

## Chapter Six: Program Management

### 6.1 Description of Structures, Responsibilities and Communication Channels

Explorations, as has been explained elsewhere, is a grouping of one semester, non-DEC Programs. One coordinator and one Academic Advisor are responsible for each and all of the Explorations programs.

These facts:

- a single coordinator for a grouping of programs,
- an Academic Advisor dedicated to the program,
- the one semester, non DEC nature of these programs
- the formal on-going “attachment” of other non-teaching professionals and support staff to Explorations
- no dedicated faculty members (or Explorations discipline faculty)

are atypical of program organization at Vanier. To further complicate the structure, responsibilities and communication channels, the various Explorations programs are administered by the three Faculty Deans, severally and separately. The Coordinator liaises with the three Faculty Deans severally and separately, and as appropriate.

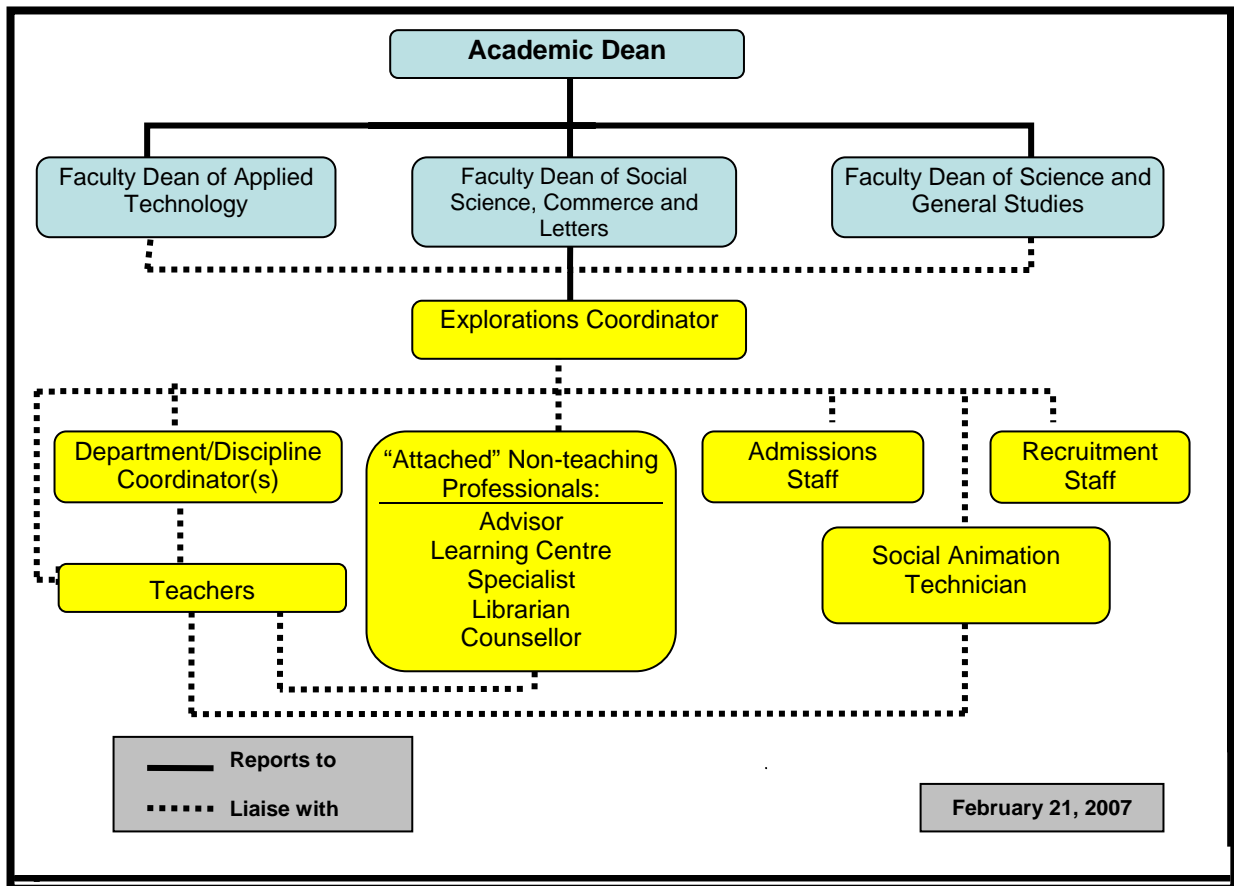


Figure 6A: Management Structure of the Explorations Programs

## 6.2 Program Management: Responsibilities

### 6.2.1 Faculty Deans

Officially and formally, the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science, Commerce, Arts and Letters is responsible for Explorations 1 and 2 programs and carries the bulk of the pedagogical and administrative responsibilities for Explorations. The Explorations “budget” is reported annually to this Dean.

The Dean of Applied Technologies has minimal responsibility for Explorations 3 and 5 (mostly manifested in Review Board organization) for these two programs. Originally the Dean of Applied Technology was active in designing the content of some of the program-specific Explorations courses.

The Dean of Science and General Studies is responsible for the Physical Education Department’s delivery of the complementary Science of Survival course and budget. The concept of Explorations 6 originated with the Faculty of Science and General Studies although Explorations 6 was eventually made a Faculty of Social Science, Commerce, Arts and Letters Explorations program. Nevertheless the Dean of Science and General Studies discharges Review Board duties for Explorations 6 students similar to those performed by the Dean of Applied Technologies for Explorations 3/5 students.

### 6.2.2 Coordinator

The Explorations Programs have a single Coordinator whose release time is financed from two sources: the operational budget; and the *masse salariale*. The Coordinator is elected or nominated by members of the program and is responsible for overseeing the activities of the program and for representing the program at college committees such as Joint Coordinators, Program Review Boards, and recruitment events; however the ultimate responsibility for the functioning of the Programs is assumed collectively by all its members, under the supervision of the Faculty Deans.

