



Decision Note Advice to Minister

Date: June 2, 2015

Cliff #: 100039

Issue: University of British Columbia (UBC) proposal for a Bachelor of Urban Forestry degree.

Recommendation:

Approve the UBC proposal for a Bachelor of Urban Forestry degree.

Implications:

- Enables British Columbia students pursue an urban forestry degree without having to leave the province.

Next steps:

- Sign the attached letter of approval.

Background / Facts:

- Section 48(2) of the *University Act* requires UBC to apply for Ministerial approval to offer a new degree program. This proposal did not undergo a Degree Quality Assessment Board review because UBC has exempt status up to and including the doctoral level.
- If implemented, this will be the first urban forestry degree program in British Columbia and only the second one in Canada.
- Students will learn about management and planning of urban forest and green-space systems in cities. The curriculum will include urban ecology, recreation and landscape planning, climate change and human well-being.
- The courses will be comprised of face-to-face lectures and laboratories, with one required field course. A co-op option will be developed soon after implementation, bringing the program into in line with other undergraduate programs offered by the Faculty of Forestry.
- Students in the proposed program will benefit from other UBC resources, including "living laboratory projects" that transform the campus into a sustainable community, the urban farm, and the Research Forests in Maple Ridge and Williams Lake.
- UBC indicates that the proposed program may become a flagship program within the UBC Sustainability Initiative which deeply integrates academic and campus operational sustainability efforts.
- The Faculty of Forestry is collaborating with the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Arts, the School of Community and Regional Planning, and the Faculty of Land Food Systems to deliver the proposed program.
- UBC reports strong links with industry including the Association of BC Professional Foresters (ABCPF), the Canadian Federation of Professional Forestry Associations, the International Society of Arboriculture, and the Tree Canada Foundation. UBC is hoping to collaborate with these

organizations on course delivery and a co-operative education program.

Analysis:

- UBC expects international students will comprise approximately 50% of students in the program. International students are expected to initially come from China and the United States, but in future, recruitment will be expanded to other countries.
- This is an opportunity for UBC to strengthen existing partnerships with three Chinese Universities – Beijing Forestry University, Nanjing Forestry University, and Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University. UBC reports that formal student transfer agreements currently in place may be expanded to include the proposed degree program.
- The ABCFP has authority under legislation to accredit forestry programs, certify professional foresters and grant the license to practice forestry in BC. Currently, the ABCFP and the Canadian Forestry Accreditation Board (CFAB) do not provide specialized accreditation for urban forestry. s.13

s.13 but the first graduates are not anticipated until 2017. In addition, all applicants to the RPF examination must complete two years as foresters in training under an RPF prior to applying. The proposal also notes that UBC plans to seek accreditation with the Society of American Foresters (SAF), which accredits urban forestry programs in the United States, or another suitable professional body after two years of successful delivery.

- Labour market information provided by the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training shows above average demand for forestry professionals and average to above average demand in related occupations for graduates of urban forestry. US Department of Labor data, provided by UBC, also show positive labour demand for urban forestry and related disciplines.
- The program is consistent with UBC's mandate.

Approved



Honourable Andrew Wilkinson

June 22, 2015

Date

Attachment: Letter to the University of British Columbia
Contact: Claire Avison, Assistant Deputy Minister (250-217-9059)