People Plan Feedback

Which three priorities should SFU focus on in the next few years?

SFU is "an open, inclusive university whose foundation is intellectual and academic freedom" (from Values and Commitments of SFU). In this spirit, our top three priorities are:

1. **Increase salaries.** SFUFA's report on bargaining priorities (April 2022) and the "SFU: What's Next?" survey identified low salaries as an issue (when the "persistent inflation steadily erodes purchasing power and, in real terms, cannot be thought of as anything other than a pay cut," SFUFA, p.5). Increasing salaries of faculty and staff should be the first priority, especially considering the sharply increasing cost of living in this province. This **compensation** issue is closely related to the "Experience and Well-being" theme and "Faculty/Staff Recruitment & Retention" themes.
2. **Academic freedom**. The "Experience and Well-being" and "Faculty/Staff Recruitment & Retention" themes should be tied to the academic function of SFU and protection of our main guaranteed right, **academic freedom**. Inadequate protection may contribute to lower job satisfaction and various tensions. Explicitly focusing on how SFU will become a leader in the protection of AF is critical given the divisive and politicized climate at the university. The importance of academic freedom to faculty and other stakeholders was highlighted in the "SFU: What's Next?" survey, which identified academic freedom as a **guiding principle of our work** for the next 5 years.
3. **Reduce the administrative bloat at SFU.** The "SFU: What's Next?" survey and SFUFA's report both identified that faculty don't want SFU **to hire more administrators and bureaucrats** whose main duties focus on tasks other than research and teaching. Reducing the administrative bloat at SFU will allow redirection of funding to faculty, staff, and student support – thus improving experience and well-being. This priority should be mentioned explicitly under the theme "Leadership/ Organization Development".

Additional Considerations Concerning the Development of the People Plan

1. **"Equity Compass as foundation"**. The header "Equity Compass as foundation" appears on the themes slide. Given the numerous problems and ambiguities with the Equity Compass draft, this header is concerning and difficult to interpret. Moreover, shouldn't the mission of the university (to generate and translate knowledge) and academic freedom (a key principle that allows us to fulfill this mission) be the foundation of any plan? Why is the Equity Compass taking priority?

2. **Protecting time for research.** One of the priority initiatives in the newly developed [SFU Implementation Plan](#)is "Protecting time for research."[1] Our main responsibilities as faculty members are research and teaching. We also provide service to our departments, our professional communities, and the general public. However, ironically, this initiative, intended to help faculty members and others in our community, is taking much of our time. For example, we need to go to various consultations and meetings and read drafts of the proposed plans. For some of us, this work is burdensome, which may lead to negative impacts on work experience and well-being and to lower job satisfaction. We ask that the administration be sensitive to this issue and to **minimize additional work for faculty**.

3. **Undefined terms.** The document contains some undefined jargon that is inaccessible to a general audience. For example, what is a "supportive organizational culture"? And what is "enhanced leadership development, including a needs assessment for faculty development"? Such jargon should ideally be replaced with plain language. At a minimum, it should be defined.

4. **Measures of success and accountability.** Clearly identified measures of success of the proposed initiatives are critical for accountability. In 1, 2, 3… years we should be able to see what has been achieved by the VP PEI office, how faculty satisfaction rates have changed, how salaries have changed, etc. For example, how will "enhanced leadership development" be measured? Which outcomes will indicate that the initiative has been successful?

5. **Background and review of approaches used at other universities/institutions**. Including a thorough review of experiences at other institutions as background to the plan would be helpful. Which initiatives were successful? Which were not? Such background information would increase the confidence of the SFU community in the proposed plan.

Appendix

The following is an excerpt from the newly developed SFU Implementation Plan on the subject of protecting time for research:[2]

> **Challenge**: Faculty members have identified "lack of time" as the biggest constraint in increasing their research output. For individual faculty members, balancing the competing demands of research, teaching and service is challenging. For department chairs, school directors and deans, balancing the need to deliver academic programming—and to support a dynamic research environment—is also challenging.
>
> **Action**: Consulting with deans, chairs and directors, ADRs and SFU Faculty Relations, we will identify barriers to availability and effective use of research time for faculty members. Best practices across faculties, schools and departments will be shared and places where flexibility exists in the system (e.g., course scheduling/stacking) and within the current collective agreement will be examined.

---

[1] See Appendix for more details.
[2] https://www.sfu.ca/research/strategic-research-plan/implementation-plan