



## Psst.....Looking for a Change?

**Will it be Business Process Redesign or  
Process Streamlining?**

***The University of British Columbia's  
Experience with Two Methodologies for  
Structured Organizational Change***

**Gaylea Wong and Lisa Collins**

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### **The University of British Columbia in Context**

The University of British Columbia (UBC) is a research-intensive public university located on the west coast of Canada in Vancouver, British Columbia, with total enrolment exceeding 45 000 students.

The University has experienced tremendous growth since its establishment in 1917, but it has become clear that some of our business practices have not "scaled well" over this lengthy period of expansion and, more recently, intense technological change. In addition to ongoing renewal efforts, UBC has successfully employed structured organizational change methodologies, including Business Process Redesign and Process Streamline. This article gives an overview of our experience with structured change methodologies and describes two such projects.

### **Process Streamlining and Business Process Redesign**

Hammer and Stanton (1995) define Business Process Redesign (BPR) as "the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to bring about dramatic improvements in performance." The key to the BPR methodology lies in three defining words: **fundamental**, **radical** and **dramatic**. Redesign, or reengineering, by definition, is not glorified downsizing, job restructuring, reorganization, automation, or even a traditional business project. Rather, it deals with the fundamental questions about why we do what we do, and focuses not on what is, but what should be. It is about reinventing, not improving, enhancing, or modifying. The optimum outcome of reengineering is found in "quantum leaps in performance." It is essential to discard the old ways and introduce a totally new approach (Hammer and Champy, 1993).

Though the prospect of dramatic and radical change is often daunting, the BPR methodology is designed not just to change, but to dramatically improve processes by reorganizing and restructuring how tasks are combined and completed. Redesign of processes naturally leads to further improvement within the rest of the organization.

Process Streamlining (PS) may also result in dramatic changes and improvements in performance. Assessing which methodology is best to apply in a given situation is not

always easy, so it helps to understand the differences between a BPR and a PS project. **The degree of radical change expected and the timeline for implementation are two distinguishing features.....**

<b><u>A Business Process Redesign Project:</u></b> <i>Is the more radical of the two approaches</i>	<b><u>A Process Streamlining Project:</u></b> <i>Accepts that the organization is generally doing the right things</i>
Asks: “ <b>Are we doing the right things?</b> ” thereby encouraging the team to question whether a given process or set of processes is even necessary at all.	Asks: “ <b>Are we doing these things right?</b> ” and “how could we do these things better?”
Allows for up to <u>eight weeks</u> for the team to complete its work.	Allows <u>eight to ten days</u> for the team to complete its work.
Generates solutions that will likely take several years to implement.	Generates solutions that may be implemented in the following six months

Both methodologies rely on a “**Case for Action**” document that is developed by a planning body before the team begins its work. A key feature of the Case for Action is the careful articulation of the desired end result, i.e., what it is, in very specific terms that the team sets out to accomplish. The Case for Action also specifies the scope of the project and identifies any particular constraints. Constraints are the mountains that are not easily moved, such as legislation that is not easily changed or a deadline that absolutely cannot be avoided. The importance of the Case for Action should not be underestimated, as a team will refer to this document time and time again as they undertake their work.

One other critical element for success is a commitment on behalf of senior management to accept the team’s solutions as long as they satisfy the **End Result** and fit with any specified constraints. This commitment empowers team members to set aside preconceptions of what would likely be acceptable to senior management and explore the most creative solutions.

### **UBC’s Student Information Management Plan (SIMPL) BPR Project Summary**

In 2000, individuals from a cross-section of Enrolment Services considered the areas of our overall operation requiring improvement and focused on our interactions with new and prospective students. Providing excellent service to students is a key goal for UBC – positioned prominently both in the V-P Student Strategic Plan and the overall University Strategic Plan (Trek 2010). In spite of this very strong commitment to excellent service, our staff members were often frustrated because they could not provide it. Inadequate resources to serve increasing numbers of students, some of whom needed help to navigate processes and systems that were complex and difficult to follow frustrated their efforts. The goal of providing first-time-right, excellent service, with no “ping pong effect,” had become more and more difficult to attain.

To achieve the kind of improvement that we wanted, we needed to make radical changes in the way we recruited and admitted undergraduate students. We applied BPR principles to this task. The project came to be called SIMPL and is described below.

A nine member BPR team, which included six staff, an emeritus faculty member, an undergraduate student and the partner of a graduate student, met four (sometimes five) days a week between September and November 2000 to develop the new design. During this time, the team followed an adaptation of Hammer's highly structured BPR approach designed for higher education. The methodology used by the team included an examination of the current processes, extensive external research, more than eighty interviews with students, parents, high school counselors, faculty, staff and others, brainstorming, and development of the new design. The team analyzed the problem, researched possible solutions, designed new processes, interviewed prospective users to validate the design, and then verified and documented the design and presented it to the project's steering committee, demonstrating that it would achieve the end result.

The following reengineering principles may further explain the intended outcome of the BPR methodology. They were the **fundamental guidelines** used throughout the redesign project.

