

**Notes of University Council  
Special Meeting  
2:30 p.m., Thursday, April 3, 2008  
Neatby-Timlin Theatre**

*Attendance: See Appendix A.*

1. Opening Remarks

Having called the meeting to order at 2:33 p.m., and quorum not having been met, Chair Claire Card sought and obtained agreement from Council that the meeting proceed informally. She also indicated that she has asked Vice Chair Barry Ziola to preside at today's meeting in order to avoid a possible conflict of interest, and to allow her to participate fully in the discussion of the Draft Second Integrated Plan.

Professor Ziola then assumed the Chair for the rest of the meeting.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Those present agreed to proceed on the basis of the circulated agenda.

3. Discussion of Draft Second Integrated Plan

Professor Ziola asked Professor John Rigby as Chair of the Planning and Priorities Committee to introduce this item. Professor Rigby summarized the consultation and drafting process that led to the creation of the draft of the plan that is before Council, and then invited Acting Provost and Vice President Academic Ernie Barber to present the draft.

Professor Barber commented on the relationship of the college and unit plans to the Integrated Plan, and on the three priority areas identified in the plan. He pointed out that the plan also identifies 15 commitments that the university needs to make under these three areas. He drew Council's attention to the institutional imperatives articulated in the plan: the relationship with aboriginal peoples, linking the global and the local; and the need for innovation in all that we do. He also drew members' attention to the section of that plan on Quality and Accountability.

Professor Barber then introduced Pauline Melis, Director of Institutional Planning, to speak about the consultation process for the current draft, and the feedback that has been received so far. She described the differences between this plan and the first plan, developed four years ago. She also explained how the implementation process would work and how the plan itself might influence initiative-specific planning in the academic

and administrative units. Finally, she talked about the need to assess the success of initiatives and commitments in the plan by delineating specific ways of measuring them.

Professor Barber then invited members of Council to provide their comments and suggestions.

There was a wide-ranging discussion of the plan; notes from this discussion are attached as Appendix B.

Several members commented that they liked the draft and found it more inviting and enabling than the first integrated plan.

There were a number of suggestions made for enhancing the document, including putting more emphasis on recruitment of students in the face of declining demographics, incorporating material from the Teaching and Learning foundational document, highlighting the importance of prospective employers as partners, making internationalization more central to the document, committing to better training for both academic advisors and instructors, and including concrete targets for addressing the student housing problem and concrete measures to enhance environmental sustainability in the document. Several other suggestions were made respecting the wording in specific sections of the document.

Comments about an apparent dissonance between the section on the *Ways we Work Together* and the Human Resources unit plan led to a discussion about the relationship between the unit plans, which were reviewed by the College Plans Review Committee but are not subject to approval by Council, and the University-wide Integrated Plan, which will come before Council for its endorsement later this month. A visitor to Council who identified himself as a member of the Concerned Academic Community read from a prepared text on this issue, and asked that the full text be entered into the record of this meeting. It appears as Appendix C.

Dr. Barber encouraged all who have further comments about the plan to visit the Integrated Planning web site and register their views; the site has been designed to encourage and record dialogue about the plan. Another draft will be made available approximately April 9 so that it can be considered at the next Council meeting.

4. Question Period

There were no further questions.

5. Other Business

There was no other business.

6 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m. Next meeting: 2:30 p.m., Thursday, April 17, 2008 in Neatby-Timlin Theatre

*Appendix B*Record of Discussion of the Integrated Plan (Agenda Item 3)

A member commented that he liked the draft and found it to be inviting, commenting that it seems less exclusive than the last plan. He was glad to find the student experience highlighted in the plan, but worries about the University's ability to maintain the student population given the demographics of the province. He would have liked to have seen more specifics about how we will attract the best and brightest students from Canada and internationally to keep our programs strong. The Provost's response was that this is a strategic, not an operational, plan, and that every one of the commitments require implementation plans in order to operationalize them. He also agreed that it is time to revisit the enrolment plan in light of the changing demographics.

Another member agreed that the plan seems to be enabling and that he can see his own College & Department in it; it represents a good guide to progress. However, the plan does not carry any reference to the proposed Teaching and Learning document, which has important things to say about linking teaching and programs to career goals. He suggested that the integrated plan should address the issue of removing barriers for employers, and should identify employers as important partners in creating conditions for learning and retention.

A member of the International Activities Committee of Council congratulated the drafters of the plan on the attention it pays to globalization, particularly its goal of engaging students in global realities and its references to the foundational document on Globalization. Internationalization is about creating a global ethos, internationalizing the curriculum, and seeking to respect different cultures. He also expressed gratitude to the administration for its recent appointment of a special advisor on internationalization. Nevertheless, he would have liked to see it a little more front and centre in the document, and he expressed some concern that the recommendations of the special advisory may not be eligible for funding because of timing: the multi-year budget document will be approved in May, before those recommendations have come out. He suggested that a substantial block of funding should be set aside for internationalization, on the understanding that internationalization will be central to the institution over the next planning cycle.

