



**Internal Academic Review 2007-2008
School of Environmental Studies
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate**

The Internal Academic Review (IAR) of the School of Environmental Studies is now complete. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) has taken into consideration all of the submissions related to the IAR of the School of Environmental Studies and respectfully submits the following report. The IARC Report to Senate is intended to supplement the findings of the attached Review Team Report and to provide a mechanism for the Director of the School and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science to jointly report on the progress in addressing the Review Team recommendations (please see the “Outcomes” section of this report).

Summary of the Internal Academic Review of the School of Environmental Studies

The School of Environmental Studies has evolved significantly since its inception in 1995 and is to be recognized for its admirable achievements and progress in a short period of time. The IARC agrees with the IAR Report and acknowledges that the School of Environmental Studies (SES) is now at a critical point in its evolution due, in part, to the university-wide resource limitations. The IARC encourages the SES to recognize this as an opportunity to refine the School’s role within the University’s strategic plan and continue to develop as a national leader in environmental and sustainable education and research.

The SES has become an established unit at the University. The IARC concurs with both the IAR Team Report and the External Consultants’ view that the School, in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Science, should continue annual updates to its strategic planning process in an effort to realize its full potential and refine its future purpose and goals.

With respect to the leadership of the School, the IARC agrees with both the IAR Team Report and the External Consultants’ Report that serious consideration should be given to introducing a full-time Director to lead the School into the next stage of its development. This recommendation should be considered when both the Faculty of Arts and Science and the SES agree that the resources are available and the timing is appropriate.

The IARC applauds the SES for establishing interdisciplinary opportunities in an environment of fiscal constraint, and encourages the School to continue to preserve the strong core program while building strategic partnerships to enhance interdisciplinary programming. The SES’ multidisciplinary approach to teaching and its strong linkages with other areas within the University and externally to Queen’s are commendable. This approach to learning has allowed the SES to offer an interesting undergraduate and graduate program that is appealing to students and continues to increase enrolment. The IARC supports the recommendation by the IAR Team that the School of Environmental Studies work in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Science to continue to build strong partnerships with participating faculty members and to reduce any systemic barriers that may impede interdisciplinary programming.

The IARC agrees with both the IAR Team Report and the External Consultants' recommendation that a Ph. D. program should not be pursued at this time but may be considered at a future stage in the development of the SES.

The IARC recognizes the School of Environmental Studies as a young and dynamic unit that is flourishing despite the current resource constraints. The IARC fully supports the School in its pivotal point of evolution and encourages the School to address the recommendations of the IAR Report so it may successfully enter the next phase of maturity, continue to improve the overall quality and remain a leader in environmental studies in Canada.

Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the School of Environmental Studies

*Joint response submitted by the
Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the
Acting Director the School of Environmental Studies*

Much has transpired at Queen's since the School's IAR was initiated in 2007. Expansion of undergraduate enrolment, a very positive experience with the new MES program, the addition of two new faculty members, the financial success of the Analytical Services Unit, and a current undergraduate curriculum review has positioned the School to weather the University's budget crisis, and to expand and meet its long-term goals once the University's finances improve. ***Thus, the School is encouraged to update its strategic plan in conjunction with University-wide Strategic Planning that will be initiated by its new Principal.***

The most critical resources needed for current and future programs include an ecological economist to fill a gap in undergraduate and graduate teaching, and sufficient teaching capacity to ensure diversity and interdisciplinarity in a sustainable suite of course offerings. ***The Faculty of Arts and Science will work with the School to find these resources, and in the short term, to facilitate ways of accessing existing resources.***

To advance research and training in environmental sustainability, ***the School is encouraged to develop a viable academic and financial plan for a future PhD program.*** Such a plan will build on the success of the current MES program and ensure the School can take full advantage of growth opportunities that arise when the University's financial situation stabilizes.