- ◆ Organize work around results, not tasks.
- ◆ Capture data only once--when it is created.
- ◆ Allow decisions to be made where work is performed.
- ◆ Incorporate controls into information processing.
- ◆ Allow people who use a process to do the work.
- ◆ Work in parallel instead of in sequence.
- ◆ Treat geographically dispersed resources as one.

Other important objectives that guided the team during the redesign include the elimination of duplication within processes, provision of value-added services to all clients, simplification of processes for both staff and clients, and the elimination of bureaucracy where possible.

### **The End Result**

The objective for the project was as follows.....

*Create a solution that integrates all activities prospective and admitted students undertake, both student requested and institutionally required, to begin their first undergraduate degree program at UBC.*

*The new solution should be easy-to-use, efficient, effective, and timely, and reflect student needs, meet their requirements and exceed their expectations.*

*The solution will anticipate student needs, eliminate unnecessary tasks and processes, and preclude a student's need to know the University's organization. It will be a one-stop, anytime, anyplace solution that is easy for all students to understand and use.*

The steering committee, chaired by our Vice President, Students, made a commitment that if the BPR team designed a solution that achieved this end result, they would do everything they could to ensure it was implemented., Quite a commitment for a group of high-level faculty and administrators ..... ..and definitely not the kind of stuff usually seen in the hallowed halls of UBC academe. Our Vice President, Students understandably appeared rather nervous during the team’s deliberations.



### The New Design

The team presented their report to the steering committee in December of 2000. The committee was enthusiastic about the proposed design and accepted it. It also supported progress to detailed feasibility testing and development of several pilots.

#### **The new design rested on five fundamental concepts:**

- A.** Establishment of a client care philosophy at UBC;
- B.** Implementation of a Client Relationship Management System;
- C.** Gathering information from students;
- D.** Improved staff support, training and development;
- E.** Commitment to quality control.

#### ***These formed an essential framework for the following six new core processes:***

**Enticement** includes recruitment and marketing. The new processes commence when students begin to “stream” into their academic track, typically in Grade 10. Marketing is focused on developing relationships with these students, with their high school counselors, with parents and with others who have influence over the student’s decision to attend university. Truly exceptional students are targeted and offered age appropriate rewards.

**Information Sharing** supplements the current inquiry and response processes. The new design requires the provision of tools for UBC staff to ensure consistent, client-focused and personalized service. UBC applies industry standards to client care, making the institution seem smaller and friendlier.

**Relationship Building** is a major focus of the new design. UBC aims to provide value-added services for prospective students that encourage them to build an early and strong relationship with UBC. These services are meant to help students make decisions about post-secondary options. We encourage future students to provide information, to be collected in an electronic portfolio, which will be used both for admissions assessment and institutional planning.

**Assessment** replaces the current admissions evaluation process, focusing instead on the admission of pre-qualified students to ensure that those students accept UBC's offer. This, with other process and system changes, frees staff to provide more support to individual students, and help them resolve any problems or difficulties.

**Hand Off** is a brand new process, the goal of which is to find the best match between the student and his or her abilities. Instead of rejecting applicants, they will be guided to other post-secondary choices.

**Transition** involves the improvement, integration and streamlining of existing processes with a client-centered view. Bureaucracy is reduced so students can focus on personal transitions and academic programs, rather than on meeting University requirements.

\*\*\* A schematic illustrating these six core processes is attached as "Appendix A: SIMPL Core Process Diagram."

### **Outcomes of the SIMPL Project**

The BPR team arrived at a solution that was student-centered, exceeded client expectations, and supported the key goals articulated in the University's mission. The new processes were easy-to-use, efficient and effective. They allowed staff to provide excellent service and focused on student needs, precluding a student's need to know the organization. The new design was able to meet student requirements and exceed their expectations.

We have been delivering modules of the SIMPL solution each year since 2000. It has radically changed how we do business in the areas of recruitment and admissions. Below are just some of the deliverables coming out of the SIMPL project.

#### **Client Care Training Program (CCTP)**

The CCTP addresses the client culture of Enrolment Services and helps support a client care philosophy in easy, consistent ways.

#### **Personal Relationship Management System (PRM)**

We continue to develop the PRM functionality in our custom Student Information System. We purchased the IntelliResponse system to give students Web access to basic information about admissions, programs, housing, fees, etc. using a natural language query interface. At present, The IR database is handling 97% of the requests automatically.

#### **Self Service and Single Point of Service Systems**

It is the highest priority that students have the capability to access services through a single interface, and to receive "one stop service" at many places.

#### **Web Information Support System – Knowledge Management**

The deployment of the latest version of WISE, the VP Students' portal, together with the development of guidelines for the maintenance of the knowledge base by departments, has achieved many of goals of this project.

- ◆ Remaining goals include a more powerful content management system, and more consistent practices in all departments for making knowledge accessible and keeping it current.
- ◆ We have begun to implement an internal KM version of IntelliResponse designed to be useful to staff for training and succession management purposes.

