

Report of the Planning Committee to Council

May 20, 1999

REVISIONS TO THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM, ADMISSIONS QUOTA AND FINANCIAL OPERATION OF THE COLLEGE OF DENTISTRY

1. Introduction

In November, 1996, President Ivany informed Council that the Board of Governors had directed the College of Dentistry to decrease its dependence on the University's annual operating budget by \$1.5M, and that it was to do so by marketing places in the College to out-of-province and international students at full cost-recovery. This unprecedented directive was accompanied by an announcement that 22 faculty positions were to be cut in Arts and Science, Education and Physical Education and that significant cuts were also to be made in support staff, all in order to meet the University's budget shortfall. Since then the College of Dentistry has been struggling to produce a business plan which would meet the Board's \$1.5M requirement and a program which would be both academically viable and marketable at "full cost recovery" (but nevertheless competitive) tuition levels. The College of Dentistry has now submitted its revised academic program and a request for a permanent quota change for consideration by Council and has submitted its business plan for consideration by the Board of Governors.

The College of Dentistry realized early in the process that the need to be competitive at full cost recovery tuition levels would require offering a four year rather than a five year program, irrespective of the mix of students admitted, because all Canadian and almost all North American DMD programs are of the shorter four year duration. The College was directed to pursue reduction of the program to four years in a memo from President Ivany to Dean McDermott dated December 16, 1997, following consideration by the Board of three options proposed by the College in a business and marketing plan.

2. Proposed four year DMD program

The proposal for the new 2 + 4 academic program leading to the DMD degree, to replace the existing accredited 1 + 5 program, was submitted by the College of Dentistry on October 16, 1998. A copy of the program is attached in Appendix A of this report. Course proposals are not included but may be obtained by contacting Eileen Harvey (phone 5036). A list of documents supporting this program initiative is included in Appendix A. Copies of the correspondence between Dentistry and the Academic Programs Committee, documentation regarding accreditation of the DMD program and the recommendations of the Academic Programs Committee are also included in Appendix A. The Planning Committee also received and considered a number of unsolicited submissions from faculty in Dentistry and a petition from Dentistry students concerning the proposed program changes. The Academic Programs Committee identifies a number of concerns regarding the proposed new program, but recommends approval provided that sufficient resources are available to maintain its ongoing viability.

The Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada granted full accreditation to the DMD program for two years, effective November 30, 1998, with reporting requirements. Although only the overall recommendation of the Commission is included in Appendix A, the Academic Programs and Planning Committees had access to the complete accreditation

report. Note that, although the Commission was aware that very substantial changes to the DMD program were contemplated, the final version of these changes was not available at the time the Commission did its review. Note particularly that the comments of the accreditation committee and the response of the College are based on the assumption that, in the new program, 15 of the 25 spaces in each class would be reserved for international students, an assumption which was valid at the time, but which no longer holds (*vide infra*). In February, 1999, the Commission indicated it had no objection to conversion to a four-year program. A progress report must be provided to the Commission by November, 1999. Full accreditation of the new program is anticipated.

3. Resource implications and business plan

The College of Dentistry has struggled with the financial imperatives imposed on it by the Board. The Board was not satisfied with early attempts of the College to produce a realistic business plan which would implement its budget requirements, and eventually contracted KPMG to help the College. The resulting report was submitted to the Board of Governors on January 19, 1999, and copies were made available at the same time to both the Budget and Planning Committees. Members of Council who wish to review the KPMG report may do so by contacting the Office of the Vice-President Finance and Administration. The Board agreed that "Option III" of the KPMG report be the basis for further development of the College's business plan, and this option is the essence of what the College has now opted for in its proposal.

The College describes how it plans to integrate the 2 + 4 academic program with the business plan in a document entitled "*Proposed Program Changes, College of Dentistry*" which is attached in Appendix B of this report. The summary financial statement of how the College will meet the Board's \$1.5M budget target may be found in the last page of this appendix, followed by the Budget Committee's comments on the resource implications of the proposal. The College received considerable assistance from the University's Division of Financial Services in arriving at their final plan.

In summary:

(i) The College has a plan to meet its target of reducing its dependency on the operating budget by \$1.5M/a which, although "in progress" at the time it was considered, has been endorsed by the Budget Committee.

(ii) The required revenues will be generated by charging the first cohort of 25 students \$30,000 in tuition for each of four years, starting in 1999-2000, and by increasing clinic revenues. Subsequent cohorts of students may be charged higher tuition. (At \$30,000 per year, students are still not paying tuition at a full cost recovery level.)

(iii) Places will be reserved for 15 Saskatchewan students, of which 3 will be available to aboriginal students who meet the entrance requirements. These 15 students will receive four-year scholarships of \$17,225/a from the University and will be eligible for proposed ongoing annual bursaries of \$5,000 from the Province (forgivable if the graduate practises in Saskatchewan). Ten places will be targeted for the recruitment of "full cost recovery" students who could be from Saskatchewan or elsewhere but who will not be eligible for the above U of S scholarships. Information regarding the quota is contained in Appendix B in "*Proposed Program Changes, College of Dentistry*".

(iv) There appears to be sufficient demand to fill all 25 places at \$30,000 tuition per year at present. Future demand is unpredictable.

(v) The changes necessitated by moving to a four year "full tuition" program will require an increase in the base operating budget of the College, part of which is expected to be offset by increased clinic revenues.

Discussions with the Province to establish the proposed bursary program are underway.

