



PETER WALL INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

The University of British Columbia

To: Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies Board of Trustees and Secretary to the Board Terry Sumner (and official observers Barry McBride, Frieda Granot, Brett Finlay) for the Fall 2003 meeting

From: Brett Finlay, Chair, Academic Advisory Committee, and Dianne Newell, Acting Director, the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, UBC, for the Academic Advisory Committee

Re: "Detailed Response to the Recommendations of *External Review Committee Report* on the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies, UBC, dated February 2003," by the Academic Advisory Committee, PWIAS

Response prepared 9 June 2003

Discussed at a meeting of the Academic Advisory Committee; attended by Dianne Newell, Acting Director; Dean Frieda Granot, Faculty of Graduate Studies; and Barry McBride, Academic V-P and Provost, 13 June 2003

Updated 10 October 2003

SUMMARY: The Academic Advisory Committee and Acting Director of the Institute generally agree in principle with the recommendations, outlined in the *External Review Committee Report*, which hinge on a defined vision, and strategic plan that flows from it, a new permanent Director, and stable finances.



Detailed Response to the Recommendations of Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies,
UBC *External Review Report*, dated February 2003¹

Submitted by

The Academic Advisory Committee of the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies,
9 June 2003

Administrative

1) **Prepare a Strategic Plan and Vision Statement** – We fully agree that these are critical, and essential, for focussing the efforts of the Institute within its limited resources. The existing vision statement and five-year plan for the Institute were introduced by the Director, Kenneth MacCrimmon, and approved by the Trustees at their April 1998 meeting. We expect the new permanent Director, when appointed, to redevelop and articulate the vision, and the strategic plan that flows from that vision, for approval by the Trustees.

Discussion: The existing vision and the five-year plan flowing from it were developed over several years. However, from early on, even before programs were launched, the twin pillars of supporting academic ‘stars,’ and of funding interdisciplinary thematic grants, were seen as being centrally important. Within the Institute, the Peter Wall Endowment has always focused on ‘stars,’ while the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies Endowment Fund (known as the Hampton Fund), created by David Strangway in 1994, has always supported an interdisciplinary, theme-based program of research and scholarship.² Thus, over the years

¹ Note: This is the second response to the *External Review Report* dated February 2003. The Trustees will allocate a major proportion of their fall (October 29) 2003 meeting to a discussion of this response of the PWIAS Academic Advisory Committee to the nine recommendations outlined in the “Executive Summary” of the *Review Report*. The Acting Director’s initial response to the *External Review Report*, dated March 2003, was prepared in consultation with the Academic Advisory Board and others, and it was distributed and informally discussed at the spring (15 April) 2003 meeting of the Trustees of the PWIAS.

² *Bronley Report*, Blake Bromley, ‘Report on Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies,’ 31 July 1997 (hereafter *Bronley Report*), pp. 8-9, 11. A review by Blake Bromley Consulting of the background and early stages of the PWIAS— covering President Strangway’s tenure ending 31 July 1997— commissioned by Peter Wall. Unless otherwise stated, all information in this section is to be found in the *Bronley Report*, which examined Minutes of the PWE Trustees meetings and UBC Senate and Board of Governors resolutions; correspondence and UBC resolutions from other sources; discussions with UBC President David Strangway and others.

1994-1996, the operating mode of grant making and supporting academic stars created a 'hybrid.' In 1994, with John Grace at the helm, grants with a thematic concentration were advertised (Major Thematic Grants), two Peter Wall Distinguished Professors were appointed, and a permanent director was sought. In 1996, Dr. Kenneth MacCrimmon was identified as inaugural director. Ken MacCrimmon's long-range plan and multi-year budget aimed at creating a world-class institute was discussed and eventually approved in Trustees meetings held August, October, and November 1996 and July 1997. Under Ken MacCrimmon's directorship, several specific programs evolved to support the foundational balance between academic 'stars' and thematic research projects. To that end, over the next few years the trustees approved additional programs. These were: Exploratory Workshop grants, whose ultimate aim was to develop the major thematic grants, in 1996; a summer Visiting Junior Scholars program in 1997; the Distinguished UBC Scholars in Residence program in 1998; and an Early Career UBC Scholars program for outstanding assistant and associate professors in 1999.³ These programs have resulted in creating a balance between UBC and external scholars; between junior and senior scholars, and between programs of short-term duration and those long-term. They remain in effect.

