

## Enhanced Planning: *Making Choices* Background and Goals

Achievement of the goals in the university's Strategic Plan requires that resources be aligned with priorities. Although this is important at all times, it is even more critical in times of fiscal restraint. Similar to many universities in Canada and across North America, the university is experiencing stresses in its budget model.

For a decade, from roughly 2000 – 2010, the university planned for significant growth, first at the undergraduate level and then at the graduate level, growth. In response to student growth, we developed an array of new academic programs and added a range of new student services, as well as administrative support. The increases in student enrollment were associated with increased government funding, and correspondingly with increases in funding of academic units and support areas.

In four of the last five years, however, government funding has been flat or reduced. Like most universities across Canada, the UVic's economic model came under increasing stress as increases in tuition (which is capped at 2%) and other income was not sufficient to cover the increasing costs of faculty and staff progression and in increase in other costs to the university. Across the board cuts were borne by both academic and administrative/support areas. The current situation is not sustainable.

During the period of expansion, student enrollments served as a quantifiable and useful shorthand for looking at increases in student interest and program demand, and for recognition of resource needs. Enrolment targets were set in collaboration with academic deans based on interest in growth and instructional capacity. In the current environment, however, as per-student funding declines and students continue to migrate to different areas of study, a sole focus on enrolment targets is no longer appropriate. The emphasis on targets may be contributing to initiatives that lead more to internal competition for student enrolments and discourage collaboration, than to reaching larger university goals of quality over quantity.

In this resource constrained environment, it is essential to align the resources we have with our priorities. We need to focus our efforts on quality programs of education and research and provide the services essential for student, faculty and staff success. This will require robust planning processes, and reliable, meaningful, data-driven planning tools that can be used by leaders in academic and service units in the long term.

Across the university, there has been an interest in greater transparency with respect to the planning process and more information to assist with planning activities and decisions. Phase 1 of this Enhanced Planning process, *Making Choices*, will be consultative and will develop a set of criteria and associated data that will assist academic and service planning and decision-making. These criteria will relate to institutional values, priorities and identifiable strengths as set out in the strategic plan, as well as to measures of sustainability and efficiency.