

## **Report of the Senior Administration Responsibility Review Committee**

### Responses from the University Community

Number received: 40 responses were received between 26 September 2014 and 30 January 2015.

#### Groups

- Academic Council, Fredericton
- AUNBT (publicly posted on the organization's website)
- Deans Council, Fredericton
- Directors Plus, Fredericton
- Faculty of Business, Saint John
- Faculty of Education, Fredericton
- Library Board, Fredericton
- Library Management Group, Fredericton
- Student Services Staff, UNB Fredericton

#### Individuals

- Anonymous - 7 (verified as members of the University community by Brenda LeBlanc)
- Faculty Members – 12 from UNB Fredericton (includes 1 retired and 1 adjunct)
  - 7 from Saint John (1 retired)
- Individual Staff Members – 3 from UNB Fredericton
  - 1 from UNB Saint John
- Graduate Students - 1

### **General Comments**

*Just over half of the responses received were largely positive and/or supportive of the SARR, though many of the responses, both positive and negative, spoke only to selected recommendations and not the entire document. At least two respondents termed it "a disappointment." Strong support for the report came from the AUNBT (response publicly posted on the website) and the Academic Council in Fredericton.*

*The issue of "trust" between the administration and faculty, as well as between the campuses, was mentioned frequently. The overall view was that the report's recommendations, even those that had merit, would not address this fundamental issue.*

*It was noted that neither the position of Vice-President Research nor of Vice-President Advancement was considered in the report, which was regarded as a baffling oversight by those who mentioned it.*

*Several responses indicated the mandate of the review committee was too limited and should have included a performance review of the individuals holding the positions. Concerns were raised by a few about the limited number of people interviewed by the committee. This was particularly true for Saint John campus respondents, who felt the input to the committee came largely from Fredericton-based administrators. At least one respondent felt the consultation should have been much broader and deeper involving all interested members of faculty and staff over a longer timeframe.*

*Most respondents called for quick decisions on what will be enacted and expeditious implementation. It was suggested the implementation should precede academic prioritization and the revision of the UNB Act.*

### **Title of the Vice-President Saint John**

#### **Recommendation One:**

We recommend that the Vice-President Saint John be re-designated the Principal of UNB Saint John reporting to the President of the University, and that the Principal normally act as President in the latter's absence.

*Although the term "principal" was suggested by the group with whom the Committee met in Saint John, the reaction in both Saint John and Fredericton to this recommendation was almost universally negative, citing it as a "demotion" and a "step backward." There were a number of alternates suggested: Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Provost and Vice-President Saint John, Senior Vice-President, First Vice-President.*

*Reaction to having the VP Saint John designated as "second in command" got mixed reviews. Some felt the VP in Saint John would be well-qualified to undertake this, given his/her scope of responsibilities; others felt it should alternate between the VP Saint John and VP Fredericton; while still others felt the VP Saint John did not have an adequate grasp of the range of programs on the Fredericton campus.*

*A couple of respondents objected to the use of the exclusive use of the pronoun "he" (rather than he/she) in reference to this position.*

### **Title and Duties of the Vice-President Fredericton**

#### **Recommendation Two:**

We recommend that the Vice-President Fredericton be re-designated simply Vice-President Academic, with responsibility for academic matters on the Fredericton campus. Non-academic responsibilities should be reviewed and reassigned to other administrative units, as appropriate, to ensure this Vice-President's focus and mandate are primarily academic.

