

**Comments and Action Items Arising from the Report of the Committee on  
“Priority Area E – Enhancing our capacity to conduct our research and programs  
of teaching effectively” from *Moving FPA Forward***

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On 22 October 2014, the views and comments of FPA colleagues (faculty and professional staff) were solicited on the report of the ad hoc committee on “Priority Area E - Enhancing our capacity to conduct our research and programs of teaching effectively” from *Moving FPA Forward*. This report, also known as the Synergies Report, was intended as a “white paper” and was designed to elicit comments and discussion. The purpose was to generate possible avenues of future action, as warranted. As you might recall, this report was composed of 12 sections (and two appended documents), with each section addressing a specific set of issues and containing its own recommendations.

The aim of this document is to provide an overview of the views and comments expressed in the responses to the Synergies Report and to outline action items that would flow from it and the ensuing consultations. This document also reflects subsequent discussions with FPA Chairs and Directors at a meeting held on 19 January 2015. Discussions were also held with the Associate Deans and the Faculty’s Administrative Officer. Based on all of this material, a number of action items are identified below. These reflect my assessment and that of the Associate Deans as to the most promising avenues for follow-up actions on the report by FPA units and the Faculty as a whole.

A total of 15 written responses were received, some of which were supportive, many of which were critical of, at least, parts of the report and all of which raised important questions, to be highlighted below. Two of the responses provided comments about the report in general. One of these was critical of the report. It raised issues of scope, balance, program improvement, and whether or not the report had gone beyond its mandate. The second general submission provided comments on issues of online resources and the possible creation of a common FPA-wide course. Most of the other responses dealt with a limited set of the issues addressed in the report; only a few responses provided comments on all (or most) of the sections in the report.

The part of the Synergies Report that garnered the most responses was “Section I. Administering Multidisciplinary Programs”. Of the 15 responses received, 12 addressed this section. Many of the comments challenged this section of the report, often in detail. Emblematic of these comments are those provided by the current or immediate past directors of the Institute of African Studies, EURUS and the Institute of Political Economy, who focused their comments on factual statements on which the section was based, and challenged both the methods and data used in this section of the report (the source of these comments is identified with the permission of the authors). They decried the lack of adequate consultation on this section and argued that it was based on assertions that were unsupported. In fact, they called for this section to be withdrawn on the basis that it gave a misleading representation of their programs. The possibility of undertaking a serious discussion on multi-unit programs (MUPs) with broad engagement was raised in two responses. Finally, there was one comment that supported the recommendation on consolidating MUPs.

In the discussion with FPA Chairs and Directors, the general view that emerged was that the contents of the report had tended to focus on concerns and had not highlighted the benefits associated with MUPs. It would have been useful had data on revenues and costs for MUPs been included in the report. It was noted that, from the perspective of the units participating in MUPs, there were no systemic issues or concerns that markedly hampered operations; the existing governance provisions included the mechanisms needed to address issues as these arose.

1. *Overall, the general view that emerged was that, based on the information available, there were no significant issues relating to MUPs that needed to be addressed at the level of the Faculty.*

Another section of the report that received some attention was “Section III. Enhancing the Internship and Co-op Experience”. Here the comments were focused on resource implications. In one submission, it was noted that internships and co-op placements impose a considerable administrative burden, and so while positive, any expansion of opportunities in these areas would require additional financial commitments. In the same response, it was also suggested that the role of the Dean’s Office may be to develop common policies that would apply across the Faculty. A similar suggestion was made in another response where the overlap between this section and the recently identified issues with insurance for students on internships was also highlighted. A third submission was supportive of the recommendation of hiring a staff person to provide Faculty-wide assistance with internships and co-op placements.

The general view that emerged in the course of discussions with FPA Chairs and Directors was that opportunities for co-op, placements, and internships were important elements to FPA units. These were seen as key aspects of Carleton’s “Capital Advantage”. It was felt that co-op was well organized (at the level of the University), but that it was less systematically the case for internships. The general feeling, however, was that not much would be added by a single position to support internships. Four action items were identified:

2. *The issue of insurance for students on placements and internships was discussed and it was understood that this was a University-level issue and that the Associate Dean (Curriculum and Planning) needed to press for resolution at that level. [Note that since the end of consultations,*

*significant progress has been made at the level of the University in addressing these concerns. The Associate Dean (Curriculum and Planning) will keep FPA Chairs and Directors apprised of developments.]*

- 3. The Associate Dean (Student Success) should develop an informal means for individuals (faculty and professional staff) involved in the development, implementation, and support of placements and internships in FPA units to get together informally and share best practices, common elements, issues and concerns. This could later develop into a committee if the individuals involved felt the need to do so.*
- 4. Placements and internships should be more prominently highlighted on the FPA website and, as appropriate, on the websites of individual FPA units.*
- 5. The Associate Dean (Research and Graduate Affairs) and the Associate Dean (Student Success) should work with the appropriate University-level officials to clarify the status of students on co-op placements. We should aim to ensure that these students are eligible to be considered “in program” and thus allowed to register as full-time students during their co-op placements. It is understood that specific issues of concern differ between undergraduate and graduate programs.*