The Explorations Coordinator is responsible for the overall animation and coordination of the Explorations Programs, liaison with Admissions, liaison with the constituent discipline/departments, liaison (severally and separately) with the three Faculty Deans responsible for the various Exploration programs, interactions with students, especially Explorations 2 students, regular Program meetings such as the “Explorations Team” and the encouragement of the “triads”<sup>1</sup> and “dyads”, preparation of objectives and annual reports, curriculum and pedagogy, and budget oversight. See Appendix 7.1 for a list of the Coordinator’s activities prepared by current and past Explorations Coordinators, and Appendix A14 for clarification from the current Coordinator on Explorations terminology.

Observation also has determined that advocacy for the Program and particularly the Explorations 2 Program is a prime role of any Explorations Coordinator. The Explorations 2 Program by nature of its content and clientele can consume Coordinator energies, threatening to overwhelm the needs of other Explorations Programs.

In the past, the Coordinator has been a key player consulted on the admissions of candidates to the Explorations programs, but this task is minimized with the recent

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A15 for an explanation of Explorations Team and “triads”.

College - SRAM affiliation. This affiliation dictated the change of Explorations 2 from a program into which weak applicants were placed by Admissions staff into one which candidates now select through application. The Explorations Coordinator sits on the SRAM-Explorations transition committee.

The Coordinator is asked to submit scheduling information for Explorations program specific courses through both the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science, Commerce Arts and Letters (Explorations 1, 2 and 5) and the Dean of Science and General Studies (Explorations 6). There are no program specific Explorations courses in Explorations 3. The Explorations Coordinator does not submit scheduling information for the Introduction to College Science 360-902-26 (Explorations 6 only) or the Science of Survival 109-HSA-22 (Explorations 2). These are handled by the Coordinators of Mathematics and Physical Education, while scheduling information for the remedial Science and Math courses are handled by the Coordinators of Physics and Mathematics accordingly. These coordinators submit their information via the Dean of Science and General Studies.

