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Laurier Board of Governors approves program priority recommendations and new budget model

WATERLOO – The Wilfrid Laurier University Board of Governors passed a series of motions Feb. 26 approving recommendations of the Integrated Planning and Resource Management (IPRM) report, which identify academic and administrative priorities and a new resource allocation model for the university. The IPRM report was endorsed by Senate on Jan.12.

The IPRM recommendations are the result of a rigorous 18-month review process conducted by more than 90 faculty members, staff and students nominated by their peers. The process evaluated submissions from each academic and administrative program area of the university according to how they align with institutional priorities and based on criteria that included essentiality to the institution, internal and external demand, costs and revenues. The recommendations also identified a new budget model to more effectively allocate university resources to identified priorities.

“IPRM is an important priority-setting process that enables Laurier to clearly identify those programs that, if resourced appropriately, will distinguish the university and allow it to continue to excel,” said Jamie Martin, chair of the Board of Governors. “In approving the report recommendations, the Board of Governors has given the university the tools it needs to move forward in making strategic decisions.”

In approving the IPRM recommendations, the Board took into consideration discussion and comments from the Senate, senior administration, and from faculty, staff and students who attended town halls and submitted written comments.

The Board emphasized that its role in approving the IPRM report was to give high-level strategic direction to the university, while leaving specific program recommendations to be decided and implemented through the appropriate academic and administrative processes.

“Today’s decision results from a strong and selfless effort by members of the IPRM working groups. It also benefitted from a great deal of discussion and debate within the university community,” said Max Blouw, Laurier president and vice-chancellor. “It is because we have engaged in deep discussion and debate that we are confident that we have reached sound and strategic recommendations necessary for the university to provide the highest quality and effective delivery of academic and administrative programs within the resources available.”

The IPRM 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 report recommends that about 22 per cent of academic and administrative areas receive additional resources; that roughly 60 per cent of the areas continue with existing resources; 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.

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In place of Laurier’s existing “historical-based” budget process, the approved recommendation will move the university toward 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 strategic and financial performance.

By undertaking a prioritization process in tandem with a resource management process, the university is able to strategically allocate its resources to priorities identified by members of the community rather than by making across-the-board budget increases or reductions.

“Laurier will increase its focus on excellence; IPRM has given us the tools to succeed,” said Blouw.

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

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