

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

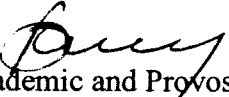


Vice President Academic and Provost
6328 Memorial Road
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2
Tel: (604) 822-4948
Fax: (604) 822-3134

MEMORANDUM

September 4, 2002

To: Senate
c/o Lisa Collins, Manager of Secretariat Services

From: Barry C. McBride 
Vice President Academic and Provost

Re: Merger of the Sustainable Development Research Institute (SDRI) and the Institute for Resources and the Environment (IRE) to establish the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability

Recommendation:

I recommend that Senate approve the merger of the Sustainable Development Research Institute (SDRI) and the Institute for Resources and the Environment (IRE) to establish the Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability.

Rationale:

The "Meadowcroft Report" (Report of the Committee on the Potential Future of the Sustainable Development Research Institute) recommends the merger of the two Institutes, SDRI and IRE. The Report is attached. The recommendations contained in the Report were approved unanimously at the meeting of the Graduate Council on May 9, 2002. The merged units will operate under the name Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability.

Attachment: The "Meadowcroft Report", Dec 3, 2001: Report of the Committee on the Potential Future of the Sustainable Development Research Institute

The "Meadowcroft Report", Dec. 3, 2001

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE POTENTIAL FUTURE OF THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

In August of 2001, Prof. Granot, Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, requested that a committee be established to recommend a future path for the Sustainable Development Research Institute (SDRI). The founder and former Director of SDRI, Prof. Robinson, had stepped down from this post in June, and Prof. Lavkulich was the interim Acting Director. Prof. Lavkulich is the Director of the Institute for Resources and the Environment (IRE) and had examined unsuccessfully with Prof. Robinson some years ago the potential for a merger of the two Institutes. With this change in the leadership of the SDRI, it seemed an appropriate time to reexamine the administrative structure of the two Institutes including the potential for merger.

A committee was established with the following members:

Prof. Kay Teschke	Health Care and Epidemiology
Prof. George Spiegelman	Microbiology and Immunology
Prof. John Robinson	Sustainable Development Research Institute
Prof. Les Lavkulich	Agricultural Sciences
Ms. Vanessa Timmer	Grad. Student, IRE
Prof. Tom Pedersen	Earth and Ocean Sciences, Assoc. Dean, Grad. Studies
Prof. Ray Meadowcroft, Chair	Metals and Materials Engineering

At the first meeting of the committee, Professors Lavkulich and Robinson expanded on previously circulated documents outlining the structure, mission and academic plans for SDRI and IRE. The committee was impressed by the high standard of activities engaged in by both groups. IRE has a strong academic focus and a very popular and well recognized graduate student program. It also serves as a catalyst for various government and industry agencies seeking research in resource and environmental areas. SDRI is internationally known for its outreach activities with government agencies and industrial groups in the area of sustainable development. It has a very strong support group of non-academic associates, has a growing faculty strength and is recognized internationally in several areas of scholarship pertaining to the theory and practice of sustainable development. However, it does not have a graduate program.

At a subsequent meeting, the potential for merger was discussed at length. The benefits appeared substantial. SDRI would gain a graduate program, both Institutes would expand their circle of involved faculty, and the strengths of both groups in interaction with other communities would be amplified. Against this, the problem of coherence in a combined group located in three separate parts of the campus appeared to be the major negative feature.

A general meeting was held and the faculty, staff and students associated with both Institutes were invited to comment on the benefits or disadvantages of merger of the two Institutes. The turnout for this meeting was excellent with over thirty people in

attendance as well as the committee. The general reception to the concept of merger was very positive with some key points being made:

- a. the merged groups should quickly establish a shared vision for their joint future
- b. the merging of research and teaching at both the graduate and undergraduate level is a necessity
- c. the strengths of IRE in teaching be preserved along with its commitment to sustaining the environment
- d. the study of sustainable development must continue to be seen by the external community as a key activity of the university
- e. both units have a keen interest in maintaining their unique identities, i.e. they would both like to have their names remain identifiable after the merger.

Follow-up comments from the group were requested and two letters were received from IRE faculty expressing concerns about the potential merger. The focus of these letters was the academic performance of SDRI and the melding of the two faculty groups. The committee felt that this issue had been well discussed at the general meeting and in committee.

At the final meeting of the committee, the following recommendations were agreed upon:

1. The two Institutes, SDRI and IRE, be merged with a single Director and operating budget.
2. The present graduate program of IRE be expanded to include SDRI. This would significantly enhance the attraction of sustainability studies to potential graduate students and eliminate the present bureaucratic barriers.
3. The merged units consider the merits of undertaking a wider spectrum of undergraduate activities in association with existing undergraduate programs.
4. The merged units operate under their present names until the new unit has an opportunity to discuss their shared vision and can then choose a name appropriate to their academic mission.
5. A review of the merged unit be made in 2003.

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