Up to the adoption of the revised By Law on Academic Success in 2005 and its subsidiary policy the revised Standing and Advancement Policy in 2006, the pre-university academic standing standards<sup>2</sup> have been applied to all Explorations students at the end of their semester with the College. The Coordinator either participated in Review Boards for students of Explorations who did not fulfil these standards, and/or organized someone from the Explorations Program or Team to serve on these Review Boards. The recommendations of these Boards effectively determined the outcome of any Program Transfer (or Program Change) request initiated by Explorations students, as Admissions personnel do not overturn Board decisions, although they may refuse admission to the actual program requested. Indeed previous members of these Review Boards referred to themselves as “admit committee members”, although technically only Admissions personnel can recommend admission to College Programs (i.e. approve Program Change requests).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> To be in good standing in the College and to be permitted to register for the following semester a **pre-university** student must have passed at least four courses in the previous semester.

<sup>3</sup> The revised Standing and Advancement Policy which became effective with the Fall 2006 semester, does not include single semester program students in its scope. This leaves Explorations students who fail to achieve good academic standing in a very unclear position/status, along with the import of the recommendation of the Explorations Review Boards. If Explorations students who fail to achieve good academic standing are treated as outlined in the policy for DEC students, such students would be placed on academic probation. If treated as one semester students, outside the policy, such students would be judged in Admissions on their merit for DEC programs admission via Program Change, and would not be under academic probation although Admissions probation is possible. If treated as on academic or Admissions probation already, by virtue of enrolment in an Explorations program, such students would be suspended from the College.

## 6.2.3 Departments/Disciplines

### 6.2.3.1 Department Structures

There is no Explorations Department. The primary academic structures of the Explorations Programs at Vanier College are:

- the Social Science Program and its discipline departments,
- the Science Program and its discipline departments (Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics),
- the General Studies departments (Humanities, English, French, Physical Education).

The components of the program-specific courses within the Explorations Programs are the courses entitled:

- Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; (Explorations 2, 5)
- Work, Future & Yourself; (Explorations 1,2,5,6)
- Introduction to College Science (Explorations 6 only)
- Science of Survival (Explorations 2 only)

The Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and Work, Future & Yourself courses have been primarily taught by Social Science teachers of the various disciplines (mostly Sociology and Psychology). The Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century courses for Explorations 2 are twinned with discipline courses dedicated to the same Explorations 2 students. Thus the same teacher works with the same group of students in two different courses in Explorations 2.

The Science of Survival course has been taught by teachers of the Physical Education Department and is exclusively for Explorations 2 students. Aside from this course, the General Studies Departments integrate Explorations students with students from other programs into regular General Studies college sections.

It is college policy that all students must take an English course in order to complete their registration, so it could be said that all Explorations students enrol in an English course in order to complete their registration. Registration in other General Studies courses is not mandatory, and depends on the priorities of the student.

The remedial Mathematics and Science courses are taught by teachers of the appropriate Mathematics, or Science Departments. Explorations students in these remedial Mathematics and Science courses are also integrated with regular DEC students.

### 6.2.3.2. Department Responsibilities

Departments mentioned previously are responsible for all activities specific to their discipline such as making recommendations for hiring discipline teachers, allocating courses to teachers and the maintenance of the utility and coherence of the courses offered in their disciplines. The exceptions are the Explorations courses in the 360 discipline<sup>4</sup> where the utility and coherence of the courses falls to the Explorations Coordinator and the teachers themselves, and not the parent department of the teacher. (See 7.3 Program Management: Communication Channels.)

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<sup>4</sup> (Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; 360-902-22 (Explorations 2); 360-902-23 (Explorations 5) Work, Future & Yourself; 360-907-21 (Explorations 1), 360-907-22 (Explorations 2), 360-907-23 (Explorations 5) 360-907-26 (Explorations 6) Introduction to College Science 360-902-26 (Explorations 6 only)

Some Departments (Chemistry, Physics) are responsible for laboratories associated with their disciplines. This involves maintenance of the equipment and the hiring and supervision of technicians. The Physical Education Department is responsible for organizing the outdoor education component of the Science of Survival courses, and the supervision required within these courses. Many departments maintain, participate in, or utilize a resource center where students can come for additional assistance. (Math and Science Centre, Social Science Resource Room, Learning Centre.)

