



Memorial

University of Newfoundland

Office of the Vice-President (Academic) and Pro Vice-Chancellor

August 25, 2003

Dr. Chris Youé, Head
Department of History
Memorial University

Dear Dr. Youé,

On behalf of the Planning and Budget Committee I want to thank the Department of History for its participation in a regular Academic Program Review of the unit and its activities. PBC has discussed the report and the accompanying action plan and looks forward to a followup towards the middle of 2004.

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. An anticipated outcome is planning that clarifies how best to achieve the unit'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 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.

We were impressed by an apparent change in the department's approach between the preparation of the self-study and the action plan. The former sometimes appeared unfocused, especially with respect to research, while the latter is deliberate and forward looking. We would have liked to gain a clearer sense of the department's current place among Canadian departments of History and to know how you may in future make deliberate use of the University library and research resources. As a general matter, your review made PBC keenly aware of the need to consider the large investment we have in particular collections when making appointments without being so bound to them that we cannot significantly redefine our disciplinary strengths.

We could not fully appreciate the inadequacies of your physical space against the background of declining enrolments and numbers of faculty, nor were we convinced that your administrative needs would best be met by adding personnel rather than by reconfiguring the use of support staff across the Faculty. It is clear that these and other issues must be worked through with the Dean of Arts. However, as another general matter we would not advise further burdening a secretary with responsibility for your web pages. This responsibility involves academic judgments and might best be met by using a MUCEP student under the supervision of a faculty

member as part of the colleague's duty of academic service.

PBC applauds the Department's priority on undergraduate curriculum review. The resources of the Registrar's Office should be useful in clearing up the clutter of special topics courses you refer to and in identifying the classrooms you need in order to conduct classes of the size you want. If you find that this is not the case, then we should like to hear about it.

It was gratifying to get Professor Facey-Crowther's note that "the Academic Review has served and will continue to serve a useful purpose for the department over the next five years." Thank you again for taking good advantage of the opportunity provided by the process.

Sincerely yours,

Evan Simpson
Chair, PBC

c: D. Graham
D. Ball
R. Ellis