*There was general support for this recommendation, as long as the focus was on academic matters in Fredericton and did not extend to Saint John.*

*Some respondents questioned whether the VP Fredericton actually had too many non-academic responsibilities and felt the responsibilities of the VP Fredericton and VP Saint John should be identically aligned.*

*The issue of non-academic responsibilities within the VP Fredericton's portfolio was addressed in greatest detail by the Student Services respondents, representing 150+ staff members who support students outside the classroom, who advocated strongly for the creation of a bi-campus Vice-President Students position. This position, which has been recommended in several Student Services QARs since 1996, would take responsibility for UNB's commitment to the "Student Experience" as identified in the strategic plan. They also noted that this position is common in many universities in both Canada and the US, and is necessary in an environment where recruitment is highly competitive.*

*This was also the recommendation under which the question of UNB having a Provost was mentioned by several respondents. Some expressed surprise that it had not been recommended by the Committee. Those who were against the appointment based their opposition primarily on the cost and the further proliferation of administrative positions.*

*The Fredericton Deans Council in particular favoured the appointment of a Provost, recommending it be an expansion of the VP Fredericton's responsibilities, constituting a "first among equals" and serving as Acting President in the President's absence. The group presented three scenarios: a new position of Provost, reporting to the President, to whom the VP Research, VP Saint John, VP Fredericton, School of Graduate Studies and University Librarian would report; a combined Provost and VP Fredericton position to whom the VPs Saint John and Research would report; and a combined Provost and VP Fredericton position reporting to the President along with all the other VPs.*

*Another respondent suggested combining the positions of Provost and University Secretary.*

## **Title of Vice-President Finance and Corporate Services**

### **Recommendation Three:**

We recommend the title of the Vice-President Finance and Corporate Services be restored to that of Vice-President Finance and Administration as it was originally known until recently at UNB and is commonly used in Canadian universities.

*Reaction to this recommendation ranged from supportive to "it doesn't matter." The focus was much more on ensuring, as is stated later in the report, that academic priorities drive the budgeting process.*

## **Reporting Relationship—Dean of Graduate Studies**

### **Recommendation Four:**

It is recommended that the Dean of Graduate Studies report to the Vice-President Academic at UNB Fredericton and to the Principal of UNB Saint John. It is further recommended that the Dean have a dotted line reporting relationship to the Vice-President Research.

*This met with mixed reviews. Some expressed concern about the Dean having to be accountable to three vice-presidents. Others strongly favoured the Dean reporting to an "academic" VP. One former dean of the SGS argued strongly for the current arrangement, given both the Dean and the VP Research have bi-campus responsibilities.*

*Another respondent noted that there is confusion around whether responsibility for graduate studies is "inside" or "outside" the faculties, and that this needs to be addressed along with the reporting relationship.*

## **Financial Management**

### **Recommendation Five:**

The President, with the support of the Board of Governors, should reorganize the University's financial management systems, processes and personnel to achieve effective University-wide budget preparation, monitoring and reporting outcomes under the responsibility of the Vice-President Finance and Administration. The Assistant Vice-President (Financial and Administrative Services) at the Saint John campus and the Assistant Vice-President (Resource Planning and Budgeting) at the Fredericton campus and their staffs should report directly to the Vice-President Finance and Administration. In the reorganization that follows upon this recommendation the academic leaders (Principal in Saint John, Vice-President Academic in Fredericton and Vice-President Research) must retain sufficient staff to sustain their capacity to manage their own budgets and ensure effective decision supports in their office.

*There was support for this reorganization particularly if it would result in better communication and more transparency in the budgeting process. There was widespread concern (indeed, anger in some cases) about budget surpluses in recent years that turned out to be "surprises" following several years of austerity measures.*

*Respondents from Saint John were more hesitant, worrying that the change in reporting relationships would lessen that campus's autonomy and diminish the role of the Assistant VP (Finance and Administrative Services), whose duties extend beyond the budgeting process. Concern was also expressed that the Assistant VP would no longer be accountable to faculty and students on the Saint John campus.*

*Respondents from both campuses stressed the importance of having sufficient financial support staff to ensure the campus Vice-Presidents could do their jobs effectively, especially with regard to budgeting for the academic mission.*

### **Recommendation Six:**

We propose three changes to the existing university budget process which we believe will make it more transparent and enable the University community to engage with the development of the annual budget on an iterative basis. Academic priorities must, of course, drive the budget process. This is not to say that academic budget needs trump all others since there are a host of other needs--for example, student services, infrastructure, advancement and communication supports to name just a few--that also must be attended to for the University's success. For academic priorities to be considered, however, there must be clear academic strategic needs articulated across the university in academic plans clearly stated by the Vice-President Academic and the Principal after appropriate consultation with their academic colleagues.