- 2) **Formalize Advisory Committee:** We fully agree with this recommendation to document and formally acknowledge the Academic Advisory Committee's role.

Discussion: Working with the Acting Director we plan to develop formal draft terms of reference for this committee and to establish a regular schedule of meetings. We will work with the new permanent Director, once in place, to finalize these terms of reference and document the Academic Advisory Committee as an ongoing part of the structure of the Peter Wall Institute.

³ See the appropriate Minutes of Trustees meetings.

3) **Major Thematic Grants (MTG) Program: Revise to provide greater flexibility of funding; increase accountability:** We fully agree that this program should continue and that greater flexibility of funding is needed, and that it would be helpful to better document, where possible, the outcomes of such grants. PWIAS is now working to strengthen the profile of the MTG program. We also support the continuation of Exploratory Workshop grants— many of which have produced extraordinary results— and Theme Development Workshops, both of which ‘feed’ into the MTG, and both of which require small awards relative to the MTG. These programs are precursory to, not a replacement for, the MTGs and without them it is likely fewer major proposals would come forward. We fully agree that periodic follow-up reporting on the Major Theme programs is needed. In addition, appropriate publicity for program results would help give the Institute a higher profile. PWIAS is now giving priority to these latter two important matters.

Discussion: Although no applications came forward over the last four, semi-annual rounds of adjudication, at present there is one highly promising application submitted in the fall 2003 competition and three equally exciting MTG applications slated for submission in 2004. In an ever-changing national and international research-funding environment, large-scale, high-risk research agendas in major universities such as the University of British Columbia are likely to be cyclical in this way.

Concerning accountability, the research we expect of our MTG grant projects, and the Exploratory Workshop grant projects that are preparatory to them, is high risk but with higher payoff in transforming thinking in a field if successful. This means the results of programs are not immediately predictable. In fact, in these new areas it may take years for the full significance and importance of the output of a program to become clear.

Nevertheless, it is essential to document the outcomes and we will establish a stricter requirement for annual reports, with periodic presentations on each MTG from now on. There are four completed MTGs and a fifth one finishing this year. Two MTGs in particular

have led to multi-million dollar funding to continue the research: “Pathogenomics: An Interdisciplinary Approach for the Study of Infectious Diseases” received a \$27 million multi-year grant under the Genome Canada Pathogenomics Project, beginning in 2002, and “Acoustic Ecology,” led to two Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) project grants, “Hearing Accessibility, Assistive Technology & Acoustic Design” project (\$2.4 million) and the “Institute of Computing Information and Cognitive Systems” project (\$22.1 million). Another MTG project awarded a CFI is “Narratives of Disease, Disability, and Trauma,” which received an infrastructure grant for SAGA (The Centre for Studies in Autobiography, Gender, and Age at UBC); this project award holds the distinction of being one of the first two in Canada coming from the Social Sciences and Humanities.

We note that the assumption stated on page 8 of the *Review Report* that MTG websites are not updated and maintained, is not correct. All MTG projects are required to— and do— maintain and update their websites on a permanent basis. We differ with the Review Committee on the claim that the adjudication process for Major Thematic Grant applications hampers the success rate for applications or discourages serious, appropriate applications. The Major Thematic Grant adjudication process meets the rigorous standards set by all major granting agencies and such standards must be retained. Communication, guidance, and mentoring from the Director are amply provided to potential applicants. In addition, our two application deadlines per year accommodate the needs of applicants in ways that national funding deadlines do not. PWIAS has funded five MTGs in the six-year period covered by the *Review Report*. The notion of a ‘success rate’ of applications is tempered by the fact that regardless of how many excellent applications are submitted, no more than one 3-year grant per year on average can be awarded due to the high value of the award.

4) **The value of the Visiting Junior Scholars (VJS) program and the need to Restructure or Eliminate:** We recognize the intellectual and public relations value in continuing this unique summer international visitors program that brings interdisciplinary research 'stars' to UBC who are at the early stages of their careers, although we anticipate the new Director may wish to initiate some changes to it. This program, like the Early Career UBC Scholars program, strengthens our overall aim to identify PWIAS and UBC with the most exciting research being conducted today. These young scholars are the ones who are going to be making a difference in the world in the next decade, and their support of PWIAS worldwide is crucial to the Institute's reputation and success. Since the benefits of this program were evidently not clearly communicated, PWIAS will now more carefully monitor and document the benefits of the program and highlight the ongoing activities of these academic stars through the Institute website, *Annual Report*, *UBC Reports* and local newspaper profiles of a sample of visiting scholars, and other means.