Candidates for teaching positions apply for discipline positions through the discipline/departmental Hiring Committees, not for Explorations Program positions.<sup>5</sup> There is no evidence that these discipline/departmental hiring committees select, demand or test for teachers with remedial skills. Faculty Deans reported that candidates applying for positions in these departments/disciplines are quizzed about their ability to handle remedial students and in Psychology and Sociology the Hiring Committees do indicate the possibility of being allotted an Explorations course section<sup>6</sup> (See Appendix A16). Nevertheless some candidates may not appreciate the possibility and the impact of this extensive remedial course section load, nor may the hiring committees use remedial teaching skills as a key criterion, or even qualification leading to selection.

## 6.2.4 Staff

### 6.2.4.1 Academic Advisor

The Academic Advisor carries program management responsibilities beyond the duties normally associated with program advising. Explorations has had one advisor since the inception of the program. She reviews application dossiers, and advises Admissions staff on the suitability of candidates for admission. She is responsible for the selection of courses, the pre-registering all Explorations students in required courses, and training (classroom instruction) for registration and Program Transfer (or Program Change) requests. For major recruitment events (Open House, Guidance Counsellor Session, School Board Open Houses and Career Fairs), she represents the program at its Explorations kiosk. The Advisor handles enquiries from prospective students (and their parents) as well as high school personnel. She also is responsible for individual student counselling and advising, and alerts the program to trends or situations she uncovers during this exercise of her profession.

### 6.2.4.2 Social Animation Technician

During the evaluation period, the position of Social Animation Technician was not one of the positions financed in whole or in part by the Explorations “budget”. This position is responsible for organizing volunteer opportunities for students of Explorations 2.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Recruits/cajoles/filters [contracted] teachers to teach course sections for the upcoming semester. Appendix 7.1 *Definition of Tasks of Explorations Coordinator*. Item 13

<sup>6</sup> (Skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; 360-902-22 (Explorations 2); 360-902-23 (Explorations 5) Work, Future & Yourself; 360-907-21 (Explorations 1), 360-907-22 (Explorations 2), 360-907-23 (Explorations 5) 360-907-26 (Explorations 6) Introduction to College Science 360-902-26 (Explorations 6 only) or Science of Survival 109-HSA-22.

<sup>7</sup> Special funding has been secured for this position’s Explorations responsibilities as of 2006.

## 6.3 Communication Channels

### 6.3.1 Internal Program Communication Channels

Meetings are used as a vehicle of communication within the program. Consistently the program has reported three types of meetings:

- Those convened as necessary with teachers of individual courses. These have produced common pedagogical materials, methodologies and standards.
- Those convened as necessary with teachers teaching the same students in two or more courses (“triads” and “dyads”). The “triads”<sup>8</sup>: consist of those teachers currently teaching the program specific sections in Explorations 2 and twinned sections in Social Science disciplines. Teachers responding to the survey questionnaire indicated these meetings were useful and helpful although by necessity ad hoc; with a few teachers not attending as often as others. In the Winter semester there are “dyad” meetings of the teachers of the two Explorations courses in Explorations 5.<sup>9</sup> Both “triads” and “dyads” make recommendations to the upcoming Review Boards about individual students in anticipation of their failure to pass four courses. The “triads” and “dyads” do not involve teachers of the remedial Math or Science courses
- There are “joint meetings” of the “Explorations Team” (as explained by the current coordinator<sup>10</sup>). The “Explorations Team” consists of the coordinator, current and past teachers of the program specific Explorations courses, the social animation technician and the professionals associated with the Explorations Program: Academic Advisor, Learning Centre Specialist, and Counsellor. (A Librarian was a team member in the early days of Explorations, but since the advent of self-tutorials, has not been active on the “Explorations Team”.)<sup>11</sup> The “Team” does not involve teachers of the remedial Math or Science courses. The “Explorations Team” meets prior to the start of the semester and at the end. More frequent meetings have proved impossible as not all members had scheduled meeting time for the purpose. Agendas and notes are done by the Coordinator, but were not available for this report.

