

May 9th, 2005

Dr. John Whitehead
Head
Department of Physics and Physical Oceanography
Memorial University

Dear Dr. Whitehead:

The Planning and Budget Committee of Senate considered the action plan that resulted from the Academic Program Review for the Department of Physics and Physical Oceanography at its February 9th, 2005 meeting. The PBC wishes to express its appreciation to the Department for its participation in the APR process and for undertaking all the work that this process requires.

The primary purpose of formal academic program reviews is to give units of the University an opportunity to engage in formative self-assessment and to obtain the advantages of commentary and advice from experts from the discipline in question. The role of PBC is to monitor the process and develop a body of knowledge that is useful in making broad strategic recommendations and providing sound budgetary advice to the University. It is not the role of the Committee to determine allocations to individual units, but we can sometimes offer advice or make potentially useful observations.

An anticipated outcome of the process is a plan that clarifies how best to achieve the Department's objectives with the resources available to it. From the standpoint of the University, the process also provides a measure of accountability to the whole institution and the public that supports us. The Committee wishes to pass along its congratulations on an excellent report. It was felt that the Department showed a willingness to deal with problems as they occurred, that they had shown vision and direction, and demonstrated strength in teaching and research. There was some concern expressed about the length of time between the submission of the review panel report and the action plan, and there was also some discussion about the number of staff relative to other academic units, and the relatively low number of undergraduate majors.

I offer my support and that of the Committee as you begin the important work outlined in your action plan. We look forward to seeing your one-year update next February.

Sincerely yours,

Eddy Campbell
Vice-President (Academic)

c. Dr. R. Lucas, Dean of Science