In recognition of the School's need for strong and stable leadership to continue to build a national reputation for teaching and research, ***the Faculty of Arts and Science will work with the School in its next phase of development to seek resources to sustain the appointment of a full-time Director.***

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Office of the
Vice-Principal (Academic)

Internal Academic Review (IAR) Team
Report on the
School of Environmental Studies (SES)
February 28, 2008

Summary: After establishing itself as a credible academic unit within the University, the SES is at a critical point in its evolution. The major challenge now facing the SES is to define the next phase in its development. It is the opinion of the IAR team that the SES deserves a chance to excel, and thus recommendations have been formulated with the expectation that the next step for the School, be a significant step. It is critical that the SES develop a vision or strategic plan, but this is unrealistic given a 50% appointment of School Director, and effectively "part-time" faculty. We recommend that a full-time director be appointed and have identified key elements of that individual's mandate. We feel that the positive distinguishing characteristics of the School include the quality and commitment of its faculty and staff, its linkages to key departments on campus, the strong science base of the School, and the productive working relationship with the Analytical Services Unit (ASU). The appointment structure for the SES is problematic, and for that reason it is recommended that new appointments be to the SES as home base while encouraging joint or cross-appointments with other units on campus. We feel that it is premature for the SES to be considering introducing a PhD program at this point in time and have suggested that the SES consider a name change to better reflect the directions that it may propose as part of a renewed direction or mandate.

Comments on the report of the External Consultants: The Review Team was impressed with the caliber of the external consultants, the care and detail with which they prepared for the site visit, their insight into the challenges faced by the SES, and the quality of their report. We met with the site visitors both before and after the site visit, and participated in most of their meetings with the various constituent groups. The consultants' final report was detailed, demonstrated a strong understanding of the SES and the challenges that it faces, and also showed an understanding of the Queen's culture and financial constraints currently being faced. We strongly endorse their report and are in agreement with the recommendations of the report.

The SES at the crossroads: It is our view that the SES is at a critical point in its evolution. The initial Senate mandate (1994), led to the establishment of the School in 1995, and the School has to a large extent met that mandate in a remarkably short period of time with limited resources and with "part-time" appointments. It is our view that the following noteworthy goals have been met:

- SES established as a credible academic unit within the University;
- provided leadership and a focal point for environmental education and research at Queen's;

- attracted outstanding faculty who are committed to supporting the School and its programs;
- broadened its faculty base, with focus toward the environmental-science disciplines;
- attracted strong and committed leadership;
- demonstrated the ability to be financially responsible;
- built a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with the Analytical Services Unit (ASU);
- developed a variety of undergraduate programs, introduced new courses and established a solid and growing student base;
- recently introduced a new Master of Environmental Studies program and provided appropriate funding to students enrolled;
- built a positive working environment for faculty, staff and graduate students;
- built a base of adjunct faculty who provide critical teaching support;
- attracted outstanding faculty to Queen's;
- become recognized locally, regionally and nationally as an educational and research resource for particular environmental issues that concern Canadians.

The **reasons** for considering the School to be at a critical point in its evolution are:

- new Director of the School;
- entering into a period of fiscal restraint within the Faculty of Arts and Science and the whole University, driven by a process of strategic planning;
- have established a faculty base within the School;
- School has matured to a point where it can be viewed as self-sustaining;
- need for the development of a renewed vision and full understanding of the unique strengths of the School and its offerings, in comparison to similar units at other Canadian and North American institutions;
- proposed development of a PhD degree program;

- academic review will provide the School with a critical assessment of its role within the University, and how it is perceived within and outside of Queen's;
- academic review will clarify the future staffing and budgetary needs of the School;
- increasing public and student interest in effective strategies for responding to environmental concerns.

The challenge that has focused the IAR team's deliberations is: *What is the next phase in the evolution of the school?* The SES has a unique opportunity, given the need for, and success of other interdisciplinary programs (e.g. Neurosciences), and given the growing interest in environmental issues on the part of society at large, and on the part of students coming into Queen's. It is the IAR team opinion that the **SES deserves a chance to excel**. The team has designed this report in a way to guide the School, the Faculty of Arts and Science, and the University in order to enable the SES to achieve its goal (*to become a national leader in environmental education and research*). Given that the SES is seen by this IAR team to be at a critical juncture in its development, we expect the next step to be a significant step, and have formulated recommendations with that in mind.

