

## 5. Report of the Senior Assessor

Professor Misak informed the Committee that the administration wanted to explore what progress had been made in the directions set in *Towards 2030* initiative and it wanted to identify the new and ongoing challenges and opportunities that faced the University. Over the next six months, the University would engage governance bodies and the University community in providing an update to *Towards 2030*.

Professor Misak's PowerPoint presentation entitled "*Towards 2030 – The View from 2012*" is appended to these minutes.

### Discussion

#### (i) *Members' Comments and Questions*

In the course of the discussion, members raised the following points.

- The challenge of per student funding received by the University from the provincial government needed to be clearly placed within the context of student experience.
- Along with the economic pressures, the end of mandatory retirement had placed an additional challenge to academic divisions that sought to renew their teaching ranks. It was hoped that early retirement packages offered by the University would mitigate some of these challenges.
- A member asked for the rationale that had led to include the balance between discovery-based and applied research, as a challenge faced by the University.
- Finally, a member commented that the major political parties had made little comment on matters related to post secondary education in the ongoing provincial election campaign. Was there a sense of the importance of this issue within political parties?

#### (ii) *Administrative Response*

Professor Misak's responses included the following:

- With respect to the per-student funding, Professor Misak said that this was indeed a problem. The provincial government's nearly 17-year freeze on the basic income unit (BIU) weights assigned to each program (through which universities are funded) did have an impact on student experience. The University would continue to lobby the provincial government on the need to increase per-student funding
- Professor Misak said that faculty renewal was indeed important. Citing a recently released study<sup>1</sup>, she said that though there was a steady student-driven demand for on-line courses, students continued to stress on the importance of face to face contact with professors, irrespective of class size. As an unintended consequence of the economic downturn, the University had been able to recruit teaching instructors of the highest quality.
- The inclusion of the question related to challenge on the balance between discovery-based and applied-based research had emerged from discussions within the University community. In the Provost's opinion this issue had been identified as a challenge as a result of pressure from granting agencies towards applied research, while others had posed the question because they had wanted more applied research conducted at the University.
- The University would encourage all members of its community to become familiar with the platforms of each political party and then exercise their franchise.

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<sup>1</sup> Kaznowska, E., Rogers, J., and Usher, A. (2011). *The State of E-Learning in Canadian Universities, 2011: If Students Are Digital Natives, Why Don't They Like E-Learning?* Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates