

# MUN Department of Ocean Sciences 2020 Academic Unit Planning Lay Summary (28 June, 2024)

**Launch semester:** The very first MUN Department of Ocean Sciences' (DOS) Academic Unit Planning process was officially launched at the end of the Fall 2020 semester.

**Action Plan approval:** The unit's Action Plan was presented to the Dean of Record in July 2023, with a few subsequent discussions in anticipation of approval.

## 1. Self-Study Process

The DOS Self-Study process, announced in September 2020 and officially launched in late November 2020, was conducted at the request of the Associate Vice-President (Academic), with the intent to encourage planning, innovation, and improvement in the DOS and its programs, in alignment with the University's mission and strategic frameworks. Accordingly, the Head of DOS (Dr. Chris Parrish) formed a departmental Academic Unit Planning Committee (AUPC) consisting of four faculty members with relevant knowledge/expertise in departmental/university affairs; Dr. Parrish himself (Head), Dr. Annie Mercier (Deputy Head, Undergraduate Studies), Dr. Ian Fleming (Deputy Head, Graduate Studies and Research), and Dr. Pat Gagnon (AUPC chair and former chair of another academic unit's recent AUP's Site Visit). The AUPC used a variety of means to reach out to the global DOS/Ocean Sciences Centre (OSC) community and various MUN constituencies in order to collect current, accurate data, including individual and group meetings and email consultations with faculty and staff who hold key academic, administrative, technical, and management positions. Various aspects of this work were also discussed during formal faculty meetings. A key component of the AUPC's approach was to measure more accurately the strengths, limitations, and impacts of DOS research and teaching programs. This involved the development and administration, in collaboration with the MUN Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP), of a comprehensive online survey to probe the degree of satisfaction of the DOS undergraduate and graduate student constituencies.

Some of the main recommendations/priorities highlighted in the Self-Study document include the urgent need of:

- Addressing multiple infrastructure, budgetary, and pedagogical challenges;
- Hiring faculty in replacement of those who recently left or are soon to retire to limit pervasive effects on undergraduate teaching, graduate training and research.

## 2. Panel Review

The AUP Review Panel included four members who brought a wealth of experience in Academia, Marine Research Stations, Aquaculture Industry, and Government to the review. Collectively, this allowed the Panel to provide a balanced and comprehensive assessment of the DOS and of the world-class marine research facility in which it is located: the Ocean Sciences Centre (OSC). The Panel met many DOS/OSC stakeholders by video link or in person at the OSC. These included MUN Associate VP Academic, MUN Dean of Science, two recently departed CRC chairs, and representatives of nearly all current DOS stakeholders: Head, Associate Director of Facilities, academic staff, administrative staff, facilities support staff (research, unit heads, maintenance, outreach), undergraduate and graduate students, and postdoctoral

fellows. The Panel toured most facilities at the OSC, including the Dr. Joe Brown Aquatic Research Building (JBARB), the Cold-Ocean Deep-Sea Research Facility (CDRF), research, outreach and nominal teaching/meeting space (Challenger Room) in the Main (OS) Building.

Some of the main recommendations brought forward by the Panel include:

- Upgrade the ageing OSC facilities and commit to a plan to phase in new junior faculty;
- Streamline administration of the impressive, complex OSC facility with a single Facilities Director rather than multiple unit managers and commit to retention or succession of the current JBARB manager.

### **3. Unit Response and Action Plan**

We fully agreed with the report from the AUP Review Panel, in that it effectively outlines the many strengths of our Unit (an academic department [DOS] operating in a marine research facility [OSC]), including excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, extraordinary levels of external funding, and high-impact research. We thought that the report very clearly situates DOS/OSC as a cornerstone of MUN's strategic goal to be a leader in ocean-related research and education, while outlining the many challenges we face related to marine and fresh water supplies, critically needed renovations of an aging infrastructure, and the need for faculty renewal following Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles, to name a few. We highlighted that we were looking forward to working with the University to implement necessary changes to allow our Unit to maintain and grow its reputation as a truly unique, world-class hub for ocean sciences research and education.

Some of the actions and timelines outlined in our Action Plan include:

- Commit to a plan to replace departed, retired or soon-to- retire faculty to ensure viability of the DOS, with a goal of increasing the number of EDI-deserving faculty. Timeline: 1 year;
- Retain and maintain both 'shallow' and 'deep' seawater intake systems to ensure minimal redundancy, which is essential to assure industry partners, JBARB and CDRF users, and researchers that running seawater is reliable. Timeline: 1 year;
- Quickly develop retention or succession plans for the JBARB manager and the Outreach Coordinator. Timeline: less than 1 year (for both positions);
- Reorganize OSC management to have one overall 'Facilities Director'. Timeline: a 2-phased approach presented as a pilot project launched over 2 years.