It was subsequently noted that proponents of any new initiative relating to internships and placements would need to consider the limited capacity of our external partners to meet increased demands for internships and placements (“community fatigue”). In turn, this reflection led to a recommendation aimed at recognizing the contributions of our external partners:

- 6. The Office of the Dean should work in collaboration with the relevant FPA units to develop means to recognize our community partners for their contribution to the education of our students.*

The content of: “Section IV. Addressing Program Overlap” was highlighted in four of the submitted responses. The majority of the comments on this section were positive. One comment focused on the idea of merging programs, another on the idea of introducing Faculty-wide methods courses. A third submission was largely supportive of this section and expressed support for the idea of joint methodology courses at the graduate level, which are perceived as an opportunity and a means to create an FPA identity. The contents of a fourth commentary were similar in tone, seeing the existence of opportunities with joint methods courses, particularly at the graduate level.

Overall, in the discussion with FPA Chairs and Directors, not much appetite emerged for joint methods courses across several FPA units, especially at the graduate level. There was more support for sharing course information and access to courses across programs within the Faculty. The key issue remains one of identifying a mechanism that would allow this to happen smoothly. In the end, it was felt that more unit-to-unit and Faculty-wide communication about intentions to offer courses should occur prior to finalizing schedules and that once schedules were finalized, information on courses to be offered should be shared widely. The focus here was particularly on option (and especially special topics) courses in graduate programs – it was felt that such courses offered by most FPA units should be available to graduate students across the Faculty. There was strong support expressed for the following initiative:

7. *The Associate Dean (Research and Graduate Affairs) should work in collaboration with interested FPA units to spearhead the development of a series of “professional practices” workshops / seminars that would be available to all graduate students in programs offered by FPA units. Proposed topics include: publishing techniques; field work; interview techniques; design and administration of questionnaires. It is understood that the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs already offers a number of professional development opportunities to all graduate students at Carleton. A necessary first step would thus be to publicize these opportunities to graduate students in FPA units and then to focus the FPA-level development efforts to address gaps.*

In reaction to “Section V. Rebranding Programs”, one respondent noted that there is some scope for positive contributions in this area and suggested a focus on the development of an FPA brand, including a suggestion to move to a Bachelor of Public Affairs (BPA). On the other hand, another respondent noted that this section and the next one (“Section VI. Encouraging Undergraduate-to-Graduate Degree Pathways”) both fail to address the issue of intra-Faculty competition for the same graduate students, a situation that can lead to undesirable bidding wars across FPA units.

Discussion with FPA Chairs and Directors led to the conclusion that the idea of “rebranding programs” would have to be motivated by some underlying argument – re-branding for the sake of re-branding was not seen as a worthwhile exercise. There was not much support for the notion of creating a “Bachelor of Public Affairs” that would be separate from the BA. For some, this offered a great opportunity to reflect the nature of the Faculty through specified core requirements for such a program. For others, it would be the route to even more specialized degrees, leading to even less integration and coherence of the degrees offered across the Faculty. Two specific recommendations were made:

8. *The Associate Dean (Curriculum and Planning) and the Associate Dean (Student Success) should work with the relevant University-level professional staff to ensure that the recruitment materials prepared in support of FPA undergraduate programs be designed in ways that highlight the relevant aspects of these programs.*
9. *The Associate Dean (Curriculum and Planning) and I will work with interested FPA units and the University’s Working Group on Course Clusters (created as a result of the Report of the BA Panel) to explore the possibility of developing and/or participating in the development suites of undergraduate course clusters and certificates that would take advantage of our Ottawa location and be of interest to students already at Carleton and of other students that we could attract to Carleton.*

The remaining sections of the Synergies Report elicited a reaction in only one of the responses received. The contents of and recommendations in these sections were briefly considered in a discussion with FPA Chairs and Directors. The main points expressed in the course of that discussion were:

10. *Some support was expressed for the notion of accelerated pathways from undergraduate to graduate programs within FPA. Interest was expressed in finding out more about the idea and in considering whether and how such pathways could be implemented in individual units and*

*across units. Units are encouraged to explore the possibilities created as a result of the increased flexibility on the structure of these pathways that was recently expressed by the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs. The Associate Dean and Director of Kroeger College will continue to work with interested FPA units to develop accelerated pathways for B.PAPM students.*

- 11. There was not much appetite for the development of a means to enhance the language skills of graduate students. The general feeling was that students would not be willing to pay for this service and so that an initiative in this area would simply raise the cost structure of our programs without generating any offsetting revenue flows.*
- 12. As to new programs, the key concerns highlighted were that moving ahead with any such initiative would require the strong support and commitment of champions.*

After consideration of the contents of the report of the committee on Priority Area E in *Moving FPA Forward*, the views and comments expressed on the report, and discussions with FPA Chairs and Directors, the Associate Deans and I consider that the bulleted items above (and especially items 2 to 10) offer the most promising avenues for action by units within FPA and by the Faculty as a whole as a follow-up on the Synergies Report.

Finally, please allow me to thank the members of the Committee on Priority Area E who produced the Synergies Report, all FPA colleagues who provided comments on the report, Chairs and Directors, and the Associate Deans for their contribution to this process.