Secondly, while the Saint John campus has a well-developed campus budget process that feeds Saint John priorities into the University-wide budget process, there is no equivalent process in Fredericton. It is our understanding that the Vice-President Academic is currently developing a plan for such a process and we strongly urge that this initiative come to fruition shortly.

Finally, we take it as given that effective budget planning in a university environment requires adequate consultation with the University community through an iterative process. We understand that currently there are three stages to the University-wide budget process: Phase 1, which involves assessing the budget context, establishing broad priorities, assessing risks, modeling major assumptions and budget parameters, assessing available options and choices and developing a budget strategy for the coming year. Phase 2 involves assignment of targets, detailed preliminary budget preparation, Budget Committee review of unit budgets, incorporation of Provincial Budget decisions that affect the university, reassessing budget parameters in light of emerging information and reviewing the budget to assess objectives and targets. Phase 3 sees the consolidation of this process in the completion of the budget, a final assessment in relation to objectives and risks, presentation of the package to the Board of Governors, communication of the outcomes to the University community and the creation of spending accounts for units to proceed with their annual business.

This is fine so far as it goes, but we believe that the communication process should start occurring earlier – at the end of Phase 1 with a request to the University community for feedback on assumptions and evolving plans, at the end of Phase 2 as the next year’s budget begins to take shape before it goes to the Board of Governors, and finally, as is the case currently, at the end of Phase 3, to inform the University community of the Board’s decisions and the state of unit budgets. Better communication will educate the entire University community about the University’s financial status and prospects, invite campus comment and suggestions about emerging priorities and tentative decisions, and provide greater confidence across the University with the final budget decisions that emerge from this process.

*This recommendation resonated well with most respondents, even those who expressed reservations about how Saint John’s budget process might be “subsumed” by the larger process. Again, there was resounding support for the recommendation that academic priorities should drive the budget process, that it should be more transparent, with more consultation throughout, sharing of budget assumptions and greater communication with faculties. (There was a demand that the plan being developed by the Vice-President Academic to submit academic priorities to the Fredericton budget committee be communicated immediately.) Giving faculties greater responsibility for managing their own budgets was also mentioned—a “managerial” accounting perspective, rather than a “financial” accounting perspective. The reallocation of funding to restore academic positions was advocated by several respondents.*

*For many, the University budget and financial situation were the “central issue” that needs to be addressed.*

## **Communication Issues**

### **Recommendation Seven:**

We endorse the current initiative to hire a senior communications professional specifically to support the Office of the President in its communication needs both on the campuses and beyond the University.

*Although this has now been accomplished, there was no support for this recommendation. Reasons included opposition to hiring another administrative staff member to the conviction that another “spin doctor” would not solve the endemic communications problems between faculty and administrators, especially the President. Some mention was made that internal communications are in need of improvement and that efforts should be dedicated to more effective connections with faculty, staff and students. There was a suggestion to reorganize the Advancement Office staff to accomplish this.*

### **Recommendation Eight:**

To support deeper understanding of pressing issues and priorities, encourage informed input to vital decisions and build University-wide networks of committed officials, the President should annually organize a two-day retreat, and perhaps a subsequent day-long meeting as well, for senior academic and administrative leaders from both campuses.

*There was little support for a retreat, which was seen largely as a benefit for senior staff and no others. Instead, several respondents recommended a series of annual town halls at which all members of the University community would be welcome. So would more "management by walking around," where senior administrators would be seen in the faculties and departments. Most respondents preferred to see resources put into interactions that would engage more people.*

### **Recommendation Nine:**

The Deans Council in Fredericton, chaired by the Vice-President Academic, should from time to time invite Vice-Presidents and other senior administrative staff to discuss issues related to their portfolios and hear about academic leaders' concerns.

