

COUNCIL OF CHAIRS OF CANADIAN EARTH SCIENCE DEPARTMENTS
CCCESD

UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA, 080 GENDRON HALL
4-5 NOVEMBER 2010

Present: Dave Eaton (Calgary, chair), Altaf Arain (McMaster), Sam Bentley (Memorial), Greg Dipple (UBC – Vancouver), Grant Ferguson (St. Francis Xavier), Ian Ferguson (Manitoba), Kathy Gillis (Victoria), John Greenough (UBC – Okanagan), Martin Head (Brock), Jean Hutchinson (Queen's), Andrew Hynes (McGill), Pierre Jutras (St. Mary's), Steve Kissin (Lakehead), Jim Merriam (Saskatchewan), Gerhard Pratt (Western Ontario), Russ Pysklywec (Toronto), Rob Raeside (Acadia), Michel Robin (Ottawa), Claire Samson (Carleton), Cliff Shaw (UNB), René Therrien (Laval), Derek Thorkelson (Simon Fraser), Barry Warner (Waterloo)

1. **Welcome:** André Lalonde brought greetings from the Faculty of Science at University of Ottawa.

2. **News and Views from Departments**

A summary of departmental reports is posted at http://cccesd.acadiau.ca/dept_notes_10.pdf. Some common themes in the round-table review were:

- Fiscal environment, many departments experiencing budget cuts
- Space issues
- Adapting to changes in NSERC Discovery Grant system
- Accreditation issues (Engineering, Environmental Science)
- Differentiation between chairs and other faculty appointments
- Provincial government directives, reaching to the departmental level
- Working relations with Environmental Science
- Recruitment issues
- Logistics of field schools (less than last year)
- Alumni relations
- Retirements without replacement

3. **CCCESD Finances**

John Greenough reported on the status of finances with a balance of \$15, 466.07 with expenses of \$946.64. A new expense is membership in CFES, balanced by a re-introduced contribution of \$100 per department, successfully implemented.

4. **CCCESD Statistics**

Rob Raeside circulated the statistics collected from the calendar year 2009, and noted a call for data will be circulated in December.

5. **CFES Teaching Award**

CFES asked CCCESD to develop terms of reference for a national teaching award (circulated previously). It is understood that the award would be dependent on the raising of money to fund it. A question was asked about medal *versus* award – consistency with the Mentorship Medal might be considered. It was suggested that a single nomination letter be submitted, and the nature of the nominator be clarified. The text of the proposal variably uses “geoscience” and “geological science(s)”. It was recommended that either the chair or dean should be a co-signor on the nomination letter. It was recommended that past winners of the 3M Award be considered as committee members (A Morgan, C Eyles). It was suggested that funds available for the award be split between a cash award to the winner and a grant to be used toward teaching at the recipient's choice. G Dipple moved, J Greenough seconded, that the proposal (modified) be approved. Carried.

6. CFES presentation

E Kusters presented an overview of the work of the Canadian Federation of Earth Sciences (posted at <http://cccesd.acadiau.ca/past.html>):

- after the meeting on 6-7 November, the president will be Bill Stiebel (Stantec)
- noted that CCCESD paid \$500 for membership, but it could be argued that our membership is all faculty members, meaning our membership fee should be about \$1600.
- CFES is a member of PAGSE (Partnership Group for Science and Engineering) and a charter member of the newly formed Science Media Centre of Canada (SMCC).
- Current activity includes updating the careers website, establishing CanGeoRef (including all assessment reports and thesis titles), IGC 2020 bid, mentorship medal, “*Four Billion Years and Counting*” book, U30/35 (survey tracking of recent graduates)
- Request to members of CCCESD to run the U30 survey through the departments.
- One member from CCCESD is needed to serve on the IGC 2020 bid committee.

7. NSERC issues

D Eaton reviewed known issues associated with NSERC (e.g. new Northern program; CCUCC letter and response from Suzanne Fortier). In discussion, key issues to be raised with NSERC include:

- Long term planning for allocation strategies
- Inclusion of a broader range of groups (e.g. CFES, industry) in discussions with NSERC
- Recognizing NSERC cannot lobby government, other groups (CFES?) need to be involved
- Shift in focus away from Discovery Grant-type (“curiosity-driven”) research
- Inter-annual variability of award of grants and annual return of increasing numbers of non-recipients
- Emphasis on “check boxes” in applications *versus* quality of proposed science
- Unintended consequences for graduate students supported by grants that are terminated (HQP commonly tapers off in advance of renewal, and consequent risk of non-funding)
- Creeping conservatism for faculty to take on students, especially PhD students
- Disconnect between expected numbers of HQP and value of research grants
- Statement from NSERC that it desires graduate study to increase
- Chemistry chairs proposal to have a two-tier system for schools that focus on undergraduate/ masters level only
- Can emergency situations (suddenly unfunded graduate students) be financed via ICR funds?
- Loss of prestige for NSERC Discovery Grants within the university system
- Low success rate for new applicants
- Minimum level of funding may be too high
- Change to the EG system has positive aspects – diminishment of inertia; better success for mid-career entrants
- Is there evidence that the intended outcomes of the new system are being achieved?
- Reintroduce a damping mechanism in unsuccessful renewals
- Age of members on EGs seems young
- Awards to retired and adjunct faculty