The final recommendation of the consultants was *that the SES should revisit their strategic plan detailing the rationale for their future plans, comparing their program with others in North America, and carefully expressing how their vision articulates with the vision of the University. In order to accomplish this, the Director will need additional support.*

We feel that this recommendation is at the heart of the challenge faced by the School, and it is unrealistic to expect that such a vision or strategic plan can be developed and articulated at the level of the School Director, given a 50% appointment. It is our impression from the review that shared appointments carry a cost in terms of expectations, duties and responsibilities coming from the shared campus homes. Toward this end, the IAR team **recommends that a full-time Director be appointed, either on an interim or long-term basis charged with a mandate to:**

- direct the development of a vision/strategic plan for the SES, in light of the University strategic plan and taking into account the present financial realities of the University;
- develop linkages with other Queen's units to broaden its base of contributing departments, particularly within the Social Sciences and Humanities;
- review undergraduate courses and programs to make the most effective use of teaching and administrative resources;

- work with the Faculty of Arts and Science and with joint appointed faculty toward standardizing their work load, given their responsibilities to two campus homes;
- work with the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science toward the development of a formula whereby departments of participating faculty involved in interdisciplinary programs such as the SES, receive appropriate budgetary/student credit for their academic, supervisory and administrative contributions to the School;
- address the systemic barriers that make it difficult to develop interdisciplinary programs by engaging faculty across campus (this is a broader mandate impacting other interdisciplinary programs at Queen's, and would more effectively be addressed at the institutional level);
- identify and articulate more clearly the strengths and unique aspects of the SES and build upon those strengths... through identifying and drawing comparisons with benchmark academic units in Canada and the USA;
- build on the relationship with the ASU which is considered by the IAR team to be one of the strengths and unique features of the SES... student experience with the ASU appears to be excellent, and the ASU is not only fully engaged in the educational aspect of the program, but is a resource base for the SES and the University;
- work on developing the focus of the SES on depth versus breadth that appeared as recommendations in the external consultants' reports of 1999 and again in 2007.

Other comments and recommendations: The IAR team would like to provide the following additional comments on its review of the SES.

The School is considered to be a success story and worthy of the full support of the University. The **reasons for the success** of the SES are as follows:

- quality and committed leadership;
- outstanding faculty, who are committed to the School's programs;
- linkages with key departments on campus;
- ability to attract students;
- association with the ASU which is mutually beneficial;
- multidisciplinary nature of the School and its programs;

- strong science base;
- increasing engagement of the public by the SES about contemporary environmental issues

It is our conclusion that the association of the SES with the ASU and the strong science base are unique and distinguishing characteristics of the School.

We have identified the following **weaknesses**:

- lack of clear vision or direction for the School;
- engaged in too many educational and research endeavours without critical mass of faculty, which is perceived by reviewers as lack of focus on academic excellence;
- School has not conveyed a sense of how it compares with similar units at other Universities in Canada or the USA, and there were no efforts to draw these comparisons in the Unit Self Study;
- lack of serious review or attention to equity issues/goals in the Unit Self Study;
- heavy weighting toward the science disciplines, and much less so toward the Humanities and Social Sciences, although the strong science base was considered to be a positive distinguishing feature of the SES.

Appointment structure: The SES has embraced the joint/cross appointment model in the past, which reinforces the integration and multi-disciplinary focus of the School and engages other units on campus to expand their environmental focus and outreach. The School is clearly moving to joint appointments, with the recent new hires being jointly appointed. Shared appointments may be the norm and desired for interdisciplinary programs, but there are problems that need to be addressed in order to strengthen the SES.

