

**PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE TO THE**  
**REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON OCEAN STUDIES**

July 1991

In April, I received the Report of the Task Force on Ocean Studies. The work of the Task Force, established some 18 months previously, had been extensive; it involved numerous meetings of the Task Force itself, the preparation, circulation and debate of a Discussion Paper and several discussion sessions and open meetings involving members of the Dalhousie community, representatives of other universities, and senior representatives of industry, government and the community. It was an extensive and highly consultative process and the reasonable conclusion can be drawn that the Report of the Task Force reflects the degree of consensus, and of commitment, that exists in Dalhousie and its broader community to develop Ocean Studies in a new, more comprehensive, yet better integrated fashion.

Since receiving the Report, I have met with the Task Force, and have discussed the contents of the Report with Vice-Presidents and Deans; it has of course, been provided to Senate and Senate Committees, and individual faculties have been able to consider and offer comment on it. It is now timely for there to be a clear response from the President, phrased in terms of the specific recommendations developed by the Task Force.

Before I respond to those recommendations, it may be useful to provide my own perceptions of where Dalhousie currently stands with regard to Ocean Studies. I have been told that, over the past twenty years or so, there have been several debates at Dalhousie, all aimed at enhancing the interdisciplinary nature and general coherence and visibility of the University's activities in Ocean Studies. I sense that these are viewed as having been largely unproductive. Illustrative of this is the history of the Oceanography Department, recognized nationally and internationally for its academic and scientific quality. Initially conceived of as a research institute, it has been a unique department reporting to the Dean of Graduate Studies and presently is the only Department in the Faculty of Science which offers only graduate programmes. That history reflects some uncertainty as to how Dalhousie wished to proceed in developing Ocean Studies. Perhaps of even greater significance has been Dalhousie's limited past success in more effectively coordinating our extensive and extremely well-regarded

activities in scientific aspects of Ocean Studies, with policy areas involving economic studies, ocean transportation, marine law, etc.

I mention these facts only to make the point that the Task Force, though it has worked with great ability, enthusiasm and diligence, can only carry the Dalhousie community a certain distance beyond that to which our past history had brought us. The Task Force was very representative in its composition, it worked hard to achieve an effective consensus and to carry the Dalhousie debate on Ocean Studies to a significantly higher level, and it has achieved major success. Yet the lack of complete agreement reflects our present situation as well as that previous history.

That historical past, as well as two significant very recent factors influence my response to the Task Force Report. While my response to the Task Force's recommendations must attempt to resolve remaining divisions and differences of opinion, it must also recognize circumstances that have changed since the Task Force was established. For a variety of reasons, some relating to efforts at other Canadian universities such as Victoria or UNB to develop greater strength in Ocean Studies, Dalhousie has recently lost a number of excellent faculty members working in these fields. The difficulties of coping with budgetary deficits have made it more difficult to respond positively to these losses. The maintenance of Dalhousie's traditional strengths in certain specific areas of Ocean Studies is seen as a major problem by some, that must be addressed before any more ambitious institutional-wide developments can be undertaken.

Yet on the other side, is the fact that Dalhousie, in many of those same scientific fields in which faculty losses seem so apparent, is now the focus for a national Centre of Excellence that is bringing up to forty additional scientists to Dalhousie, together with up to \$20 million in funding, and new facilities such as the Gene Probe Lab. And while there are other concerns reflected in the Task Force Report about our ability to mount an appropriate interdisciplinary graduate programme in ocean-related policy fields, the fact is that external funds are ready and waiting to provide graduate scholarships for such a programme, if we can just get our act together.

In developing this response I have endeavoured to take all of these factors into account.

### **Response:**

1. Institutional Commitment The Task Force rightly makes the point that Ocean Studies at Dalhousie must be an institution-wide commitment. This is an essential requirement for an Area

of Special Emphasis at Dalhousie and I fully and strongly agree with this recommendation. Hopefully, this response will help to develop such a commitment, in which all at Dalhousie will need to participate.