8. **Visit from NSERC staff:** Dave Bowen (Team Leader, Environmental Sciences), Tiffany Lancaster (Program Officer, Geosciences EG), Kenn Rankine (Program Officer, Geosciences EG). D Bowen outlined recent develops from NSERC (posted at http://cccesd.acadiau.ca/NSERC_notes10.pps) and note in particular:

- Changes arising from the 2010 federal budget - new elements: Discovery Frontiers (one multidisciplinary award at \$1M a year; first call in Northern Earth Systems) and Innovation Frontiers
- Aim to double number of companies partnering with researchers by 2014

- Returning unfunded grant applications in Geosciences EG has risen from 14.8% in 2009 to 20.7% in 2010 and 28.7% in 2011
- No change in weighting of assessment criteria for Discovery Grant program
- RTI success rate overall is 27% - more applications means more awards.

9. **Visit from Geological Survey of Canada** (Geneviève Béchar, Director, Central Canada Division, and Acting Director General; Mike Villeneuve, manager GSC laboratory network).

The PowerPoint presentation provided will be posted to <http://cccesd.acadiou.ca/past.html> when received).

G Béchar outlined the role of the GSC within the NRC/ESS structure, and the mandates of ESS in general. Special note was made of TGI4 (Targeted Geoscience Initiative) with emphasis on ore systems research, and GEM (Geo-Mapping for Energy and Minerals) with emphasis on northern mapping. Recognition was made of the requirement for local social engagement in both mineral exploration and marine work. Effort is being made to ensure map data are made available faster and in a more standard system. Students can be funded through the RAP (Research Affiliate Program), a scholarship-bursary program involving universities and the GSC. Student opportunity information will be circulated among CCCESD.

10. **Discussion on professional registration issues**

M Head noted that professional registration is useful when dealing with administration, parents of students, potential employers and donors, etc., recognizing that a program that employs professional registration carries clout. Less clear is the future of any requirement for teaching faculty to be registered. Geological Engineering programs do require PEng status for professors, and in recent reviews, restrictions have been placed on some Geological Engineering programs because of the lack of PEng status professors. D Eaton suggested different registration fees for faculty members. Other suggestions included flexibility in qualification for non-consulting teaching faculty (as in the “limited PEng, PGeo” categories in Ontario), and revisiting the knowledge standards.

It was recognised that CCCESD could play a role in advocating such changes. CCCESD plans to focus on professional registration issues in its next meeting with a representative from Geoscientists Canada (G Finn, incoming president).

J Hutchinson offered to take a lead on opening discussion relevant to the Geological Engineering programs.

11. **NSERC actions**

It was agreed that CCCESD should prepare a letter to be delivered to NSERC expressing the concerns of the council, addressed to Suzanne Fortier, copied to the Advisory Board and to ministers. Further investigation is needed of the role of the NSERC advisory board and the Canadian Council of Academies. Major items to be included in this letter are the importance of fundamental research, the concern that the balance of funding has moved toward applied research; transparency in metrics and performance measures; excessive top-loading of all programs; and the low success rate for early career researchers. K Gillis proposed that CCCESD invite equivalent bodies to participate. G Dipple proposed to contact the former chair of CCUCC to explore this route.

12. **The Canadian geoscientific landscape after LITHOPROBE**

In general discussion, several suggestions of potential large programs were raised – the Sudbury deep drill project; a near-surface equivalent to Lithoprobe; the North; climate change issues; greening; aquifer studies: a renewed Lithoprobe.

13. Action items

a. NSERC Discovery Frontiers (Northern Earth Systems)

Recognising the LOI deadline is 9 December (as outlined by D Bowen), it is likely too late to participate in the first round of Discovery Frontiers.

b. CFES actions

There was some agreement that CCCESD should strive to retain its \$500 fee. The response on the U30 survey was generally negative. Leaders of both CFES and CFGS are to be invited to attend next year.

c. IGC 2020

Stony silence ensued.

d. Feedback on duration of workshop

Feedback was positive – the 1.5 day meeting seems to meet the needs of the Council.

e. Timing of next meeting

Agreed to hold the meeting on a different date – likely later in November

f. Other Action items

R Raeside was requested to obtain GSC and NSERC PowerPoint presentations for distribution.

14. Executive appointments

Vacancies exist for the Atlantic region and Ontario. C Shaw volunteered to serve for Atlantic region. G Pratt volunteered to serve for Ontario.

R Raeside and J Greenough expressed willingness to continue as recording secretary and treasurer.

15. Next meeting

To be held next November at Carleton University.

Meeting adjourned with expression of thanks to D Eaton, at 2 p.m.