Announcement of the
Formation of a Committee and Terms of Reference for a
Project on Ways and Means to Optimize Collaborative Health Professional
Education and Research Among the Health Professions in Memorial University

Some months ago the government of Newfoundland and Labrador issued a White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education\(^1\). Contained in it were:

- A request that the University assess the feasibility of establishing a Faculty of Health Sciences and
- A direction to the Departments of Education and Health and Community Services to discuss with the Schools of Nursing and other stakeholders the consolidation of nursing education within Memorial University.

With respect to the latter direction, Dr. Chris Loomis, Vice-President (Research) is chairing the Committee working to bring within the aegis of Memorial the two nursing education programs that have been affiliated with the University but continue to be operated by two Regional Health Authorities, the Centre for Nursing Studies, and the Western Regional School of Nursing. I am informed that negotiations are proceeding but that specific plans to implement this direction will not be forthcoming until the many issues involved have been resolved satisfactorily. I refer you to the communiqué issued by the Committee in late December (copy attached).

With respect to the request to consider the feasibility of creating a Faculty of Health Sciences, in the late fall I initiated a two-stage process.

The first stage was to engage an experienced outside consultant to work with a committee set up by Vice-President Campbell to develop terms of reference and a work plan to study the feasibility of the suggested organizational change. The new Faculty would potentially include the Faculty of Medicine, the School of Nursing (as expanded), the School of Pharmacy, the School of Social Work, and possibly the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation. The consultant is Dr. Duncan G. Sinclair, retired Vice-Principal (Health Sciences) and Dean of Medicine at Queen’s University and past Chair of Ontario’s Health Services Restructuring Commission. The Committee’s other members are:

- Dr. Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch, Director, School of Social Work
- Dr. Linda Hensman, Director, School of Pharmacy
- Dr. Sandra LeFort, Director, School of Nursing
- Representative from School of Human Kinetics and Recreation
- Dr. Jim Rourke, Dean, Faculty of Medicine
- Dr. Shirley Solberg, School of Nursing
- Dr. Roy West, Faculty of Medicine

\(^1\) Foundation for Success. 2005
Dr. Sinclair visited Memorial in November, met with the Committee, interviewed a number of people including representatives of government and, after meeting with the Committee again in December, suggested that it be expanded by the addition of:

- Sister Elizabeth Davis, previously C.E.O. of the St. John’s Health Corporation.
- Dr. Wayne Ludlow, as facilitator and Co-Chair

Dr. Sinclair, having submitted a work plan, then recommended that the second stage of the process I had initiated proceed but that the feasibility study be re-cast beyond the White paper’s narrow organizational objective to encompass the more important and fundamental goal of identifying how health professional education and research might be facilitated and coordinated within Memorial University. He and his Committee developed the attached rationale and terms of reference to guide its work.

I have accepted Dr. Sinclair’s recommendations and am pleased to announce that the Committee has launched into the intensive work needed to discharge its terms of reference by June of this year. It will be meeting once a month until then, coincident with Dr. Sinclair’s being on campus. The Dean of Medicine and the Directors of the Schools involved have been asked to engage faculty and staff members and students in discussion of the issues involved and to bring forward comments and suggestions to the Committee. The Committee’s Co-Chair, Dr. Ludlow (and Dr. Sinclair to the extent possible given his scheduled visits to the campus), will be pleased to participate in such discussions.

Those who have questions or who may wish to provide comments on this initiative are invited to communicate directly with Dr. Sinclair, Dr. Ludlow, and the Committee. Memoranda should be directed to Ms. Glenys Woodland, c/o Office of the Vice-President (Academic) or sent by e-mail to gwoodlan@mun.ca

I have suggested that the Committee also invite a series of speakers to come to St. John’s to inform the campus community and the general public about the growing awareness of the benefits of collaborative or interprofessional (the word most commonly used in the growing body of literature on the subject) health professional education and research, especially in relation to the provision of optimally effective primary health care services to the increasingly elderly and widely dispersed people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I have made available to the Committee the necessary resources. My expectation is that this lecture series will begin in March. Although the dates have yet to be established, I am informed that the first speaker in this series will be Dr. Carol Herbert, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Western Ontario, and general editor of a special issue of the Journal of Interprofessional Education sponsored by Health Canada and published in May 2005.

