



TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

SPONSOR: Cheryl Regehr, Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

CONTACT INFO: vpacademicprograms@utoronto.ca

DATE: August 26, 2011 for September 20, 2011

AGENDA ITEM: **8(b) 3**

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Follow-up Report on the Review of the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Toronto Scarborough and its programs

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee is the point of entry into governance for reports, summaries and administrative responses on the results of academic reviews of programs and units commissioned by academic administrators. The role of the Committee is to ensure that the reviews are conducted according to University policy and guidelines, an appropriate process is being used, adequate documentation is provided, consultations are undertaken, and issues identified in the review are addressed by the administration. Under the new University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process, the Committee may request a one year follow-up report when concerns are raised in an external review that require a longer period of response.

This report is forwarded, together with the record of the Committee's discussion, to the Agenda Planning committee of the Academic Board, which determines whether there are any issues of general academic significance warranting discussion at the Board level. The same documentation is sent to the Executive Committee of Governing Council for information.

PREVIOUS ACTION

The Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Toronto Scarborough was reviewed on March 29-30, 2010. The report of the external reviewers suggested a number of areas for immediate attention. In response, the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs asked for a one year follow-up report to provide the opportunity for the University of Toronto Scarborough to provide information in respect to a number of areas of concern including: programs, faculty, administrative structure, and facilities.

HIGHLIGHTS

The follow-up report from the University of Toronto Scarborough focuses on the following areas identified in the initial review report:

- *Programs*

The reviewers expressed concern about gaps in curricula affecting the ability of graduates to proceed to graduate programs. In response, the Dean and Vice-Principal (Academic) has indicated that physics and astrophysics curricula have been completely revised; the programs in chemistry are being changed to meet the accreditation requirements of the Canadian Society of Chemistry; and the environmental science programs are similarly being modified to meet accreditation requirements and support student progression to the Masters in Environmental Science.

- *Faculty resources*

The reviewer expressed concern about the ability of the Department to adequately support its existing programmatic obligations. In response, the Dean and Vice Principal (Academic) has explained that the Department has made complement development a priority in order to reduce long-term dependence on stipendiary faculty.

- *Structure and Administration of the unit*

The reviewers identified a series of concerns to do with the administration of the Department, emphasizing the challenge of coordinating such a diverse unit. They recommended in particular that the Physics area might benefit from being a unit in its own right. In response, the Dean and Vice-Principal (Academic) has noted a number of initiatives taken by the chair to improve communications and provide opportunities for collegial discussion. In particular, he has underlined the decision to appoint four Associate Chairs of whom one has a specific responsibility for Physics supporting a degree of autonomy for the area.

- *Facilities*

The reviewer underlined the lack of lab space and technical support for the programs and the negative impact of this on the ability of programs to support learning objectives. The Dean and Vice Principal (Academic) reports that UTSC will begin construction on a new lab facility in the fall 2011 and will be renovating others.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS: n/a

RECOMMENDATION: For Information.