

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
PLANNING AND PRIORITIES COMMITTEE
REPORT FOR INFORMATION

PRESENTED BY: Bob Tyler, Chair, Planning and Priorities Committee

DATE OF MEETING: April 19, 2012

SUBJECT: **Reflections on the Integrated Planning Process**

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND:

The Unit Plans Review Committee, which comprised the Planning and Priorities Committee and two members from each of the Academic Programs Committee and the Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee, was integrally involved in the development of the Third Integrated Plan, as has been reported to Council on several occasions. At the outset, the Committee committed to a full debriefing on the process for the development of the plan and its related components, which was to occur as soon as possible after Council approval of the plan.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY:

The Unit Plans Review Committee met on March 14th to reflect on the integrated planning process. Members commented on topics ranging from the practical logistics and timeline for the development of the plan, to the degree of engagement of unit faculty/staff and the broader community and the perceptions associated with planning as an institutional activity. These comments are outlined in the attachment, which summarizes the Committee's observations and contains a number of suggestions and recommendations intended to inform the work of the Office of Institutional Planning and Assessment in the next planning cycle.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memo to Pauline Melis, Assistant Provost, Institutional Planning and Assessment, dated April 5, 2012



MEMORANDUM

TO: Pauline Melis, Assistant Provost, Institutional Planning and Assessment

FROM: Bob Tyler, Chair, Planning and Priorities Committee of Council and Chair, Unit Plans Review Committee

DATE: April 5, 2012

RE: **Reflections on the integrated planning process for the third planning cycle**

On March 14, 2012, members of the Planning and Priorities Committee and the Unit Plans Review Committee met to reflect on the planning process for the third planning cycle, from inception to approval of the Third Integrated Plan. Thank you for attending and joining in the discussion as a member of both committees and, of course, as Assistant Provost, Institutional Planning and Assessment. The following summarizes the main points raised, and is intended to provide you with the Committee's unique perspective resulting from its involvement in the development of the Third Integrated Plan, the Multi-year Budget Framework and the Multi-year Capital Plan, and its review of the college, school and administrative unit plans.

Community Planning Event

Consultation with stakeholders was highly significant to the development of the integrated plan. The Community Planning Event leading to the identification of the four focal areas for the plan was viewed as a very worthwhile activity. Participation by members of Senate at the Community Planning Event was considered unique and an aspect of the planning process deserving of greater profile.

Areas of Focus

The identification of a limited number of key institutional priorities was supported as essential to the planning process. The advantage, of course, is that the focal areas benefit from institutional "lift" and become broadly dispersed throughout the institution. Care must be taken, however, in their selection as by virtue of their identification, emphasis on other areas will be diminished. With the exception of the focal area on Aboriginal Engagement, the areas of focus identified were quite similar to those used in planning at other universities. Greater recognition that the focal areas will not apply equally to all colleges, schools and administrative units may be useful in ensuring that resources are not invested in initiatives that are neither applicable nor productive for a particular unit or for the University. The breadth and depth of the focal areas means that by their nature, the majority of planning entities will respond to them. As the University's planning process matures, a more nuanced consideration of distinctions amongst units to achieve the right level of integration is supported to make the most efficient use of our resources.

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Faculty and Staff Engagement

The integrated planning process provides ample opportunity for members of the University to participate fully in the process, both as individuals and within their units. However, the degree to which this occurred at the unit level appeared to vary greatly. Additional consideration of how faculty and staff might be engaged more fully in the planning process would be desirable. A natural first point of consultation is with those leaders who deeply engaged their units in planning for the third planning cycle. Although accountability for the implementation of the plan has been vested at the senior leadership level, the fundamental basis for implementation is at the level of individual faculty and staff members. Without buy-in at this level, the implementation of the plan is tenuous.

Planning Template

A number of practical suggestions were offered with respect to the planning template provided to colleges, schools and administrative units. These included inclusion of an executive summary which would highlight the priorities of the unit. Greater focus on complement planning in the template would be desirable, given the importance of the faculty and staff complements in enacting the plans. Additional guidance on the use of metrics in the plans is suggested to ensure the metrics provided by units also cite their basis and source, and are based upon activities that can be measured.

Managing Expectations and Priorities

Ensuring the template contains a more definitive request for prioritization is suggested to better manage expectations. For many units, planning is perceived to be synonymous with growth. Encouraging these units to perceive planning from the perspective of how things might be done differently with the resources at hand is advised. Clearly identifying within college, school and administrative unit plans the order of priority for the activities listed, how these will be resourced (including what resources would be reallocated), and the implications of not resourcing priorities was proposed as a means to more clearly link priorities with resources. Without this approach, the robust development of the plan is lost at the implementation stage as the priorities and funding for priorities have not been well articulated. A scenario-based approach is proposed, which would ask how existing resources are and would be deployed, and what units might do if additional resources were available. This approach would require that core activities be considered in consultation with others, given the interdependency of much programming.

Many of the plans did not contain a clear and strong analysis of the effect new priority initiatives would have on ongoing commitments. Requiring planning entities to make clear commitments and to report back on progress against those commitments is proposed to provide clarity to shifting priorities.

Academic Priorities Fund

The Committee identified a fundamental disconnect between the existence of the Academic Priorities Fund, which is intended to fund significant initiatives arising from integrated planning, and the implied request that units base their planning on existing resources. From this viewpoint, the Academic Priorities Fund should either be abandoned or greatly increased. At present, the existence of the Fund was perceived to have a psychological effect, leading to requests for resources from units that are many times the magnitude of the Fund. Alternatively, the purpose of the Fund and the funds available within it should be very clearly disseminated to all planning entities.

Timeline

In order to achieve the full value of the process and consultations, the timelines must be relaxed. This translates into starting the planning process earlier. It was suggested that this also would lead to better integration of unit planning processes with the institutional planning process. Presently, unit leaders receive feedback once their plans are cast. Despite the philosophy of plans being living documents, plans are seldom modified once submitted.

On behalf of members,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Fairbairn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

c B. Fairbairn, Provost and Vice-President Academic