We feel that there are career and retention challenges around joint appointments, as particularly new faculty and faculty from small "home" units find themselves caught between expectations and responsibilities associated with two academic homes. This may be more of an administrative issue than an academic issue, and would need to be addressed by the University, to ensure that "home" departments don't feel that they are in budgetary disadvantage when their faculty provide teaching, supervisory and administrative support to the interdisciplinary program. Most units are presently very concerned about resources being stretched during a time of financial restraint, and as a result are less than enthusiastic about participation in the SES. This is especially the case at a time when departments are being encouraged to increase graduate enrolments.

Secondly, since all faculty have a “home” department other than the SES, the primary research focus and thrust are mainly directed through the “home” department, with the collaborative and SES-funded work (with one notable exception) directed through the School. It is difficult to imagine how the School can grow in stature given this research model. We feel strongly that the SES needs to have the opportunity to attract faculty who are fully committed through their appointment to the School, where the research, teaching and service are fully directed through the School. If those faculty then want to entertain joint or cross-appointments, they can then do so through the strength of their “home” base, but the primary responsibility would be to the School. New appointments are being requested through the Unit Self Study (USS), and we recommend that these appointments be to the SES.

We also feel that this action on the appointment structure needs to be a pre-requisite before the School considers developing a PhD program.

School identity: Given the potential for a significant change in the direction of the School, it may be appropriate for the SES to **consider a name change**. The SES name may be misleading since the School has placed its emphasis more on the “science” side of the discipline, than on the “studies” side. Environmental “studies” implies the humanistic concern for attitudes to landscape and the idea that the environment is more than space, place and resources. Presently, there is little room for the cultural side to be explored except perhaps in some elective courses. Since a substantive science base is considered to be one of the strengths and perhaps unique features of the School, it may be more appropriate to consider a name such as the *School of Environmental Sciences*, or *School of Environmental Sustainability* to emphasize the new focus around sustainability.

We feel that it is a worthy goal for the School to focus on a **theme such as sustainability**, although we do have a concern about a lack of definition about what exactly that means. We noted that the fourth-year class (410) had embarked on a course project to look at what it means to make the University sustainable, and yet students could not think of a single practice within the School that they would consider to be a sustainable practice. We would recommend that if the intent is to be a national and University leader on sustainability or environmental issues, that the School, its faculty and staff and students be prepared to practice what they teach/learn. What would it take for example for the School to serve as a leader on campus in sustainability? Why were the IAR team and external consultants for example provided with a USS paper document that was 6.5 cm thick? Had the School given some thought to alternative means of delivering a paperless USS? It is hard to see the **sustainability focus** as being credible if it is not reflected in everything the School does.

Analytical Services Unit (ASU): We were impressed with the strong leadership and clear sense of the ASU's role and contribution to the SES and to the University. The ASU is a definite strength for the SES and for Queen's, and the relationship between the SES and the ASU was perceived as a strength and unique feature of the School. The ASU is a revenue generator, but the financial relationship between the ASU and the SES is based

on a dated agreement, and should probably be reviewed, for the purpose of strengthening and sustaining the ASU and strengthening this unique partnership.

Ph.D. program: We feel that it is premature for the School to be considering a PhD program at this time until it has established a faculty base to provide continuity and permanence, a clear focus in its research mandate and direction, and has fully developed and sustained its Master's program.

Respectfully submitted by:

- Mr. Rick Boswell, Staff, Department of Chemistry
- Mr. Ben Bradley, doctoral student, Department of History
- Dr. James Brien, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology
- Ms. Megan Ellis, undergraduate student, Department of Sociology/SKHS
- Dr. Audrey Kobayashi, Department of Geography
- Dr. Ronald Neufeld, Chemical Engineering (Chair)
- Dr. Joan Schwartz, Department of Art

All members of the team were fully involved in the review and in the preparation of the report, and all members agree with the report and its recommendations.

Mar. 3, 2008



R. J. NEUFELD

ON BEHALF OF IAR-TEAM