CMNS Program Review Recommendations

The following are recommendations arising from each section of this review:

Content/Curriculum

- Develop new university-transfer courses in new media, media and cultural studies, and professional communications as part of new credentials in Communications.
- Review the curriculum guidelines and update them as necessary.

Pathways

- Develop a certificate, diploma, post-baccalaureate diploma and Bachelor's degree in Communications using established Douglas Communications courses and new courses in new media, media and cultural studies, and professional communications.
- Increase publication and marketing efforts to promote the Communications Certificate and Associate of Arts, Communications specialization.
- Strengthen Communications pathways between Douglas and Royal Roads and SFU.

Admissions

- Determine with the Creative Writing and English Departments whether or not to maintain the LLPA requirement for a B in English 12 for direct registration in writing-intensive courses.
- Educate program areas that the requirement for a B in English 12 is not a barrier to taking the classes but an exemption from taking the Douglas College Computer-based English Assessment.
- Work with the College and other writing areas within the College to enforce an appropriate standard for entrance to and exit from Communications courses.
- Direct students who do not meet that entrance standard to appropriate alternatives in ESL or DVST.

Enrolments/FTE

- Work with Academic Advising to boost enrolment in CMNS 1099 by informing students that CMNS 1099 is equivalent to ENGL 1099.
- Promote CMNS 3100 as an upper-level Arts elective among degree programs to increase enrolment.
- Work with Print Futures to strengthen the appeal of writing and publishing courses to increase enrolment in CMNS 1118 and 1218.

Program Operations

- Increase the number of sections of courses showing consistently high demand.
- Increase the number of daytime sections.

Program Delivery

- Develop more hybrid and online versions of existing courses.
- Explore options for team-teaching courses.
- Resolve ongoing conflict between program cohort sizes and Communications course capacity limits.
- Collaborate with programs to improve relevance of Communications courses, both written and interpersonal.

Faculty Development

- Provide training to faculty in developing and running hybrid and online courses.
- Build faculty capacity through hiring and professional development activities geared for developing currency in expertise and knowledge in Communications studies, both written and interpersonal.
- Foster faculty cohesion and collegiality through shared professional activities.

Student Outcomes

- Apply entrance standard for Communications courses to all students and recommend viable and relevant alternatives for those who do not meet the standard.
- Find ways to educate program areas on the value of Communications courses.
- Liaise with program areas to explore collaborative Communications assignments.

**Reviewer: Dr. David Black, School of Communication and Culture,
Royal Roads University**

What will unite all these recommendations addressed to particular problems is one underlying suggestion that enables many of the specific issues to be better addressed and remedied. That is: **allow Communications to develop an identity and function at Douglas that balances its heavy service teaching obligations with a greater latitude for the development of academic courses more fully representative of communications as an academic and professional field of study**.

1. Adopt a different and more balanced approach to Communications' role as a service department at Douglas, creating more space for academic course development and a more academic sensibility.

2. Develop 1st and 2nd year level courses in other areas typical of a communications curriculum. And should opportunities present themselves, do the same at the 3rd and 4th year level.

3. Reformulate CMNS3100 (Language, Institutions and Power) as a second year course or accommodate it as CMNS3100 in the proposed BA in Professional Writing, Communication, and Publishing.

4. Develop a team-taught pedagogical model for Communications service courses to client programs.

5. Extend the team-teaching pedagogy and divide the client programs' 30-student cohorts into two parts in the affected Communications courses.

6. Drop the formal analytical report in CMNS1115, and replace it with an equally rigorous assignment(s) that meets SFU Communications' expectations for transfer.

7. Lower the admission standard for first and second year Communications courses to C+ in English 12 for students from the vocational client programs, as well as students from the general Douglas student population. However, retain the English 12 B standard for students taking the Communications certificate, associate of arts diploma, and/or proposed BA in Professional Writing, Communication and Publishing.

8. Change the identity and content of CMNS1099 (Work Writing Skills Review) to differentiate it from ENGL1099, while making it equally attractive to prospective students.

9. Make CMNS1115 (Practical Writing) <u>the</u> workplace writing course for all those students not otherwise taking CMNS1111 (Workplace Writing for Selected Programs). And divert international students whose English is not adequate for CMNS1115 to CMNS1099.

10. Where feasible, develop hybrid Communications courses that explore the nature of interpersonal and intercultural communication online and add to, rather than detract from, the pedagogy and exploration of the subject matter. Consider an equivalent hybrid element for work writing.

Communications Review Follow up Plan

Kathy Denton, VP Academic
November 29, 2012

Administrative policy A18.01.01, Program and Service Review, requires that a follow-up plan is developed by the Vice President as the final step in the program review process.

Communications submitted a comprehensive program review in April 2011. An external reviewer subsequently read the review, conducted a site visit in June, and submitted a report. The review process highlighted some clear strengths, such as the success of the Department in meeting the needs of a broad range of professional programs and the level of commitment demonstrated by the faculty. Recommendations were provided by Communications and by the external reviewer. Those recommendations, as well as other information gathered in the review process, inform this follow up plan; however, not all recommendations were accepted. Some may be explored in the future.

