



Dr. Philip Smith

Associate Director, Academic Program Development Support and Cyclical Reviews  
Analysis, Planning & Budget,  
Office of the Provost & Vice-Principal (Academic)  
McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada

June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018

**Subject:** Department's response to the cyclical review report

Dear Dr. Smith,

This letter is to acknowledge that the Bioresource Engineering Department has examined all the comments reported by the cyclical review committee following their visit of April 9-10, 2018. We would like to thank all the committee members for their support and justified recommendations. We appreciate the exceptionally positive comments on both the teaching and research performances of our Department. We are also in agreement with all the weaknesses identified by the review committee that are mainly linked to the lack of space available to the Department (in particular for graduate students), aging teaching and research infrastructures and, our unacceptably low administrative and technical support (especially in the Departmental machine shop). Our unit is supported by one technician and this is presenting considerable challenges to operate our machine shop for both instruction (teaching laboratories) and research purposes, for a growing student population of over 325 students. We intend to seek an increase of our annual budget adequate to support the overall growth of our program to help overcome these limitations.

In terms of academic advising, we acknowledge the difficulties in providing optimal support for the growing number of our students. Prof. David Titley-Péloquin has agreed to share the undergraduate student advisory load presently carried by Prof. Shiv Prasher and Prof. Marie-Josée Dumont. We appreciate the committee's praise on the performance of our students at engineering competition events, including ASABE's (American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineering) tractor and robotics design competitions and acknowledge their recommendation to further enhance links with sister departments across North America. Our academic staff is dedicated to active collaboration within ASABE, CSBE (Canadian Society for Bioengineering), and CIGR (International Commission of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering). After co-hosting the 2014 ASABE/CSBE meeting, we look forward to help organize the 2020 CSBE/CIGR meeting in Quebec City.

### **ACTION PLAN per RECOMMENDATION**

- I. Additional support staff for the Chair and for Faculty and Students (including UO):* The centralized administrative unit of the Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (FAES) will be getting a new support staff this summer (position approved by the Provost which has been posted as of June 1<sup>st</sup>, to be filled later this summer 2018).
- II. Additional support staff for the engineering shop:* Support at the engineering shop is being met, as of now, by a research associate providing support funded by research funding. Starting this Fall 2018, we will enhance engineering shop maintenance by involving students, with superior technical skills, through the work study program. Additional efforts are being made to seek sustainable funding for more long term technical assistance.

III. *Renovation and laboratory spaces:* All members of the department have laboratory space that has been updated with CFI funding. For teaching purposes, the department will be receiving new fluid mechanics teaching equipment, to be delivered in July 2018, thanks to shared funding from the University Teaching and Learning Services and University Advancement Fundraising. A renovation project is under feasibility planning with McGill Facilities (project 17-087) to renovate the mezzanine in our technical services building for improved modular space for technical demonstrations, prototyping and team project brainstorming. A meeting is scheduled on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2018 to review the architect's report. Addressing further space issues, we are participating in the preparation of a FAES proposal for a new research building. The call for proposals for the Strategic Infrastructure Fund is expected for the Fall 2018 and projects (<\$50M) must be shovel ready by then.

IV. *Two new Faculty Positions (i) smart productions systems engineering and (ii) organic waste management and recycling engineering:* During our spring 2018 departmental strategic planning exercise, we have elaborated a list of 5 additional academic positions we would like to prioritize for new hires and future replacements of retirements (10-year plan). We are also planning the preparation of an Industry Chair position in controlled environment agriculture (for specialty crop production) for a Fall 2018 submission.

Do not hesitate to contact me shall you need more information.



Valérie Orsat, Ph.D., P.Eng.  
Professor and Department Chair