I invite your participation in this project through the appropriate health professional Faculty or School. It is an important project for Memorial University and for the people we serve. Subject to their consideration by our usual academic review processes, its
results may well set us on a path to lead the country on the preparation of health professionals to work productively together in teams, especially in the provision of primary health services.
OUTLINE OF PROJECT ON
WAYS AND MEANS TO OPTIMIZE COLLABORATIVE EDUCATION AND
RESEARCH AMONG THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS IN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF
NEWFOUNDLAND

13 December, 2005

To quote from *Foundation for Success*\(^2\) “because today’s health and community services system involves many disciplines, a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach is essential”. This was the primary rationale for the Government's:

- request to Memorial University to assess the feasibility of establishing a Faculty of Health Sciences and
- direction to the Departments of Education and Health and Community services to:
  - discuss with the Schools of Nursing and other stakeholders the consolidation of nursing education within Memorial University, and
  - deliver paramedical training at the College of the North Atlantic.

With respect to “Healthier Together”\(^3\), in the section relating to human resources, among the essential “environmental shifts” identified were:

- enhancing the curriculums of the health and social work professions to prepare new graduates to adopt the directions and practices (of the strategic plan), and
- integrating team building skills and practices into both the education and practice environments to support the development of primary health care teams.

This strategic plan\(^4\) sets a new direction for primary health care as the “central focus of the delivery of health and community services”, one that “promotes a team-based, interdisciplinary approach to service provision where physicians, nurses, and other health professionals cooperate in providing services”. It also seeks to rebalance the provision of health care services with implementation of a wellness strategy to improve the health status of the population and to improve the capacity of communities to support health and well-being\(^5\). Achieving this will require increased participation in the new health/healthcare teams of social workers, public health professionals, and others whose work focuses more on the determinants of health, broadly defined, than on the provision of health care services *per se*.

Changing the current post-secondary educational paradigm to prepare optimally all members of these new teams of health professionals to work together happily and

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\(^4\) While the current government has not yet released its own plan, the Committee has been assured that those goals and objectives outlined in “Healthier Together” which are relevant to Memorial University and collaborative health professional education remain a high priority.

\(^5\) Ibid. p. iii
productively, knowledgeable about and confident in the competencies of one another, is a challenge. While a variety of initiatives are both in place and being developed at Memorial and other universities throughout Canada and elsewhere, it is fair to say that nowhere is collaborative health professional education being done as well as it should or needs to be.

Examining the feasibility of establishing a Faculty of Health Sciences in Memorial University is, by itself, insufficient to address the real question addressed in the Government’s White Paper, i.e.

*How best can Memorial University meet the new and growing needs of the Province of Newfoundland for health professionals who are educated and trained to work happily and productively together in teams?*

Everybody (or at least the great majority) believes strongly in the inherent value of collaborative health professional education and research. Some think that this is being done well enough now, although most agree that it should and can be done better. While there is the promise of doing so in the work of Memorial’s Centre for Collaborative Health Professional Education, it is far from clear how its federally-funded project$^6$ to develop an “Inter-professional Education Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador” will be implemented.

While the Dean and Directors enjoy cordial relationships, it remains that the Faculty of Medicine and the Schools of Nursing, Pharmacy and Social Work still function quite independently of one another; the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation, another potential contributor of graduates whose work relates directly to one of the major determinants of health, is essentially disconnected from the others. There is no unified focus of health professional education and research in the University. It had at one time a Vice-President (Health Sciences and Professional Schools) but that position has not been filled since 1990 and, in any case, the role related more to the administrative functions of the professional schools (including Engineering and Business) than to coordination of their activities. Given the high priority that must attach to health professional education and research now to meet the goals and objectives of the province’s strategic plan for health services, it is very important for the University to provide a more unified focus for its work in these fields.

Memorial University may well have the potential to lead the country and perhaps beyond in developing new ways and means of optimizing collaborative education and research among the health professions. It is not being done well anywhere. Clearly it is the responsibility of this University to educate health professionals who are fully able to meet the needs of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador in all its diversity. The University could also seize this opportunity to demonstrate to others how to do collaborative health professional education well and also the benefits to be derived from collaborative research.