Discussion: The value of the program rests in the Institute's long-standing major commitment to bring 'stars' to UBC. The underlying idea— to associate outstanding young, interdisciplinary scholars worldwide with UBC— has already proved highly successful. The focus is both their mutual, interdisciplinary interaction and their individual interaction with their sponsoring UBC departments and faculty members. For example, in 2001 the collaboration of Janet Werker, Psychology Department and a member of the PWIAS Academic Advisory Committee, and VJS Jessica Maye led to a discovery on the influences on infant perception of speech sounds. This discovery, published in 2002, both changed thinking in the field and also resulted in a successful multi-million dollar application to the prestigious U.S. Human Frontiers Science Program for a four-country study of the subject, with Dr. Werker as Principal Investigator, that could revolutionize thinking internationally. None of this would have happened without the VJS program. The 2003 VJS applicant pool was stronger than ever.

It is possible that the value of the VJS program was not fully evident to the Review Committee as it did not meet with individuals from this program (who are not at the university); there was no time in the Review Committee's schedule to meet with the UBC sponsoring units and faculty, and there was no specific documentation of the overall value and purpose of the program available at the time of the Review. To rectify this, in spring 2003 PWIAS undertook a preliminary review of the VJS program. The feedback confirms our impression of the actual short-term benefits, and potential long-term ones, for the international reputation of the Peter Wall Institute and the UBC research environment. In a program that has run only five times in the last four years (there were two cohorts in 2000), longer term benefits will come over time, but details on the benefits to date are summarized and appended to this document. One overall benefit is clear: the program generates international ambassadors for PWIAS and UBC.

We note that the *Review Report* miss-identified as the value of the program its role as a 'small-scale recruiting tool' for UBC; recruitment in fact has never been the goal. However the fact that three former VJS have joined the UBC faculty may be indicative of long-term benefits of the Institute to academic excellence and innovation at UBC. We note also that the *Review Report* incorrectly identifies the participants as 'post-doctoral fellows.' This is not the case.

The majority of participants hold full-time, tenure-track faculty positions.

We note that mention is made in the *Review Report* that 'over-scheduling' of activities during the visit is a problem for the visiting scholars. We see no evidence of this problem – certainly no such problem was revealed in the participants' responses. In advertising this program and making offers to the top nominees, PWIAS circulate the schedule months in advance of the scholars' arrivals. The Institute also conducts a post-program review of scheduling after each VJS cohort.

5) **Provide increased and more flexible funding to Early Career UBC Scholars (ECS):**

We agree that the networking importance of the ECS program is unquestioned, as stated on page 9 of the *Review Report*. This program should be continued; we anticipate, however, that the new Director may wish to initiate some changes to it.

Discussion: The 2003-2004 ECS program will be larger than usual, with 12 Assistant and eight Associate Professors appointed. This reflects the extraordinarily strong applicant pools this year, and the Institute's growing reputation as the centre of cutting-edge, interdisciplinary research.⁴ Young minds think 'outside the box' and these are the scholars who are most likely to make major research breakthroughs over the long run. The Acting Director has taken steps to increase the interaction of the current and past ECS in the programs of the Institute and to highlight their research activities.

6) **Establish a Multi-Pronged Communications strategy:** We strongly agree it would be very desirable to have such an initiative and significant weight should be attached to this. While mindful that research is about deep thought, which takes time to produce newsworthy results, we agree that a higher profile for the Institute would make it easier to attract outstanding researchers to participate in its activities. We also recognize that the communications as envisioned in the *Review Report* requires the presence and leadership of a new permanent director and also that the Institute's strategic plan has been articulated and is in place.