The following recommendations merit further consideration and action within the next year or two.

Recommendations associated with course articulation and transfer

Communications has multiple roles at the College, but two are especially salient: the Department provides service courses to support professional programs and offers an array of university transfer courses for students in open enrolment programs such as the Associate Degree in Arts. Meeting the needs of programs is an important function and the College is fortunate to have such capable faculty to perform this function. The needs of professional programs within the College appear to be a more significant driver for curriculum change than the needs of students in open enrolment. This may be because colleagues in program areas make their needs known, yet open enrolment students have a broad array of course options so any concerns they may have are reflected in their course choices rather than expressed directly.

Open enrolment students' interest in Communications courses will be driven primarily by the need to meet academic requirements for writing. However, some students are attracted to Communications courses in areas other than writing, such as interpersonal communications, intercultural communications, and introduction to media, which fill reliably. These courses may draw students into the academic field of Communications. Enrolments suggest that the Department could cultivate additional demand for such courses to support students who discover a passion for the discipline. The Department should ensure that these academic courses receive

direct transfer into university programs, especially at SFU. The Department should review course offerings to achieve a better fit with those available at SFU and/or UBC. Courses that do not transfer, and cannot be revised to transfer directly to a course at SFU or UBC, ought to be withdrawn and replaced by courses that do transfer directly.

Attention to course articulation and transfer should be ongoing in university transfer areas; and Communications recognizes that this work is due to be done. Improved course transfer will likely increase enrolments and strengthen the Department.

Recommendations associated with departmental identity

To enhance the academic identify of the Department and attract students interested in Communications as a field of study, the Department should consider creating a distinction between service courses and discipline-specific academic courses. The Department may even create different prefixes to emphasize the difference. For example, the service courses may retain the title "Communications" and prefix "CMNS" but courses in the academic discipline may be called, for example, "Media Studies" or some other name that captured the content of the discipline in a new way that is consistent with the (revised) array of university transfer courses provided.

The College recognizes that developing and launching new courses and cultivating a new identity will take time. Such change entails some degree of risk and time for the benefits to be realized. The College will support the status quo in terms of the total number of instructional sections in the Department for a period of two years, unless we encounter unforeseen circumstances that prevent us from honoring this commitment. If the Department is successful in improving course articulation and transfer and attracting students, then the College will consider adding ongoing sections of instruction into the Department's Education Plan in the future. If, on the other hand, the Department has not significantly improved transfer and has soft enrolments in its university transfer courses, then the College will likely begin the process of downsizing university transfer offerings in the Department. The rationale for this response, which is entirely avoidable, is that poor transferability is problematic for students. Student should not have to take additional courses at university to replace courses that were ineligible for transfer.

Recommendations associated with program requirements

Some closed programs admit students based on English 12 with a C, yet the Communications course requirement has a prerequisite of English 12 with a B. This misalignment is not unusual in the College; however, it is very problematic within full-time closed enrolment programs. The professional programs may prefer that students complete a Communications course that they can access with English 12 with a C. If existing courses can be modified to accommodate students admitted to

programs with a C in English 12, then students will be able to keep pace within their cohort rather than complete an upgrading course prior to completing their Communications program requirement. This option should be considered in consultation with all closed programs that require Communications courses.

Another area where closed programs are sometimes misaligned with Communications course requirements involves class capacity. Programs that have cohorts of 30 or 35 ought to be able to offer a Communications course for the entire cohort of 30 or 35 *or* the program should be revised to allow students to select from an array of open-enrolment Communications courses. There is a trade off to be made here. If cohort sizes are aligned, Communications courses (curriculum guidelines) will have to be modified to accommodate the entire cohort. If, on the other hand, cohort sizes are not to be aligned, students should be permitted to complete more generic Communications courses instead of courses specifically designed for their profession. Consultation with programs should determine which solution is adopted by programs that currently experience this type of misalignment.

Recommendations associated with access

Unlike closed enrolment programs, which are generally not available for international students, open enrolment programs attract a high volume of international students, many of whom struggle with English. Even students who complete 400-level EASL courses at Douglas College struggle in university-transferable Communications courses. The realignment of EASL into the Faculty of LLPA should increase dialogue among faculty who teach in EASL, English Upgrading, Communications, and English. The ultimate goal is to improve students' transition from EASL or English Upgrading into Communications or English. Such change may be slow to occur organically, and the College is open to suggestions for supporting pilot projects or administrative projects to address student transition problems. Perhaps some students may require tutors or additional learning resources to assist them and remove some of the pressures from faculty teaching first-year university transfer courses.

The College recognizes that the Communications Department has a challenging dual role. The entire College benefits from the work of Communications faculty who transform the language skills of students. It is in everyone's interest to encourage students to take Communications courses early in their program of study and to support them so they will be successful. If class sizes within closed enrolment programs can be realigned to meet operational needs and reduce costs within professional programs, then perhaps additional resources can support first-year open enrolment courses by adding learning resources or, if warranted, reducing class sizes for targeted courses or sections. If such efforts improve student retention and success, they would be attractive and sustainable. The College is open to collecting evidence to test the effects of such changes.