



WLUF

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Faculty Association

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Dear Member of the Board of Governors,

WLUF has been contacted by many of our Members over the past couple of years who have expressed serious concern over the imposition by the Administration of the Integrated Planning and Resource Management (IPRM) process on academic programs at Wilfrid Laurier University. We have also taken note of the growing volume of literature reflecting upon program prioritization processes at other universities in Canada and the United States which roundly criticize virtually all aspects of this process. On the other side of the issue, we note the seeming complete paucity of literature supporting the academic integrity of this general approach. We have also been particularly concerned with the recent example of the University of Saskatchewan's, "TransformUS," Program Prioritization process, which generated so much negative media attention for that institution.

One way that such concerns of Laurier faculty have coalesced in the past year has been through the passage of almost identical motions of censure against the IPRM at the Divisional Councils of Senate for the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Liberal Arts. The Faculty of Liberal Arts, for example, unanimously determined:

Be it resolved: THAT the concept, method, data collection and analysis of the Integrated Planning and Resource Management process is so fundamentally flawed that this body has no confidence that it will provide reliable information upon which sound academic decisions can be made. As such, this body calls for the immediate cessation of the activities of the IPRM and the return of academic decision-making to the Senate, its rightful place as established by the WLU Act.

We have also expressed to the University on numerous occasions the incongruity of prioritizing programs along one axis when the Strategic Mandate Agreement would seemingly require prioritizing them along another.

Concerned by these developments, **WLUF has surveyed our members** to gain further insight into their feelings, attitudes and experiences regarding the IPRM. Over 200 members filled in the survey, which falls well within a meaningful response rate for survey research. Respondents included members from all Faculties across the University.

Most significantly, when asked to qualitatively describe their opinion of the IPRM, **over 85% of faculty expressed a negative opinion of the process.** These often strongly negative opinions clustered around a variety of concerns including problems with the methodology, the flawed

assumptions upon which the process itself is based, its deeply divisive impacts on faculty, the depressing effects it is having on faculty and staff morale, and its inability to achieve its stated objectives. Notable too were the many comments which presented the process as a clear road to a decline in academic quality. Serious flaws with the data populating the IPRM templates were also commented on by a strong core of respondents.

That the IPRM's method of ranking academic programs has been roundly condemned by Divisional Councils which represent a majority of faculty at the University lines up neatly with the common criticism throughout the broader literature of the methodology developed by Robert Dickeson to evaluate and rank academic programs. While we recognize the Dickeson model has been adapted in various ways for Laurier's IPRM process, it is clear to us that the fundamental underlying method remains. When asked to quantitatively rate whether the methodology employed by the IPRM was valid to achieve its purpose it is important to note that **only 17.8% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed the methodology was valid**. In contrast, 65% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the IPRM employed a valid methodology (17.2% offered no opinion either way on the issue).

Faculty were also asked what they thought was the purpose of the IPRM. A minority took a more-or-less neutral view, most often simply recognizing it as an allocation exercise aimed at determining differentiated resourcing for programs. However, a **strong majority (62%) expressed some form of negative view of its purpose**. These negative views clustered around a number of themes: a simple cost-cutting exercise (particularly aimed at Arts programs), a thinly-veiled attempt to subvert the Senate process, the imposition of an inappropriate 'business model' on an academic institution, and more.

Our Members have made it quite clear to us that they see little value in the IPRM and much with which to be concerned, even alarmed. WLUFA would like to remind the Board that faculty have a legally-mandated role in the formulation of the academic directions and policies of the university. The IPRM appears to upset the fundamental balance required through the shared governance structures which were put in place to ensure that the best combination of academic excellence and fiscal responsibility would define the institution. We respectfully ask therefore that the Board set aside the IPRM and return academic decision making to its rightful place, the University Senate, before it has the potential to create a fractious environment for this university.

WLUFA thanks you for your careful consideration of this letter. Our representatives would be available meet with you if you wish to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,



Robert Kristofferson
President, WLUFA