Discussion: In response to this recommendation of the External Review Committee, PWIAS has implemented a number of communication initiatives aimed at disseminating the research accomplishments of PWIAS people and programs to a wider audience. For

⁴ From the discussion on page 15 of the *Review Report*, it would appear that this recommendation (# 5) of the *Review Report* refers not to the Distinguished UBC Scholars in Residence (SIR) program. We brought this error to the attention of the Review Committee in our memo to the Dean of Graduate Studies dated 13 February, but the error remained uncorrected in the Review Committee's amended version distributed to the Trustees.

example, the Institute now subscribes to the UBC clipping service to keep track of publicity about its activities and faculty associates. The Institute has launched a monthly campus mailing of the schedule of upcoming public events; has initiated a regular emailing to PWIAS Faculty Associates advertising Associates events; and has created an 'Associates in the News' section on the PWIAS website that is updated daily. The Institute prepares monthly mailings of all such information to members of the Wall family. The Institute is redesigning its website to reflect the increased focus on highlighting program achievements, and it is following up on improved and updated MTG websites. The Institute has also increased the number of public lectures and other research 'events,' and are planning for more, to have greater visibility in the wider community.

Examples of topical research events include the upcoming PWIAS forum, "SARS: An Interdisciplinary Disease," led by Brett Finlay, Peter Wall Distinguished Professor, 17 June. Science reporters from major print and electronic news media have been invited to attend. UBC Media Services will videotape the entire proceedings for the PWIAS library and for use in ongoing publicity needs. Another 'outreach' event is that PWIAS will sponsor an evening talk September 24, 2003 by Lisa Cooper, a member of the Dept. of Classics, Near Eastern and Religious Studies, and a 2001-02 Early Career UBC Scholar. Dr. Cooper is an expert on the research impact worldwide of the 2003 war in Iraq on the antiquities of museums and archaeological sites. Her timely discussion for PWIAS will also receive broad media coverage. Lastly, the four Distinguished Scholars in Residence for 2003 have collaborated on major PWIAS interdisciplinary symposium, "Science Envy," to be held mid October. 'Science Envy' opens to public debate the construction of science in the past and the future, its influence on the humanities and social science, and its changing perception both in the academy and in popular culture; the scholars are planning a major research project on this

fundamental issue. Science reporters for national newspapers have accepted invitations to participate.

With the publication of the 2001-2002 *Annual Report* PWIAS is now up to date with its annual reports. The 2002-2003 *Annual Report* is targeted for December 2003, and the Institute is now more aware of the importance of this series as a publicity tool.

7) **Plans for the residential facility: Eliminate or Reconfigure.** We understand the concern over the Residential Annex. This issue has now been addressed in the Acting Director's separate cost-benefit report, 31 May 2003, on the feasibility of continuing to operate the residential annex, which the PWIAS Management Committee called for at its 16 April 2003 meeting.⁵ Final decisions concerning management or alternate use of the residential annex currently leased and operated by PWIAS will take into account the program implications outlined in that report.

Discussion: As recognized on p. 15 of the *Review Report*, the residential rooms are needed throughout the year for six out of eight PWIAS programs, and the availability of on site accommodation adds to the quality and reputation of Institute programs. We note that the residence costs the Institute nothing to operate; in fact, it generates net revenue.

8) **Hold a celebratory annual luncheon or dinner meeting with selected program presentations; involve the Trustees:** This is an excellent suggestion. With the Board of Trustees and Media Relations PWIAS is working towards acting on this recommendation, especially as 2004 is the 10th anniversary of the launching of PWIAS programs. We will involve the *Vancouver Sun* and others.

⁵ This facility is part of the PWIAS lease agreement, which comes up for renewal the end of 2003.

Discussion: The key context here is the need to review major achievements of the Institute and increase the public profile of PWIAS programs and scholars. We will seek UBC Media Relations advice on how best to accomplish this.

9) **Appoint an internationally distinguished academic and administrator, with a proven record in interdisciplinary research, as new permanent director of PWIAS; launch a national and international search.** We strongly concur. The directorship is a pivotal issue: much of the future planning will depend on the vision and academic leadership of this individual.

Discussion: The Vice-President Academic, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Chair and members of the Academic Advisory Committee recently agreed to an international search and to using a consulting firm for the PWIAS Director search. The Trustees at their 23 April 2003 meeting approved funding for a consultant-led search. We are very hopeful that this process will identify an outstanding leader for the Institute.

FINANCIAL:

We strongly endorse all three recommendations in the financial category:

1. **Conduct an immediate review of the funding arrangements to ensure stable funding to allow for proper budgeting and programming, while resolving apparent discrepancies between funds promised in the original Deed of Trust Agreement and funds received.**
2. **Explore how additional funding from other sources, including those outside the University, might be obtained for the Peter Wall Institute.**
3. **Eliminate the \$5.5 million debt of the Peter Wall Institute through fundraising, special gifts, grants or other means.**