2. Rightly, the Task Force has again been at pains to propose a GOAL, and a STRATEGY for Ocean Studies at Dalhousie. These are generally stated but are specific to Dalhousie and I very strongly endorse them both.

3. The PLAN outlined in the Report contains the most specific proposals and I wish to respond to them in detail.

(a) Chair in Ocean Studies The Report emphasizes that, in the opinion of the Task Force, the creation of a Chair in Ocean Studies is central to the further development of this area of emphasis at Dalhousie. The Chair is also seen as acting as Executive Director of Ocean Studies and as providing leadership and coordination to these initiatives.

I fully endorse this recommendation and accordingly, effective July 1992, a Killam Chair of Ocean Studies will be created at Dalhousie, with responsibilities as outlined in the Task Force Report. In order to compensate, at least in part, for recent faculty losses in ocean-related areas and also to recognize the significant role that scientific and technological studies must play in the development of Ocean Studies at Dalhousie, this new senior-level Chair will hold an academic appointment within the Faculty of Science. The incumbent will report administratively to the Vice-President (Academic & Research). The Chair will hold a tenured position and will serve as Executive Director for Ocean Studies for an initial period of five years. However, in the expectation that the Chair will be filled through an external appointment, and that a period of familiarization with Dalhousie will be required, the Chair will assume responsibilities as Executive Director on 1 July, 1993.

The creation of this Chair will be a major part of an institutional commitment to Ocean Studies and the filling of the Chair will be an institutional responsibility. A Search Committee will be established as soon as possible, to be chaired by the Vice-President (Academic & Research), and the composition of this Committee will be broadly representative of ocean-related activities at Dalhousie. This should help ensure that the appointee not only has excellent credentials for an appointment in the Faculty of Science but also has the qualifications and expertise to draw together the somewhat disparate elements of ocean studies at Dalhousie about a common vision for the future.

Additionally, one junior-level faculty appointment in an area of Ocean Studies will be created in 1993 and a further similar appointment in 1994. The Chair and Executive Director will recommend on the filling of these positions including the identification of appropriate faculty and department affiliation. An appropriate advisory body to offer advice to the Chair and Executive Director on these appointments will be established.

(b) The Task Force Report proposes that an Interdisciplinary Masters degree programme in Ocean Studies should be developed. The existence of a minority report from the Task Force and the current debate about the future of the Marine Affairs Diploma programme make it essential that this matter be given priority in this response. Past debates on Ocean Studies at Dalhousie have not led to extensive interaction or collaboration between scientific and policy-related activities or to more genuinely interdisciplinary programmes. For this area of emphasis to succeed, these must now occur.

In 1992, the Marine Affairs Diploma will be replaced by the Masters Programme in Marine Management. Although not evident in the Task Force Report, I sense that there is now consensus that this programme can and should be broadened to be more genuinely interdisciplinary and to provide the type of focus described in the Report.

Accordingly, commencing July 1992, funds will be provided for a Coordinator for this Programme, on a half-time basis, plus secretarial support. The Coordinator of the Marine Management programme will be responsible administratively directly to the Dean of Graduate Studies. Again, to ensure that this appointment reflects a university-wide commitment, a Search Committee chaired by the Dean of Graduate Studies and with a broadly representative composition will be established as soon as possible to recommend on the appointment.

(c) Ocean Forum and CORD, etc. The remaining elements of the PLAN proposed by the Task Force are focused on the creation of an Oceans Forum, a Council on Oceans Research and Development (CORD) and on the need for an institutional oceans research programme. I fully accept the general thrust of these proposals, as well as the general responsibilities that are described in recommendation 7-11 and 13-16. In particular, I agree that, for Dalhousie's initiatives in Ocean Studies to achieve any degree of success,

there must be on-going, meaningful consultation with, and participation by individuals from industry and government.