A visitor to Council identified himself as a member of the Concerned Academic Committee, and asked that his comments be read into the record. A copy of his remarks is attached (Appendix C). In responding, the Provost highlighted the section of the Plan that calls for improvements in the way we work together on the campus, including building trust, and challenged all members of the community to recognize and name our own contributions to any mistrust there may be. He noted that the Plan attempts to be strategic rather than operational, and does not make specific reference to any of the 26 unit plans; it builds from them but does not copy from them. He added that in the upcoming planning period, the University will have to make a greater commitment to assessment, and to this end Council will soon receive a white paper on assessment from the Provost's Office. He indicated that external reviews of administrative units, including the one for the Human Resources Division, will bring the same kind of rigour

to the process that is expected in Strategic Program Review, including both self-assessment and external assessment.

Another member commented that she was pleased to read the section on ways we work together, and feels this is a vital point. She also expressed appreciation that this plan is briefer than the previous plan. She offered some wording suggestions, including the following:

- p. 20/18 – need clarification about who is being referred to as “the university.”
- p 21/19 - clarification of whether senior administrators are included under ‘faculty, staff and students’
- p. 19/17- individual priorities can’t always be aligned with the institution; appreciates the word ‘generally’.

The Provost indicated that in general when the document refers to ‘the University’ it is deliberately referring to everyone collectively. He acknowledged that when it comes to implementation a balance must be struck between putting out an empowering document and trusting that the creative people will find a way to implement its recommendations on the one hand, and providing leadership and accountability on the other hand about who is responsible for achieving results.

The USSU’s VP Academic indicated that she has prepared a document in response to the plan and will send this to the Integrated Planning Office. The response includes some wordsmithing and some recommendations, for example that academic advisors be better trained, that faculty and graduate students be required (rather than encouraged) to participate in teaching improvement courses; that the goals for student housing be more explicit (e.g. target a percentage of students who will be housed on campus); that teaching evaluations be mandatory for every faculty member; that there be a campus-wide sustainability policy calling for (for example) LEEDS certification for all buildings, and campus-wide composting. She stressed the special circumstances of students who live on campus and asked that consideration be given to ways to create better between residence students and residence administration. The provost encouraged her to post her document on the Integrated Planning discussion site.

Another visitor expressed his agreement that the priorities outlined in the section on *The Ways We Work Together* will be critical to the University’s achieving its goals. He cautioned the writers of the document to be careful about calling it ‘just words’, since words—both their presence and their absence—are important. In particular, the presence of the document’s reference to ‘the real world’ is problematic. An absence he identified in the document is in the statement that “Universities are composed of people and ideas,” suggesting that what’s missing is the concept of ‘relationship’ – between people, and among ideas. He commended the document for its willingness to name the nature of a challenge (e.g. SSHRCC funding) in order to turn it into something better. Since labour relations is a challenge, he proposes that challenge should be named too. The Provost expressed agreement with the problematic nature of the “real world” distinction.

A member expressed the view that labour relations, and relations between senior management and faculty, have been very bad, and observed that during the strike this view was broadly held. He expressed his belief that the drafters of document have been

sincere in what they say, but he feels that acceptance the document is premature until administrative units have been evaluated and have adjusted their practices to conform to the spirit of the document. He proposed tabling the document. The Provost indicated that the document will be brought to Council for endorsement later that month, and that if others agree it should be tabled, a motion to do so could be brought forward at that time.

A student visitor who indicated he lives in the student residence suggested that residences should be within the SESD portfolio rather than Consumer Services. The Vice President (Finance and Resources) responded that there are both student experience and operational requirements to running a residence, so it is less important where the residences report than that SESD and Consumer Services work hand in hand.

A member of Council spoke of the huge amount of energy and paper that has gone into creating and reviewing these documents, and expressed her devastation that some of the unit plans are based non-unionized pop culture books rather than academic rigour. She asked why it was that a unit plan for which numerous unions have asked for an external review is allowed to go forward, and why it is impossible to insist that a plan that is fatally flawed be revised or retracted. She wondered who is not reading the “scorched-earth” e-mails that have been copied to her. She expressed the view that the words in the Integrated Plan are disconnected from the words in the unit plans, and that excellence should be demanded from the administrative units as well as the rest of the university.

The Provost responded that neither the CPRC nor Council is not being asked to approve or disapprove any of the 26 unit plans. As the Integrated Plan moves towards implementation, items that require Council approval will be brought forward and there will be opportunities for debate about particular aspects of implementation

A member pointed out that the CPRC spent considerable time reviewing all of the unit plans and submitted its comments to Council last month. Partly on the basis of those comments, the University-wide Integrated Plan which is before Council today was developed. Once it has been approved, the onus will be on all units, academic and non-academic, to adapt their goals to the University’s overall plan and create implementation plans that will achieve the goals that have been approved.

