and quality of service will be eventually affected by the lack of resources.

Certain student groups are increasing in number and further growth is foreseen in the University's strategic plan. Bolstering base-funded human resources in the following areas is a high priority, with unanimous support among those who addressed the Committee: international students (International Student Advising), special needs students (Blundon Centre), Scholarships Office, students with mental health needs and high risk students (Counseling and Student Health)

and commuter students (Off-Campus Housing Office). Improved support for aboriginal students was also cited as a need by some.

Funds generated through the bookstore sales and other money making ventures run by SAAS can be used to fulfill some of its needs. However, it is felt that these funds will not address all needs required to maintain quality service to the students. In addition, the money generated fluctuates from one year to other which puts operations funded solely from these sources at risk.

Recommendations

- The committee recommends that a number of areas require immediate funding. These include the International Advising Office, the Blundon Center and the area of mental health.
- Extra resources are required to cope with the dramatic increase in workload in the Scholarship Office and the Dean's office.
- Additional resources are needed to improve the utility of the website for students, a point made particularly by graduate students.
- More on-campus student housing is urgently required. (it is understood that Provincial funding has been allocated).
- Student access to childcare services needs improvement. Students feel that "While fiscal responsibility is an obvious priority for the Facility, it is crucial that the Facility not lose sight of its primary guiding principle which is the provision of quality and accessible childcare facilities for students (and, secondarily, other members of the university community)."
- More resources are needed to increase MUCEP funding simply to keep pace with increases in enrolment and minimum wage.
- Informal learning space and social space for students needs to be increased.

4. Title Change

The committee heard arguments for and arguments against the change of title. Arguments against the change of title included:

- A Vice-President has university wide responsibilities, while the dean's responsibilities are limited to the St. John's campus.
- The Dean of Student Affairs and Services currently function as VP, why change the title.
- Changing the title may make the Dean less accessible to the students.

The committee considered all arguments and is convinced that Vice President Students is the most appropriate title for the role currently carried out by the Dean of Student Affairs and Services for the following reasons:

- The members of the Senior Executive Committee assert that the Dean is currently regarded as equivalent to a Vice President, functions in that manner and is treated as such.
- The VP designation is consistent with the central concern placed on students and student-centered approaches in the university's strategic plan. (As one senior academic administrator noted, the #1 job right now at Memorial is students.)
- Student input clearly supported the VP Students title as preferable to Dean. In particular, MUNSU believes this would send a strong message that student services are as vital as finances and research to the university. They rejected the suggestion that such a title might seem too administrative and lead to distancing from students.
- Several submissions indicated that the title of Dean is confusing in the external community and not consistently understood in the University.
- In the field of Student Affairs, the term Dean has become nearly synonymous with a concern for student life, including non-academic judicial affairs. The Dean's current mandate is much broader than this, with commercial enterprises and enrolment management activities part of the purview. There are very few Deans of Students remaining in Canada. In the case of Queens, an example cited several times, the title Associate Vice-Provost was added to the Dean's title at the time the current incumbent was hired.
- The Employment Systems Review report prepared for Memorial in June 2007 indicates that there is a perception that "job titles for males and females in the same roles are not always the same or equivalent. For example, at the senior executive level, while males have the title of Vice-President, a female has the title of Dean." Moving to the VP title would put to rest any suggestion of gender inequity.
- Consideration was also given to the title of Associate Vice President, Academic – Students. This was not regarded as an adequate descriptor of current roles and responsibilities nor did it seem aligned with the thrust of the University's strategic plan.

There has already been some discussion about the need for a broader review of the organization of the senior team, including the possibility of having a VP Development. It is logical that the new title for the Dean of Student Affairs and Services be implemented in concert with this review of the Senior Executive Committee by the new President. Several members of the university community emphasized the importance of following standard governance mechanisms

and administrative processes in this matter to avoid any impression that the changes are self-serving or arise from special pleading.

The committee feels that a change of title at this point is not urgent especially since Dr. Walker is scheduled to have a review by the end of 2008. Presumably, the new President will be directing that process; the matter of changing the title is best handled then. However, there are certain measures which need to be taken to address the implications of Memorial's strategic plan, the expanded scope of the mandate of SAAS, and students' concerns.

Recommendations

- The committee concludes that a change of title from Dean of Student Affairs and Services to Vice President Students is warranted; however, the title change should be deferred and considered in the context of the full senior team review referred to above.
- The Dean of Student Affairs and Services should have a standing invitation to attend the meetings of the Board of Regents. Attendance of these meetings will provide an opportunity to the Board to hear about Student Services related issues first hand.
- The Dean of Student Affairs and Services should have budgetary privileges similar to those given to the Vice-Presidents of the University.
- The Dean should be included in all strategy meetings, budget meetings and retreats involving the President and Vice Presidents when deemed appropriate by the President.

