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"Catching Student Union off guard since 1969"

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The Times, They Are Changin'

by Amy Gallan

UPEI's Organizational Review Committee (ORC), a body of nine individuals, held a press conference on its review of the structures and administrative processes of the university on Tuesday, March 19. At the conference the ORC presented a report yielding 80 recommendations that will maintain or improve the university's quality, work, and service.

The ORC says that "The Report of the Organization Review Committee is part of the natural progression of a process of evaluation which has its roots in the Coles-Weir Report of 1994 and the Strategic Plan "Charting Our Future" presented in February, 1995." Coles and Weir described the need for an administrative structure which allows for more effective planning and follow-up. The Strategic Plan states quite clearly that "the University must... move quickly to develop a highly efficient and effective administrative structure to ensure that the University's mission is attained both now and in the future."

As a first step toward implementing the recommendations of "Charting our Future," Senate made sure that the ORC was comprised of a broad representation of the university community. Committee members recognized the need for raising morale, streamlining resources, providing mechanisms for change in programs and policies, focusing on and rewarding quality work and service. They researched specific topics and invited the university community to submit their comments and suggestions and to attend two town hall meetings dedicated to the review process.

A variety of issues were covered in the committee's 80 recommendations. The ORC said that "At the top of the Committee's priorities is the enhancement of our student-centred culture and environment." Recommendations include streamlining the processes of recruitment, admissions, first-year advising, new student orientation, measures for retention, and other related activities. This focus on service for the students would

include single-counter service for such activities as course registration and fee payment. The committee believes that "Students play important roles in the governance of the University through Student Union, Senate, Presidential, Faculty and other committees." To ensure that such participation is as effective as possible, the university will provide leadership training for students who serve on Student Union and university committees.

For improving the management of its human resources, the report recommends that in addition to continuing to support annual awards for outstanding contributions by faculty and staff, the President create a fund for encouraging research and professional development activities, that the university explore flexible work assignments as incentives, and that all units conduct regular performance appraisals to identify outstanding performance as well as deficiencies.

The ORC also endorsed the principle of letting managers manage. Heads of units, including academic department chairs, must be able to exercise agreed-upon responsibilities with a high degree of autonomy and with clear lines of accountability. One of the many recommendations involves giving managers more control over their own budgets. Other recommendations involve improving internal communication and giving appropriate administrative assistance to Deans and administrative stipends to Chairs.

While recognizing the need for committees of faculty, staff, and students, the ORC made a number of recommendations to reduce committee size and number. Other recommendations involved including alumni, faculty, staff, and student representation where appropriate, and developing a registry for committees to serve as a central depository for the information they produce.

The ORC, following suggestions made in the Coles-Weir Report, recommends the "strengthening of the Univer-

sity's senior administration." The recommended organizational structure is to be anchored by the President, a Vice-President of Academic Support and a Vice-President of Facilities and Finance. The Committee also recommends the development of an Office of Institutional Research and Planning (recommended by both the Coles-Weir and "Charting our Future"). A Management Group, consisting of the President, the two VPs, and six academic Deans, will meet regularly concerning day-to-day operations and administration.

The Committee recommends that faculties determine minimum size for departments and oversee that curriculum planning and administration be left with Departments but that larger units be created for handling resources and budgets. It also recommended reducing the size of Senate and improving its efficiency and effectiveness by creating steering and executive committees. Also, the enhancing of the Board of Governors' visibility on and off campus as a policy-making body was recommended.

The Committee believes that structural changes recommended in the report can be in place by July 1, 1997 and that the cost will be minimal. Only the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, which would support the management and planning functions of senior administrators the Senate, and the Board of Governors, will require new expenditures, as yet undetermined. The ORC says that the benefits reaped through improved planning, decision-making and management will outweigh the relatively small expenditures involved in the process.

At the conference the ORC said that the changes were being made now because after twenty-five years of existence the University and people are ready for new ideas. It also said that the changes will greatly enhance university ability to foresee the future programs and respond to opportunities.