The Direct Reports Council in Saint John, chaired by the Principal, should also from time to time invite Vice-Presidents and other senior administrative staff to discuss issues related to their portfolios and hear about academic leaders' concerns.

*Surprise was expressed by some that this was not already happening. There was strong support for this recommendation. Administrators and deans on both campuses should meet jointly at least once a term.*

## **Academic Strategy and Innovation**

### **Recommendation Ten:**

The President should establish a University-wide Strategic Academic Innovation Committee to examine and assess UNB's academic initiatives and practices regularly and to consider and promote, as appropriate, evolving new approaches within higher education that could enhance learning and research outcomes at the University. The three senior academic leaders at the university - the Vice-President Academic at UNB Fredericton, the Principal of UNB Saint John and the Vice-President Research - should be members of the Committee, but the majority of the appointees to the Committee should come from the faculty ranks on both campuses and the Chair of the Committee should be a faculty member respected for his/her knowledge and innovative spirit. Initiatives from this Committee should feed into the University's annual budget discussions. Members of the Committee should be appointed by the President upon the recommendation of senior University academic leaders and should serve for three-year terms.

*Lack of trust between the administration and faculty was cited as an impediment to the establishment of this committee. There was also concern expressed about the possibility of this being a "top down" initiative and a way of undertaking academic prioritization without actually saying so. Another group of respondents suggested that existing committees, such as the Disruptive Technologies, various Senate committees, and the Deans Council, be combined rather than establishing a new committee for this purpose. Several suggested this should be the responsibility of the Senates rather than the President to appoint.*

*Most who responded to this recommendation saw its purpose as positive, potentially serving as a forum for discussion and contributing to better communications. It was pointed out that it would be important to ensure priorities identified through this committee have a clear channel to the budgeting process. There also needs to be a firm commitment to acting on the findings and recommendations of the committee, not shelving them as has happened with some committees in the past, otherwise there is no point in setting up a new committee. Also, there needs to be a mechanism for the ideas of "individual faculty members or small clusters of like-minded scholars" to be considered. It was noted that this committee does not line up with the four new committees announced by the President on September 25.*

## **Academic Labour Relations**

### **Recommendation Eleven:**

Academic labour relations support is a specialty requiring unique knowledge and skills and this capacity must be developed within the Office of Human Resources to provide appropriate advice to deans and vice-presidents on both campuses, as required. When new academic collective agreements require negotiation, this capacity should be available to facilitate or lead the process on behalf of the University. While the administrative home for this capacity resides within the portfolio of the Vice-President Finance and Administration, along with other labour relations and HR specialists dealing with other employee groups, its clear mandate is to serve the needs of campus academic leaders as required. Collective bargaining strategy should be determined by the Vice-President Academic and the Principal under the oversight of the President and the Board of Governors Human Resources Committee which establish their mandate. Ongoing supervision of the bargaining process should fall to the Vice-President Academic and the Principal. Advice to achieve positive outcomes should be sought regularly from among deans and other senior academic leaders who operate under the terms of the Collective Agreement.

*Only a few respondents spoke to this recommendation. Some surprise was expressed that such expertise does not already reside in the HR Office. It was suggested that those with deficient knowledge and skills should be let go; new administrative staff should not be hired. If, as some respondents proposed, a*



*Provost were appointed, the responsibility for negotiations should fall to him or her.*

## **Senior Administration**

### **Recommendation Twelve:**

It is recommended that the University Management Committee (UMC) be renamed the President's Executive.

*There was general support for this recommendation.*

## **Senates Structure**

### **Recommendation Thirteen:**

It is recommended that the Senates in Fredericton and Saint John be chaired by respected senior faculty members nominated by committees of the Senates constituted for this purpose, and affirmed by the Senates' memberships. The President will continue to attend all meetings, provide a regular report, answer questions, address issues and participate in the deliberations of the Senates.

