

Summary of Meeting of Task Force on Evaluation,
Accountability and Measurement
(Wednesday, May 28th, 1:30 p.m.)

1. David Capson, Andrea Farquhar, Milena Head, David Hitchcock, Karen Menard, Jennifer McKinnell, Jackie Osterman, Lilian Scime and Mike Veall were in attendance.
2. The main item was a discussion with the Provost, Ilene Busch-Vishniac. We thank her for her attendance.

The first part of the discussion centered on the current review processes. The Provost was asked how she found the current review processes, if she had improvements to propose and if there were prospect for combining the reviews.

The Provost indicated that she found the current reviews useful up to a point. She found the OCGS reviews more useful than the undergraduate program reviews because she had more interaction with the reviewers. She recognized that now was an opportunity to change the reviews because of likely changes in the OCGS process and sought advice. She saw value in a broader review that would cover the entire unit. She also saw value in external reviews but felt that in some cases such reviewers became advocates for the program and were less helpful than they could be at suggesting improvements that did not involve large resource transfers.

She felt that one of the tasks of the committee would be to provide advice as to how to make such reviews more useful to units as well as to academic administrators.

She also indicated that reviews should be easier for departments in terms of obtaining standard statistical information. She indicated that there had been progress within the university in integrating information systems but more progress was needed and, while problems with accessing such information would not be solved overnight, they would be solved.

The second part of the discussion focused on the G13 data (data gathered at 13 universities across Canada, including McMaster) and its usefulness for comparing McMaster to other universities. The committee has the benefit of the membership of Karen Menard, the Associate Vice-President, Planning and Analysis, who has been active in exploring the utility of these data for McMaster. The Provost felt that this was a very useful endeavour. She felt, however, that non-dollar figures were probably more reliable than dollar figures, because dollar figures were more often affected by the very different ways different universities (and different units within universities) do their budgeting. There was also some general discussion about ratios: for example should McMaster focus on figures expressed as a percentage of the overall budget or on dollars per FTE student or some other ratio?

The third part of the discussion was about expectations for the task force. The task force's current goal is a fairly "high level" report about issues, problems and some

preliminary findings by the end of June, with the goal of giving the university community some considerable time to respond. The Provost was in agreement with that goal but indicated that she would press for more specifics in terms of an evaluation process. The Chair asked her whether simply developing an improved external review mechanism would be sufficient. The Provost said no and that she had in mind a more direct statement of targets and indicators. At the same time she acknowledged that these would not necessarily be the same across units.

The committee asked about her views regarding the third goal of Refining Directions, "To build an inclusive community with a shared purpose." Earlier committee discussions had come to the view, perhaps not unanimously, that this goal should be interpreted as emphasizing the role of staff as important contributors in attaining the other two goals of Refining Directions regarding education and research. While not disagreeing with the importance of this, she also put emphasis on the diversity of the university community. In answer to a question she said that this would just not have implications for recruitment of students, staff and faculty but also for curriculum.

Finally the Provost was asked about how our Task Force fit with the others, especially the Implementing Refining Directions. The Provost responded that our reports would be an input for that new Task Force.

3. After the provost left, there was a brief discussion of her remarks. With respect to the final question about Implementing Refining Directions, there was some discussion based on the part of our mandate to recommend "how information should be used in any prioritization process". One member had the suggestion that our Task Force should recommend a new structure within Faculties for making resource decisions, involving a small number of faculty members who were not Chairs and Directors. While not everyone was convinced, there was a general discussion about what was perceived as a current shortcoming with governance in that it is difficult with our current arrangements to link academic and resource decisions.

The Discussion continued into how we would produce a report. The Chair said that he would sketch a report in time for the next meeting. Then the task force could pick and choose what items to pursue plus add new items as it saw fit.

The meeting ended at about 2:50 p.m.