APPENDIX A

PROCEDURES FOR THE REVIEW OF Student Affairs and Services

This document is adapted from the procedures established by the University for the review of administrative units. This review is carried out under the authority of the senior executive group and is designed to support the objectives of the University. The review is carried out by a committee whose mandate is:

To review the Office of the Dean of Students Affairs and Services with the view to assess and make recommendations on the:

1. The relevancy of its stated mandate;
2. Adequacy of its financial, physical and human resources to allow the office to effectively discharge its mandate;
3. Responsibilities and titles of senior positions, including the potential renaming of the position of “Dean of Students Affairs” as a vice-president or other appropriate title.

It is understood that “Office of the Dean of Students Affairs and Services” includes the units reporting to the Dean of Students Affairs and Services.

This review process should be regarded as formative. That is, it is an opportunity for the members of the unit to work collegially to identify areas of strength and find ways of improving upon what it does.

The Process

- a. The Review Committee is appointed by the President. The following members have been appointed to serve on the Committee:

Ms. Angie Clarke, Office of the Executive Director, Marine Institute
Mr. James Farrell, MUNSU Executive Director of External Affairs and Communications
Dr. Mahmoud Haddara, Director (interim) of the Division of Cooperative Education (Chair)
Ms. Nicole Kieley, President, Graduate Students’ Union
Mr. Brian Sullivan, Vice-President Students, University of British Columbia.

- b. The unit conducts a thorough Self-Study and submits this to the President for distribution to the Review Committee.
- c. The Committee reviews the Self-Study, and may request additional information from the unit.
- d. The Committee seeks input from stakeholders from within and outside the University.

- e. The Committee conducts a one or two-day review of the unit. When completed, the draft Committee Report is submitted to the President who checks it for factual accuracy. The Committee makes any necessary revisions and submits a final report

Self-Study Report Content:

The study report should include the following:

- Description, mission statement, and assessment of the unit (organization, projects, programs, management, resources, and where applicable, teaching and courses);
- Description of plans or proposed innovations for the unit for the future;
- Assessment of the contribution of the unit to the University and its priorities.

A. Strategic Objectives

- a. What are the strategic objectives of the unit?
- b. To what extent are the unit's stated objectives being met? What is the evidence for these achievements?
- c. How does the unit support the mission and objectives of the University and other programs within the University?
- d. How are the efforts of the unit focused upon achieving the level of excellence (provincial, national, international) expected by its mandate?

B. Staff Contribution

- a. How effectively are the professional staff engaged with relevant professional communities locally, regionally, and nationally?
- b. How effectively are the professional staff active, and recognized, participants in regional, national, and international units?
- c. Are the staff generating a level of external grants and contracts appropriate to the unit's mission?
- d. Are the contracts and grants received by staff consistent with the strategic goals of the unit?

C. Administrative Support/Efficiency

- a. Is the unit receiving appropriate direct resources and support from the University?
- b. Is the unit pursuing sources of appropriate support from other units, funding agencies and/or corporation outside of the University?
- c. How adequate and effective are infrastructural resources and support (e.g., media, communications, space, recruitment, equipment)?
- d. How effectively is the unit able to generate external funding sufficient to undertake activities and projects that enhance its normal operations?
- e. How effectively does the unit promote new initiatives, plans, collegial spirit, and active community involvement?
- f. What major initiatives and improvements should professional staff and administrators be taking to enhance the unit?

- g. How well are administrative and professional support staff contributing to the research and strategic goals of the unit?
- h. How effectively does the unit deploy its resources?

D. Additional documentation in support of the above should include:

- a. A copy of the unit's budget.
- b. A copy of Memorial University's Strategic Plan.
- c. Breakdown salaried staff by rank, function, workload.
- d. Statement concerning any proposed changes to the unit's resources and an explanation of these proposed changes.

It is important that the self-study achieve a proper balance between details and inclusiveness, and available resources (especially time). The self-study should provide enough information to be useful and understandable by professionals outside the unit within and outside the University. The self-study should be considered as the central element for the external review process.

Review Schedule and List of Responsibilities

After the members of the Committee have discussed procedures among themselves, they will meet with the President and the Dean of Student Affairs. These meetings serve as orientation to the review and give Committee members the opportunity to ask questions about the process and the unit.

It is important that all professional staff of the unit have the opportunity to meet with the Committee. Time should be set aside for individuals and groups of professional staff, support staff and student representatives to meet with the Committee members.