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$^6$ $1.25$ million over three years, 2005-8
Recommendations:

1. That the project entitled “Examine the Feasibility of Establishing a Faculty of Health Sciences” be recast to focus on “Elucidation of Ways and Means to Optimize Collaborative Education and Research among the Health Professions in Memorial University of Newfoundland”

2. That the President’s Committee to conduct this project be:
   a. Dr. Shelly Birnie-Lefcovitch, Director, School of Social Work
   b. Sister Elizabeth Davis
   c. Dr. Linda Hensman, Director, School of Pharmacy
   d. Dr. Sandra LeFort, Director, School of Nursing
   e. Representative of School of Human Kinetics and Recreation
   f. Dr. Wayne Ludlow, President’s facilitator and Vice-Chair
   g. Dr. Jim Rourke, Dean, Faculty of Medicine
   h. Dr. Shirley Solberg, School of Nursing
   i. Dr. Duncan Sinclair, Chair
   j. Dr. Roy West, Faculty of Medicine

3. That the Committee be charged with the following terms of reference:
   a. To review the literature pertinent to collaborative professional education in the health and related fields
   b. To inquire into organizational structures, curricula, programs, and initiatives in universities elsewhere, particularly in Canada, that provide evidence or the promise of significant benefit to collaborative professional education in health-related programs of study
   c. To consult with and canvas students, staff and faculty members of the Faculty of Medicine and the Schools of Nursing, Pharmacy, Social Work, and Human Kinetics and Recreation and also with service providers (and their professional associations) currently working in provincial communities with respect to: current activities within the University that support collaborative health professional education and research
      • their strengths, weaknesses and efficacy
      • opportunities for their enhancement
      • roadblocks to such enhancement
      • ways and means of overcoming such roadblocks
   d. To recommend to the University a strategic plan to optimize collaborative health professional education and research among the related programs

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7 President’s letter to D.G.Sinclair dated 2 November, 2005
8 Enquiries will be made into the desirability of extending the canvas to include those who might be involved in the proposed professional program of study in clinical psychology.
of study in the University, including the recommendation of ways and means to implement it

- To recommend the development of measures to evaluate the effectiveness of enhanced collaborative professional education and of interprofessional research in the University’s health-related programs in meeting the needs of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador, bearing in mind the goals of the province’s strategic health plan and the long-term nature and hard-to-quantify character of the benefits to be derived

- To complete its work and report to the President as soon as possible but not later than the end of June, 2006
COMMUNIQUÉ
THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF NURSING EDUCATION
WITHIN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY.

White Paper Directive 11 (b)

Foundation for Success – White Paper on Post-Secondary Education, Directive 11 (b) directed the Departments of Education, and Health and Community Services, in conjunction with the Schools of Nursing, to implement a model that provides for the administration of nursing education, continuing education and other programs such as the licensed practical nursing program and the nurse practitioner program within Memorial University. The appropriate placement of associated funding will be determined based on discussions with the Departments of Health and Community Services, and Education.

Steering Committee

In late October, a Steering Committee was struck by Memorial University chaired by Dr. Loomis, Vice-President (Research). Included are the Directors of the three Schools of Nursing; Sandra LeFort, Joan Rowsell and Linda Norman-Robbins. Additional members are Ms. Patricia Pilgrim representing Eastern Health and Ms. Catherine McDonald representing Western Health.

As the consolidation falls within the jurisdiction of the University, it was left to Memorial to determine whether they wished to have a Government representative on the Committee. Dr. Meisen suggested that the Department of Education be given observer status on the Committee. Catherine Gogan, Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for co-ordinating the Implementation of the 28 White Paper Directives, sits on the Committee as an observer.

Purpose and Progress to Date

Phase I of the Committee’s work (October to December) has focussed on identifying key issues affecting the consolidation of the Administration of Nursing Education within Memorial University. Three meetings have been held to date (October 28, November 15 and December 2).

A road map outlining the key issues, proposed working groups to consider them, a process for relevant stakeholder engagement and time lines is now being prepared for submission to the Departments of Education, and Health and Community Services. This report is expected to be completed in early January 2006. The working groups will be established in the new year to begin consultations and discussion.
All members of the Steering Committee are committed to ensuring that consolidation of the Administration of Nursing Education within Memorial University proceeds in a cooperative and collaborative manner involving relevant stakeholders.

The Steering Committee will circulate regular communiqués to provide an ongoing update on the progress of its work.

Signed by the Committee Chair on behalf of all Committee Members.

Christopher W. Loomis, PhD  
Chair and Vice-President (Research)  
Memorial University of Newfoundland