It does not seem to me, however, that a sufficiently substantive role has been described for CORD to attract meaningful external participation, nor has a clear distinction been made between the role of the Oceans Forum and of CORD. Further thought also needs to be given as to how to develop in detail an institutional oceans research programme.

While the Oceans Forum, or a modification of it, should certainly be established no later than July 1992, I propose to establish immediately an Oceans Coordinating Committee to report to me on the following:

- (i) the composition and terms of reference of the Search Committees for the Chair in Oceans Studies and the Coordinator of the Marine Management Programme.

I would hope that the Committee can give advice on this matter by early September.

- (ii) to propose, for the consideration of the appropriate Faculties and Senate, steps that should be taken to ensure that the Master of Marine Management does indeed become fully interdisciplinary, and that administration of it reflects an institutional commitment.
- (iii) to advise, in further detail, on the proposal for an Oceans Forum on criteria for membership, and on terms of reference.
- (iv) to review the proposal for a Council, recognizing the critical need for mechanisms that provide for extensive input and participation by persons external to Dalhousie.
- (v) to consider the proposal to create an oceans-related research programme, and to suggest in detail how this might be accomplished.
- (vi) to recommend an appropriate advisory mechanism through which the Chair and Executive Director can receive on-going advice especially with regard to appointments.

On these latter matters (ii-vi), I would expect the Committee to report by December 31, 1991).

Budgetary Implications The above responses will require substantial resources which are estimated to be:

- (i) Chair in Ocean Studies - \$100,000 per annum, not including any provision for initial equipment set-up, etc. For this latter purpose, the University will provide \$25,000 in 1992-93 with any further amount being found within the Faculty of Science.
- (ii) Graduate Coordinator with secretarial support - \$85,000 per annum. A portion of these funds will be needed to make the transition from the present funding arrangements of the Diploma programme, and a pro-rated amount for the nine months commencing 1 July will be required in 1992.
- (iii) Financial support for the Oceans Forum - \$10,000 per annum, commencing 1 April, 1992

It is hardly necessary to make the point that Dalhousie has no uncommitted funds for these purposes. However, the initial appointment of a Chair in Ocean Studies will be as a Killam Chair and will be funded by the Killam Endowment. Beyond the third or fourth year, the above funds must be provided through the annual budget process. Accordingly, in the preparation of the 1992-93 budget, a special budgetary adjustment will be necessary in the amount of \$100K to allow Dalhousie to develop this Ocean Studies area of emphasis. Further adjustments will be required in each of 1993/4, 1994/5 and 1995/6.

It is also recognized that these new appointments must be accommodated within present and future total faculty complements.

Interim Steps It has taken some two years following approval of the Mission Statement to reach this point, and in the meantime, there have been significant losses to Dalhousie's strength in Ocean Studies. Dalhousie must now move aggressively to demonstrate its considerable commitment to Ocean Studies. The search for the Chair in Ocean Studies will necessarily take time, which we can now ill-afford to lose.

Accordingly, I am appointing Dr. Fournier as Interim Executive Director of Ocean Studies for a two-year period through to 1 July 1993, with a mandate to develop Ocean Studies activities at Dalhousie in accordance with the Task Force Report and this

Response. This appointment is fully consistent with his continuing position as Associate Vice-President (Research) and will allow some of the resources of Research Services to be directed over this two-year period to facilitate the development of Ocean Studies as an Area of Special Emphasis.

He will serve as Chair of the Oceans Coordinating Committee whose terms of reference I have outlined above.

Finally, in response to the Task Force recommendations, I propose that in 1997-98, following a five-year period for implementation, a Senate review be undertaken to assess progress in developing this area of emphasis, and to propose possible changes. I also would wish to emphasize that this response in the area of Ocean Studies reflects both the particular circumstances of Oceans Studies at Dalhousie at present, as well as the report of the Task Force and should not be viewed as any precedent for a Presidential response in Health Studies or any other area.

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