



Program Prioritization Process

This statement has been approved by the UGFA Executive

The Academic Integrity Committee (AIC), created by the UGFA Executive to investigate and critique the Administration's Program Prioritization Process (PPP), has identified a number of serious concerns to Faculty Members.

First, the AIC remains both troubled and confused by the Administration's determination to compare academic and non-academic units in the PPP. We wonder how members of the PPP Task Force can reasonably be asked to compare the criteria outlined in the Program Information Request (PIR) templates for the Department of Philosophy against those for Parking Services or for Athletics. Such an exercise seems impractical and unfair to both groups. At the recent Town Hall Meeting a Faculty Member asked why academic and non-academic units could not be considered separately: the Administration's external consultant responded that her question showed that she was "buying into the status quo." We think such responses are unhelpful.

At a fundamental level, the existence of non-academic support units is dependent on the quality of teaching, research and other contributions of Faculty and academic staff: it is the strength of the UGFA Membership that enables our university to attract students. The comparison of academic and non-academic units ultimately reinforces misgivings voiced by our Members that the PPP is focussed on reducing the staffing costs of UGFA Faculty, Librarians and Veterinarians.

Second, the definition of programs in the PIR template raises concerns. Not only does the PIR separate the delivery of undergraduate instruction into multiple programs: majors, minors, service teaching; but it also considers academic units' research programs and service activities as separate "programs." Yet the Administration maintains that consistent criteria will be used to evaluate and rank all programs. We wonder how this can be done: how can the quality of a research program be compared to the delivery of an academic program? How can comparisons across disciplines be made fairly and justly from the standpoint of research programs?

Third, this proposed ranking of academic units' teaching, research and service as separate "programs" poses worrying implications for Members and for the future of the university. Effectively, the PPP means that an academic unit's research program could be ranked in the bottom quintile, while the delivery of its academic program could be ranked in the top quintile. What would this mean for Faculty Members attached to such a unit? Would they find themselves in a teaching-only unit, with no opportunity to pursue research? What would happen to their teaching loads under such a scenario?

Until now a Member's Distribution of Effort (DOE) has considered the combined efforts and results of teaching, research and service. With the PPP, however, a separation and dilution will be introduced that has the potential to marginalise components of Members' professional activities and to end the existing balance of the DOE. This is particularly worrying given that the Administration has indicated that research output or quality is less important than the income generated by research grants. There is a danger that the research carried out within academic disciplines which do not traditionally require or receive grants of high dollar value could, under the PPP, be ranked in the bottom quintiles as a result. Would the Administration then seek to change the DOEs of Members to increase their teaching and service components, leaving them without the opportunity to pursue research as a vital component of their professional activities? This would run counter to the balance of activities which has always defined Faculty Members, Librarians and Veterinarians at the University of Guelph. Moreover; it would also threaten the fundamental distinction between universities and other educational institutions: faculty at universities do not only teach, they are also engaged in research.

Finally, the AIC reaffirms the serious concern that UGFA's Members were not consulted regarding the kind of process to be used to evaluate and rank academic programs at the university. Instead, the Administration has told Members that it has exercised management rights in imposing the process and that it has followed best practice in choosing external consultant Robert C. Dickeson, whose book has

been distributed to units across campus. Given that Members devote considerable professional attention not only to critiquing published arguments and interpretations, but also to comparing them to wider literatures, the AIC respectfully suggests that they consider the following recent publication as a possible counter-argument:

Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters*, (Oxford University Press, 2011) ISBN-10 019978244X

Ginsberg surveys widespread dissatisfaction with the academy in the United States and concludes that the problem lies not with faculty, but instead with the explosive growth of administration in American universities and the concomitant decline of faculty power and influence. This decline fits with the growing regimentation and corporatization of universities which, he suggests, has diminished emphasis on academic rigour and liberal education.

Members who have opinions or information to share regarding the PPP are invited to contact:

Chair, Financial Advisory Com: Professor Herb Kunze (Math & Stats)
hkunze@uoguelph.ca

Chair, Academic Integrity Com: Professor Bill Cormack (History)
wcormack@uoguelph.ca