*Most respondents who spoke to this recommendation supported this recommendation. A few felt it would further divide the President from the academic community. Regular attendance by the President should be a requirement if he/she is not in the chair.*

### **Recommendation Fourteen:**

To assist effective communication and understanding of academic developments across both campuses and aid efficient decision-making on University-wide academic concerns, UNB should establish a Joint Senate Executive Committee with representatives from both campus Senates to provide campus updates on planning, new initiatives and forthcoming proposals. From time to time, when University-wide standards or regulations are under review, this Committee can act as a clearinghouse for essential information and coordinate required joint actions.

The Joint Senate Executive Committee can also ensure that required communication between related committees on both campuses occurs in a timely manner. Initiatives being developed within one campus Senate should not come as a surprise to Senators at the other campus.

*Those who responded to this recommendation were generally supportive. There were some reservations expressed about forming yet another committee. One respondent spoke forcefully for the two Senates meeting together each month by videoconference; others strongly urged a dialogue to consider whether two Senates were really any longer necessary or beneficial to the University.*

## **Shared Administrative Services**

### **Recommendation Fifteen:**

Following the publication of the Shared Services Report, the University should adopt a strategy of reviewing key administrative services with a view to implementing changes that will cut costs and improve the quality and range of administrative support on both campuses. Such reviews should proceed in a discrete fashion with an initial focus on those services most likely to yield positive results.

To repeat for emphasis, the purpose of such initiatives is not centralized control, it is better services for all at a cheaper price. If these changes involve some degree of integration and centralization of services under the leadership of the Vice-President Finance and Administration, such initiatives must also be mindful of the need for dotted reporting lines between administrators on both campuses to other campus officials substantially impacted by their activities.

Where it makes sense, each service review that does lead to increased integration and perhaps a measure of centralization, should also pursue the question of where such services should be housed. Some services need to be proximate to each other, but this is not always the case, and where it is feasible, consideration should be given to some balance of housed services in Saint John as well as Fredericton.

At the same time, the Vice-President Finance and Administration needs to arrange his office and his schedule to ensure that both University communities feel that he is a visible presence on their campus and that he is well informed and sensitive to their administrative needs. This is an essential component of any strategy for future integrated service delivery models.

*Not surprisingly, concern was expressed that the Shared Services Report had not been circulated to the University community. In some cases, respondents indicated they were completely ignorant of the initiative.*

*The major objection to this recommendation stems from the perception/suspicion that rationalization or consolidation of services means centralization in Fredericton, with a diminution of autonomy, focus and status for Saint John.*

*The view that efficiency and cost savings cannot be the only drivers for this initiative was expressed, citing other considerations such as campus culture, cohesion, community responsibility and the fact that consolidation could potentially cut across the jurisdiction of various bargaining units. Faculty were more skeptical about this recommendation, while academic administrators and staff respondents generally embraced it.*

## **Academic Synergies**

### **Recommendation Sixteen:**

UNB should actively explore the substantial opportunities to leverage its academic resources currently available on both campuses. In the larger university world, UNB is a mid-sized institution competing with much larger institutions. To subdivide its resources unnecessarily weakens its competitive capacity. The Strategic Academic Innovation Committee (see Recommendation Ten) should analyze the opportunities identified above as well as other ideas that emerge from across the University community in this connection.

Separate initiatives should be launched to explore the benefits of integrating the operations of the Library, Information Technology Services and student recruitment on both campuses within single organizational structures. As previously noted with respect to shared administrative services, integration will require dotted line reporting relationships outside the unified organizational structure to ensure that both campuses feel these essential operations truly are responsive to their developmental needs.

*There was resounding support for this recommendation from the library/information services respondents on both campuses. Much integration between and among the libraries (Law Library excepted) has already taken place. Library respondents would like to see this increased and formalized.*

*Outside the libraries, the support was more reserved, with concerns raised again about this being used as a means to centralize activities in Fredericton without due regard for the bi-campus nature of the University. Other concerns included the potential impact on teaching (making it more difficult), and the fact that the current environment, lacking trust and transparency, was not conducive to implementation.*