



Kim Morouney, Associate Dean of Business: Academic Programs
IPRM Planning Task Force Co-Chair
519-884-0710 ext. 2485 or kmorouney@wlu.ca

Kevin Crowley, Director
Communications & Public Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University
519-884-0710 ext. 3070 or kcrowley@wlu.ca

NOV. 28, 2014 | 126-14

Task force recommends program priorities and proposed new budget model for Laurier

WATERLOO – Following a thorough and collegial review process, a task force of Wilfrid Laurier University faculty, staff and student members has submitted a report to the university’s Board of Governors that makes recommendations aimed at establishing Laurier’s academic and administrative priorities.

The recommendations are the result of a rigorous 18-month initiative called Integrated Planning and Resource Management (IPRM). In the course of this review process, every academic and administrative program area at Laurier was evaluated according to how they align with institutional priorities. At the same time, the university’s budgeting processes were reviewed and other models studied, with the intent of recommending a new budget model that will more effectively allocate the university’s resources according to the identified priorities.

“IPRM is a strategic response to the challenging fiscal environment faced by post-secondary institutions in our province; it is not a cost-cutting exercise,” said Kim Morouney, a Laurier associate professor and co-chair of the IPRM’s overarching planning task force. “From the outset, we’ve approached this process with the question, ‘How can we make Laurier a better institution for our students, faculty and staff?’ The economics of education are changing and we need to focus our resources in the areas where we can excel.”

The review process concluded that a significant majority of academic and administrative program areas at Laurier are viable, healthy and of good or excellent quality. Overall, the planning task force recommended that about 22 per cent of the university’s academic and administrative areas should receive additional resources; that the majority – roughly 60 per cent – of the areas be continued with existing resource levels; and that 18 per cent receive fewer resources. Of this 18 per cent, it was suggested that nine administrative program areas and 18 academic program areas be maintained at a minimal level or considered for phase-out.

“It is important to remember that these are recommendations at this point, and that implementation will take time,” said Mary-Louise Byrne, a Laurier associate professor and co-chair of the planning task force. “The university’s Board of Governors is responsible for making decisions about the IPRM recommendations, taking into account commentary from the university Senate and members of the Laurier community. Decisions will be made in the first few months of 2015, and any approved recommendations will be implemented using the university’s existing governance and decision-making processes.”

In keeping with Laurier’s collegial culture and to ensure input from across the university, it was essential that the evaluation process be bottom-up, transparent, and owned by members of the university. While the decision to begin the process came from senior administration, the process itself was constituted at the grassroots level. Working groups, made up of more than 90 faculty and staff members nominated by their peers, as well as undergraduate and graduate student representatives, evaluated information submitted by each academic and administrative program area of the university. The information was evaluated based on criteria that included essentiality to the institution, internal and external demand, costs and revenues.

... more

Laurier IPRM/Page 2

Laurier's senior administration will provide separate commentary on the recommendations, but was not directly involved in the process.

"This is a Laurier approach, through and through," said Byrne. "The integrity and thoughtfulness that the working-group members brought to the process was profound."

By undertaking a prioritization process in tandem with a resource management process, the university will be able to strategically allocate its resources to the areas identified as priorities.

"This approach allows us to make smart decisions about funding and operationalizing our areas of strength rather than making across-the-board budget increases or reductions," said Morouney.

In place of Laurier's existing "historical-based" budget process, the planning task force recommended that the university adopt a modified version of a "responsibility-centred" budget model, whereby budget decision-making is distributed to academic and administrative units to ensure they are responsible and accountable for budgeting and financial performance.

Laurier's Senate will review and comment on the report of recommendations in December. The Board of Governors will review the report – along with comments from Senate, senior administration and the Laurier community – in February. The Board may decide to accept the report in its original form, or with recommended changes.

The Laurier community has been invited to have questions answered at IPRM town halls.

To view the report and for more information about IPRM, visit legacy.wlu.ca/iprm.