Academic Program Review
Summary of Review

Department: Co-operative Education and Career Services
Date of Report: April 2008

Norah McRae, Executive Director of Co-operative Education, and the previous Acting Executive Director, Dr. John Schofield provided leadership in preparing a very comprehensive, detailed, thoughtful, and well organized self-study. The APR report was extremely positive. The Review Committee commented on the many strengths and positive impacts of the Co-operative Education program on student learning and student success, on the high level of professionalism throughout the organization, on the exemplary integration of co-operative education services within faculties, and on the unit’s innovative and scholarly approach to co-operative education and experiential learning.

The Review Committee did provide a number of recommendations and Co-operative Education provided a detailed response to those recommendations in December of 2008, including a plan for implementations of the recommendations over the next year.

Certainly, one of the most significant recommendations, which the university has now implemented, is the integration of Career Services within the Co-operative Education unit. While there are always some challenges in integrating units which have had somewhat different mandates and cultures, strong, positive efforts on the part of staff in both units has been evident with respect to developing an integrated culture of student support with respect to experiential learning and career development. The Office of the Provost believes that the new scope of services will be of significant benefit to students, faculty, staff and employers.

Other initiatives which follow on the external review include the following:

- Co-op is playing a major role on the Civic Engagement Steering Council which will be articulating the university’s vision for experiential education at UVic.

- Co-operative Education and Career Services is nearing completion on the development of a set of core-competencies or learning outcomes for all students in co-op.

- A new information system for Co-operative Education and Career Services is in development.

- UVic’s new faculty orientation, Essentials for Career Success, now includes information about the role and benefits of student participation in co-operative education and assists faculty members in learning how to integrate the students’ co-op experience into course curricula.

- A survey conducted in association with universities across BC to look at the impact of co-op on recruiting and retaining students has been completed.
• A survey of employers is planned in 2009-10.

• A review of how Aboriginal students participate in co-operative education, the identification of any barriers to participation, and ways to further support engagement in experiential learning for Aboriginal students is also underway.

• Expanded opportunities for international co-op placement are being developed, consistent with the university’s plan to provide all student’s with a global perspective and to enrol and increasing number of international students.

• The Executive Director has initiated regular meeting with Alumni Services to strengthen the relationship with them and to develop mutually beneficial initiatives to engage co-op alumni and employers.

The Office of the Provost strongly supports the Executive Director’s attendance at and participation in the Accountability Council for Co-operative Education of BC and its lobbying efforts to support growth and development of co-operative education in the province.

Finally, Co-operative Education is reviewing a number of the recommendations with respect to policies, procedures and service orientation in the various programs with a view to supporting best practices, ensuring the highest quality of service, and increasing efficiencies.

Co-operative Education and Career Services is commended on both receiving a highly positive external review and on their quick and comprehensive response to the recommendations arising out of that review. The Office of the Provost is particularly pleased to see the ongoing commitment to scholarly research in the area of experiential learning. The opportunity to engage in enriched learning experiences, including experiential learning, is highly valued at UVic and we are fortunate to have an extremely professional, well organized co-operative education program that is well imbedded in and supported by academic disciplines. The integration of Career Services into disciplinary areas will further support our students’ engagement and success.