The “Explorations Team” is a committee of the Explorations Program but is not a formal or official Program Committee as detailed in College policy<sup>12</sup>. There are no records of such a committee for any of the Explorations programs. However, the “Explorations Team” does address issues of curriculum and pedagogy for all of the Explorations

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<sup>8</sup> Appendix A15 *Definitions for clarification of the Explorations program terminology. November 8, 2006*

<sup>9</sup> In the Winter, because there are fewer sections of Explorations 5, groups will be formed to allow the teachers of the two Explorations courses (WFY and Skills) to have the same students and therefore allow them the same luxury Explorations 2 teachers ordinarily have. They will then meet in a similar pattern (as dyads) to collaborate over the students. Appendix A15 *Definitions for clarification of the Explorations program terminology: November 8, 2006.*

<sup>10</sup> Appendix A15 *Definitions for clarification of the Explorations program terminology. November 8, 2006.*

<sup>11</sup> Note there is contradictory reporting on whether the librarian is a member of the Explorations Team, or attends meetings.

<sup>12</sup> In 1993, Vanier College implemented the program approach. Each college program is responsible for establishing a Program Committee. The Program Committee contains 4 members from general education, 4-6 members from specific program courses, and the Faculty Dean. This Committee ideally meets at least once a semester, duly documented by minutes and data. The mandate of the Program Committee is to focus on curriculum and pedagogy (IPESA p27).

programs. The coordinator, teachers of Explorations 2 specific courses and non-teachers who work (or who have worked) explicitly in the program are a constant on this committee but the rest of the membership varies. Teachers of Explorations 1, 5 and 6 program-specific courses are invited. There are no representatives from General Studies, nor from remedial courses germane to Explorations 3/5 and 6.

## **6.3.2 External Program Communication Channels**

### **6.3.2.1 Academic Sector**

The Coordinator attends the Faculty Committee of the Faculty of Social Science, Commerce, Arts and Letters. The Coordinator is required to file annual objectives and annual reports with the Dean of the Faculty of Social Science, Commerce, Arts and Letters. These are kept for five years.

The Coordinator does not attend meetings of the other Faculties although this has been suggested by the Coordinators Committee of the Faculty of Social Science, Commerce, Arts and Letters.<sup>13</sup>

The Coordinator does not participate in Explorations Hiring committees, as there are none, nor does he or she necessarily participate in the Department or Faculty orientation activities for newly hired teachers who potentially could be assigned Explorations program-specific courses or remedial courses. The Coordinator may initiate some orientation for program specific Explorations teachers, but there is no standard procedure or schedule.

### **6.3.2.2 Students**

Explorations students receive a special registration and orientation, and as well are pre-registered by the Academic Advisor based on their declarations of future goals and their previous academic record. Explorations students are not required to apply formally to the college for entrance to a new program upon completion of the Explorations Program. They are permitted to enter full time studies via a Program Change application (thus foregoing the usual \$30 application fee and deadlines applicable to other students completing one cegep program and entering another). The Academic Advisor makes special efforts to ensure that this is done, and is one of the prime official communicators with Explorations students viz a viz their academic rights and obligations.<sup>14</sup> This is a more formalized role than exists for other College programs.

## **6.4 Budget Control**

Explorations has always had an operational budget which includes photocopying, printing, bookstore and other incidental costs for the program specific courses. The Explorations program coordinator is the “responsible” for this budget. Students in the mandatory Science of Survival course each must pay a mandatory course fee, the funds of which go to the Physical Education Dept. budget. The Chemistry, Physics and Math department operational budgets support the integrated remedial Math and Science courses. The same is true for General Studies courses.

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<sup>13</sup> This committee passed a motion in 2006 requesting that the Explorations Coordinator attend at least one Faculty or Curriculum coordinators meeting of the other Faculties each semester.

<sup>14</sup> This amounts to two regularly scheduled workshops for each section of Work Futures. In A06 this consisted of 18 separate workshops.

Each year the Director of Finance provides the Academic Dean with a statement of the distribution of funds for the Explorations program based roughly on the funding envelope established when the program started. This includes salaries and supplies. The actual staff salaries affect the division of the funds, as the amount is pro-rated by the salary of the individual. Non salary costs have stayed at \$5,000 until A06.