4. Planning Committee's comments and recommendations

Council members should harbour no illusions that the changes to the DMD program presented here were motivated by anything other than stark fiscal reality. Either the College of Dentistry would provide a viable plan to meet the Board's budget target or the College would be closed by the Board who would exercise their power to discontinue the College's funding. The proposed changes are motivated by the need to produce a competitively marketable degree program, not by a desire in the first instance to improve academic quality. The series of events which has led to the present situation is unfortunate and unwelcome and should not be allowed to set a precedent. The responsibility for creating this situation lies not with the College or the University or the Board, but with successive Provincial Governments which, according to the MacKay Report, have not given the universities high priority compared with other funding sectors and which failed to provide sufficient operating funds to allow the University of Saskatchewan to mount its existing programs at existing staffing levels.

Despite the fact that the proposed changes to the DMD program were motivated by fiscal rather than academic matters, the Academic Programs and Planning Committees are satisfied that the proposed four year program will produce well-trained graduates in Dentistry. The graduates of the present five year program are recognized as capable, well-trained practitioners because of the individual attention given by Dentistry faculty to the relatively small numbers of students in each class. This will not change under the new program, and the number of contact hours will diminish by only about 10% compared with the existing program. The new program is comparable in length and content with other programs in North America, and has received professional accreditation for two years. Both University and external professional review processes are in place to assure the academic community and the public that the College will continue to graduate dentists of high quality.

Finalizing the business plan has been difficult for the College. Indeed, some of the budget lines are still being refined. This has made it particularly awkward for the Budget Committee to carry out its responsibilities, and has delayed bringing the proposal to Council. The Planning Committee refused to bring the proposal to Council until it was assured that the Budget Committee had developed a sufficient level of comfort to endorse the business plan at at least one point in its evolution. The Budget Committee has a number of residual concerns about the financial aspects of the proposal, but has now nevertheless endorsed the plan. Both the Budget and Planning Committees have some reservations about the potential of the College of Dentistry to meet its financial targets into the future. Nevertheless, the Planning Committee believes it is now appropriate to bring the proposed changes forward for debate in Council with a recommendation that the academic aspects of the proposals be approved.

Therefore, following the recommendations of the Budget and Academic Programs Committees, the Planning Committee recommends to Council

1. that the proposal to replace the existing 1 + 5 year DMD program with the 2 + 4 year program outlined in the documentation submitted by the College of Dentistry be approved,

and that the new program be implemented in 1999-2000, subject to confirmation by the Senate of the University of Saskatchewan;

2. that, subject to confirmation by the Senate of the University of Saskatchewan, the permanent quota of the College of Dentistry be revised to permit 10 of 25 spaces in each year to be filled by "full-cost-recovery" students, while retaining 15 spaces for Saskatchewan residents of which 3 may be students of aboriginal origin who meet the program's entrance requirements, as specified in the accompanying documentation.

The Planning Committee also recommends that Council recommend to the President and the Board of Governors

3. that the University of Saskatchewan establish 15 four-year scholarships for qualified Saskatchewan students in the DMD program, including up to 3 for students of aboriginal origin who have been admitted to the program and who continue to meet academic standards;

4. that the financial model outlined in the accompanying documentation be endorsed;

5. that an oversight mechanism be established by the senior administration to ensure that the business plan established by the College of Dentistry is followed and the budgetary requirements established for the College by the Board are met;

6. that if the new program fails to receive ongoing professional accreditation, or if, after two years of experience with the new financial model, the College of Dentistry finds itself unable to meet the budgetary requirements set by the Board, discussions reopen on the future of the College.

5. Lessons for future planning

The College of Dentistry has been put through a process which is not to be wished on any of us; Dentistry faculty have been forced to work under very difficult circumstances in recent years. Fortunately, adversity has engendered creativity and the College now has a plan to meet both its financial and programmatic targets.

It is instructive to ask why Dentistry was targeted by the Board of Governors and what we can learn from their dilemma, from a planning perspective. Dentistry is a stand-alone College; it does little or no service teaching. It is small, even by U of S norms. Little research is done by faculty in the College of Dentistry (*cf.* statistics book, audit project report, publication records). The cost per student is high, and the Provincial Government has not seen fit to recognize this fact in determining this University's operating budget. The Province could almost certainly secure the same number of dentists at lower cost by subsidizing students to train in Dentistry outside Saskatchewan. In short, the College of Dentistry was, and remains, vulnerable because it is a high-cost operation that is not well-integrated into the wider academic, research and health care delivery communities. Although the College continues to do a fine job of training dentists, that is its sole strength. When, in times of fiscal restraint, it is seen that this training function can be performed more cheaply in other ways without greatly affecting the rest of the post-secondary education, research and health care delivery systems, such vulnerability can be fatal.

We all need to pay greater attention to what universities can do uniquely; namely, combine research and scholarly work and the practice of professional skills with teaching and service. The greater the number of links that each academic unit has within the academy, to the community and to national and international scholarly endeavours, the

greater is the value that unit contributes to the whole enterprise. We become vulnerable when we fail to meet any of our several obligations as academics (teaching, service to the public and the academy, research and scholarly work).

This University has taken some pride in providing Saskatchewan students with access to education and professional training in a wide range of programs, notably in the health professions, despite the higher cost associated with dis-economies of scale in doing so. Just having all the programs is clearly not enough. In the present climate of increasing competitiveness, mobility of students, and availability of electronic means of course delivery, we must devote more attention to providing programs of high quality and to effectively integrating the teaching, research and service functions of the institution with the needs of the Province.

Appendix A: Academic program proposals

Appendix B: Integration of the 4 + 2 program with the business plan; quota

(Appendices are not available on the website. See “Contact” for more information.)