Dr. Barber encouraged all who have further comments about the plan to visit the Integrated Planning web site and register their views; the site has been designed to encourage and record dialogue about the plan. Another draft will be made available approximately April 9 so that it can be considered at the next Council meeting.

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*Appendix C*Text of speech by Prof. C. Boyd at the Council Meeting, April 3rd, 2008

I would like to comment on the lack of reality of some of the observations and comments in the Integrated Plan, specifically those sections which voice ideals that are directly contradicted by recent events at the university.

On page 17 of the Integrated Plan it is noted that *“The college and unit plans made it abundantly clear that the people at the University of Saskatchewan are one of the University’s greatest assets.”* It goes on to state that *“Being successful requires an environment in which people feel positive, supported, energized, and valued, and where individual priorities are generally aligned with the goals of the institution.”* The relevant section also contains the following aspiration: *“A priority is to create.... a shared understanding about the importance of collaboration throughout the University.”*

One must ask if these statements have any real meaning whatsoever, given the recent history of labour relations at the University?

If the success of the University requires an environment where people (our greatest asset) *“feel positive, supported, energized and valued”*, then something drastic is going to have to change within the administration of this university so as to bring about this 180 degree change in attitude.

For example, some of the various communiqués that were issued from the Administration Building during the recent CUPE strike demonstrated a crude lack of respect for all staff and faculty, not just those on the picket lines. Those communiqués and the various press conferences given by administrators did not make employees *“feel positive, supported, energized and valued”*, but had quite the opposite effect.

The goal of *“a shared understanding about the importance of collaboration”* seems delusional, given the recent history of the U of S administration’s confrontations with the various labour unions on campus.

I feel that Council must be given some explanation of how exactly these haughty ideals are ever to be achieved in the absence of some kind of drastic overhaul of the pervading negative ethos within the Administration Building towards the employees of this university.

On a similar theme, the following quote on page 17 of the Integrated Plan *“We need to cultivate a work environment that reduces internal competition”* is directly contradicted by the University’s recent negotiating stance with CUPE on the issue of performance-based pay, and contradicted by the “culture of high performance” theme of the Human Resources Multi-Year Plan submitted as one of the unit plans within the Integrated Plan. Regarding the Human Resources Multi-Year Plan, I note that the Integrated Plan states on page 19 that *“The central offices are populated by professionals—accountants, lawyers, scientists, engineers, technicians, designers— who are constantly scanning their professional environments for ‘exemplary practices’, [that] are intended to provide University-wide support and critical advice....”*

The *“exemplary practices”* that have guided the preparation of the Human Resources Multi-Year Plan are described on page 7 of that document as follows:

In preparation for developing the next multi-year plan, HR explored the concepts described by Jim Collins in his books *Built to Last*, and *Good to Great*, which describe the characteristics of great and long lasting organizations.

Collins believes the most enduring and successful organizations preserve a “core ideology” (values plus purpose) which sustains them over the long run – while simultaneously envisioning a bold future which stimulates constant change and progress through a “big hairy audacious goal” (BHAG). This, he believes, is fundamental to a well conceived vision.

The fact that this plan claims to be guided by a theory that champions progress via a “big hairy audacious goal” (BHAG) should give some idea as to the academic quality of the “*exemplary practice*” that the professionals in the Human Resources Unit have somehow stumbled upon in embracing Jim Collins’ books and managerial philosophy.

As an aside, in the event that anyone would claim that Collins’ work must have credibility because his books have sold over 4 million copies altogether, I would note that popularity itself does not denote the intellectual breadth and depth nor the academic rigour of a piece of work. If this were to be so, then we would expect to see the Department of English teaching a course on “The Collected Works of Danielle Steele.”

Jim Collins’ approach is widely discredited (see, for example “The Halo Effect” by Phil Rosenzweig) such that it cannot even be regarded as exemplary practice within the US corporate world, let alone in any other context. Even if it were to be a respectable organizational philosophy, its origins lie in the United States profit sector, a world that can hardly be thought to provide any kind of exemplary practice for human resource management in the radically different milieu of a Canadian university.

I challenge any of the University’s senior administrators to either express public support for the Human Resources Plan, in which case I would expect them to openly champion the idea of the “big hairy audacious goal”, or else to publicly disassociate themselves from this bubble-headed rubbish.

For the Integrated Plan to have any meaning other than as an elaborate shared fantasy, then the administration of this University have to begin to walk the talk of the plan – they must demonstrate to us that they are committed to the Integrated Plan concepts of “collaboration”, and of “working together more effectively”.

The first demonstration of this revised approach must be the rejection of the Human Resources Multi-Year Plan, and the commissioning of a credible independent review of this University’s Human Resources Unit.

Colin Boyd,  
Professor of Management