## 6.5. Summary and Conclusions

In so far as the “Explorations Team” is the coordinating unit of the Explorations Programs, coordination centers around the program specific Explorations courses with activities across the faculties and particularly with Science, Mathematics and English teachers/departments being poorly developed. Integrative activities for faculty of the Explorations Programs seem to be rare, if not unknown, for those teaching remedial discipline courses other than Explorations 2 courses. Teachers with a combination of Explorations and non Explorations students in their sections are often unaware of or do not distinguish Explorations students from other students.

The only commonality across the various Explorations Programs is the position of Coordinator. However, the Coordinator is in a weak position to exert any overall coordination of objectives across departments or faculties.

There is no entrenched constancy in the actual personnel teaching in the Explorations Program. Teachers could change each semester and it is only by choice that the same teachers are active in the program from one semester to the next. This turnover is less exaggerated among the non teaching professionals and support staff attached to the Program, but the potential for change exists. As well, during the existence of the Explorations Program, there have been three Academic Deans and eight Faculty Deans. The Explorations Program is a program subject to routine and regular turnover of personnel which again points to the need for good communication devices.

The performance of the “attached” non-teaching personnel, Admissions and the Recruitment staff depends on clear communication of Explorations Program objectives, initiatives and developments. The heavy and tricky Explorations-related workload for Admissions staff has gone unrecognized, as has the fundamental dependence on the work carried on by the designated Academic Advisor for many aspects of the program’s operation (management). For the “attached” non-teaching staff, some have seen their roles changed, often resulting in expanded or diminished workloads. It is not clear if these changes were planned or simply the result of personnel changes or preferences. The supervision, responsibilities, and obligations of “attached” non teaching staff are not clear, causing unnecessary tensions. For instance if this staff reports to the Program, the Explorations annual report should carry summaries of activities with recommendations for improvements or changes, as necessary. If these staff report to administrative units, the parent unit annual report should carry this information. While supervision, responsibility and obligations may be clear for Admissions and Recruitment staff, the communication channel for these non teaching staff members with Explorations is not clear.

Program management boundaries and responsibilities need to be more clearly defined and monitored. Communication has to be clear, meticulous and comprehensive involving all the ever-changing players and partners in the Explorations programs. Thus, Ministerial changes made to funding<sup>15</sup> or admissions,<sup>16</sup> or demographic changes in the student body can be considered and applied throughout the various Exploration Programs.

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<sup>15</sup> Refer to Chapter 4.3 Financial Resources

<sup>16</sup> Refer to Chapter 1.1 History.

## 6.6 On-going Evaluation Procedures

Myriam Cooper prepared a comprehensive evaluation of the Explorations Program circa 1998.<sup>17</sup> Since then, on-going evaluation of the Explorations Programs has been documented in the form of the programs' Annual Report. These annual reports have been tabled with the Faculty of Social Science, Commerce, Arts and Letters which has a policy of holding annual reports for five years only and then discarding them via shredding. For purposes of this evaluation, one report was received from the Faculty files and three from one of the former coordinators.

These annual reports<sup>18</sup> are descriptive reports of one or two pages each. They describe the flow of the school year: meetings, faculty professional development away and in-house conferences, budget problems, research activities of the "active" members and changes in the composition of the teaching faculty and/or student enrolment, in admissions procedures, in nomenclature for recruitment. Not all items were discussed in each report. While the reports center on Explorations 2, other Exploration programs are mentioned according to their annual highlights and changes. In two reports mention is made of evaluation instruments being designed and applied to specific courses, although the results are not appended. It is also clear that the *rendement scolaire* is being consulted, but details and results are not provided. Three reports each note words of praise received from outside sources for the Explorations program: high school guidance counsellors, the Commission d'évaluation collégiale (CEEC) and the Chairman of Vanier's Board of Directors. Annual objectives and the progress made in meeting objectives are not explicitly addressed.

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<sup>17</sup> Cooper, Myriam. Report on Explorations Programs 1995 to 1997. Vanier College, St-Laurent, Quebec.

<sup>18</sup> Appendix B19. Explorations Program Annual Reports