The Committee should also have the opportunity to seek input from other stakeholders in the unit, both from within and outside the University, as appropriate. These may include:

Within the University:

- Members of the Senior Executive Committee, and a separate meeting with the President
- The Associate Vice Presidents
- Deans and Directors of various Faculties and Schools
- The Registrar
- Director of Facilities Management
- Director of Alumni Affairs
- Director of Student Recruitment
- Director of Memorial University Recreation Complex
- Director of Human Resources
- Prof. Karyn Butler, Chair of the last SAAS review Committee
- Manager of Campus Enforcement and Patrol

Outside the University:

- President, Atlantic Association of College and University Student Services

- President elect, Canadian Association of College and University Student Services
- Provincial Manager, Newfoundland and Labrador, Citizenship & Immigration, Canada
- Coordinator of Clients Services, CNIB
- Executive Director, Canadian Hard of Hearing Association
- Chief of Police, RNC
- Assistant Deputy Minister (Advanced Studies), Department of Education

Members of the Committee may also conduct any other interviews that they or the Dean have requested. With the consent of the President and members of the unit concerned, some interviews may be conducted, and information gathered, by the Memorial internal Committee members prior to the arrival of the external reviewers.

The review will include time for the Committee members to meet alone to outline their report and to distribute the writing responsibilities. At the conclusion of the review, the team will hold an exit interview with the President and the Dean of the Student affairs. The Report is due one month following the completion of the review.

The Review Report

As much as is reasonably possible, the report should place the unit under review in the larger context of units of a similar kind in Canada, and where appropriate outside of Canada, and should assess the unit according to the norms for such units. It should address any major issues facing the unit, comment on the compatibility of the unit's mission, achievements, plans and goals with those of other units associated with the unit and with those of the University mission, and suggest strategies for achieving unit and University goals. The Report should contain recommendations which, in the view of the Committee, will lead to improvements in the program. The Report should focus on the unit as a whole without reference to individuals and be written to inform both the unit and the President. To accomplish these purposes the Report should, where applicable and appropriate, consider the following points in addition to the points listed in the mandate of the Review Committee and stated in the introduction of this document:

- How well are staff resources being used?
- How successful is the unit in implementing University employment equity policies?
- Are staff workloads equitable and appropriate to the unit's missions?
- Are administrative decisions made and administrative tasks carried out efficiently and effectively?
- Are the staffs associations with regional, national and international units compatible with the mission of the unit?

Community Service

- Is the unit fulfilling opportunities to serve the community?
- How does the unit's mission respond to the needs and priorities of the community?

University Support

- Is the unit receiving adequate resources from its Division and from the University at large?
- Are its facilities adequate?
- Is it adequately staffed?
- Does the reporting structure ensure managerial efficiency and administrative effectiveness within the unit?

Plans, Goals and Resource Allocation

- Are the objectives of the unit appropriate to the mission of the University?
- Is the unit trying to do too much?
- What has the “value-added” of the unit been in the context of the overhead and other costs borne by the University on behalf of the unit?
- How might the unit resources be redistributed to realize its goals and those of the University?
- Should the unit continue in its present form?

Suggested Time Line

Week of the 21 st of August:	First meeting of the Review Committee
Week of the 21 st of August:	Send for input from stakeholders
Week of the 28 th of August:	Meeting with the President and the Dean of Student Affairs
Week of the 10 th of Sept.:	Site visit
	Meeting of the Review Committee
Week of the 27 th of Sept.:	Report draft discussions
October 1 st .	Draft report to the President
October 8 th ..:	Discussion of feedback from the President
	Meeting with President and the Dean
October 15 th ..:	Final report to the President.

APPENDIX B

List of Stakeholders who met with the Committee

Dr. A. Meisen, President
Dr. L. Walker, Dean, Student Affairs and Services
Dr. E. Campbell, Vice-President (Academic)
Directors of Student Affairs and Services (Mr. B. Belbin, Ms. J. Browne, Dr. P. Cornish, Ms. C. Burke, Dr. N. Lee)
Dr. D. Neville, Associate Vice-President (Academic)
Ms. L. Hollett, Director, Department of Human Resources
Graduate Students Union
Mr. K. Decker, Vice-President (Administration and Finance)
Dr. C. Loomis, Vice-President (Research)
Mr. G. Blackwood, Executive Director, Marine Institute
MUN Students' Union (MUNSU)
Mr. D. Miles, Director, Facilities Management
Ms. S. Devine, Director, Student Recruitment
Mr. G. Collins, The Registrar
Deans/Directors of Academic Units (Campus Wide)
Ms. V. Collins, Executive Director, Marketing and Communications
Student Affairs and Services Staff
Dr. P. Blackwood, Director, Alumni Affairs and Development
Ms. K. Butler, Chair of the 1999 SAAS Review
Mr. P. Chancey, Director, Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning
Dr. M. Collins, Associate Vice-President (Academic)

APPENDIX C

List of Stakeholders who made written submissions

Mr. R. Shea, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Education

Dr. C. Jablonski, Dean, Graduate Studies

Dr. E. Simpson, Honorary Research Professor

Ms. S. Devine, Director, Student Recruitment (addendum to meeting)

Ms. G. Collins, The Registrar (addendum to meeting)

Dr. L. Walker, Dean, Student Affairs and Services (addendum to meeting)

MUN Students' Union (MUNSU)