### **Consolidated Billing and Payment**

Our consolidated billing application is in production with current vendors comprised of Admissions, Tuition Fee Payment, Housing, Food Services and the Library.

Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) was implemented in December 2003.

### **Student Portfolio**

A community of practice, led by the Director of eLearning, is overseeing the implementation of six pilot projects. These include projects in Education, Pharmacy, Agricultural Sciences, Biological Sciences and Student Development. For the purpose of the pilots, we have contracted with Nuventive to provide a hosted solution for this year.

### **Advising and Career Exploration**

Careers and Communication Services have undertaken a project to redesign their website and to enable some elements of career advising available on-line. Information for employers was available on January 31st; information for students was available on February 7th.

### **Assessment and Admissions**

The stage of self assessment and self admission has been implemented for British Columbia high school students, and was very successful. Auto-acknowledging of applications was implemented for the last admission cycle, as was the ability to collect Broader Based Admission (BBA) documents. Faculty transfer and re-admission forms are also available on-line.

Further functionality is still being developed in areas such as International Baccalaureate, college and university transfer students, and open access to the self evaluation function.



## Curriculum Approval and Implementation Process Streamline Project Summary

In May 2004, a cross-functional team of UBC faculty and staff came together for three weeks to redesign the University's curriculum approval and implementation processes. The team used a custom hybrid of the Business Process Redesign and Process Streamline methodologies to approach the process redesign.

The project was conceived in response to feedback from faculty that the current processes were confusing and labour intensive: that they were difficult to follow, took too long, and required too much manual form-filling and proposal-chasing.

The team's goal was to address these concerns and find ways to facilitate the academic review of new curriculum. The team undertook significant internal consultation and external research to determine and test its process design ideas.

### **The main elements of the redesigned processes are:**

#### **1. Pilot Courses First, Approve Them Later**

This adds an unprecedented level of agility to our curriculum processes, and reflects support for revising courses in response to instructor, peer, student, and other feedback. Once the required data elements are entered into an integrated system, departments will be able to immediately offer new and revised courses for a 16-month pilot period. To continue offering the course after the 16-month pilot period, Departments will have to submit the course for full approval by governing bodies.

#### **2. Dynamically Implement New Programs and Program Changes**

Approval bodies currently devote significant amounts of their time to approving minor program changes. Removing this processing burden allows approval bodies to concentrate on reviewing and approving new programs and major program changes. Minor changes will be implemented upon approval by the department head. Such approval will include any necessary consultation.

Full review and final approval of minor program changes will happen as part of the Five-Year Curriculum Review (see below). New programs and major program changes will be submitted for full approval at the Department, Faculty, Graduate Council (if graduate), Senate, and Board levels. This approval process will be greatly enhanced and expedited through the use of technology.

#### **3. Implement a Five-Year Departmental Curriculum Review**

Current unit reviews do not usually include detailed scrutiny of curriculum as it naturally evolves. Departments, with assistance from the appropriate standing committee of Senate, should review their own curricula once every five years. Minor changes to

courses and programs would be considered part of this review, rather than approved individually prior to implementation. This ongoing review process would aid in the accurate representation of department programs and course offerings in university publications.

#### **4. Systems Integration and Development: The Technology Boost**

This Technology Boost is a large scale, resource intensive project that will require:

- ◆ The integration of existing UBC systems and the development of new ones, such that the system houses all the necessary attributes about courses and programs and so that the various parts of the system all “talk” to each other;
- ◆ The development of customized reporting functionality and user interfaces;
- ◆ The addition of workflow technology that would allow proposals to move through approval processes in an automated fashion;
- ◆ The modification of system security to support distributed access and recognize distinct user groups;
- ◆ The development of wizards, templates, examples, pick lists, decision support tools, etc.

#### **PS Implementation Status to Date**

The Curriculum Process Streamline Team’s solutions have been met with widespread support throughout the University. Members of the team finalized the team’s report in November 2004 and began a series of presentations to senior administrators and approval bodies. Feedback from these presentations demonstrated that the approval process changes are even more tightly linked to the Technology Boost than the team originally envisioned. Although early suggestions were that some of the process changes could be implemented prior to the development of the technological support systems, there has been a growing recognition that we cannot do one without the other. As of this writing, the report has been endorsed by the Vice President, Academic & Provost, the Vice President, Students, the UBC Committee of Deans, and the Senate Curriculum Committee. Full Senate approval is expected to follow by May 2005.

Following Senate approval of the academic principles in the report, Enrolment Services, in consultation with our faculty partners, will prepare a plan to implement the Technology Boost. Student Systems staff will work with team members and senior administrators to secure the necessary resources and phase in the various technological pieces. Full implementation will likely take more than two years, with one or two Faculties volunteering to pilot the new technology and processes prior to full rollout across campus.

As with all structured organizational change projects, the work truly begins with implementation, and we would be happy to provide updates as this project proceeds.

## Looking Forward

The two projects described in this article are but two of at least four BPR and PS projects undertaken at UBC to date. Other projects have included the streamlining of research grant application management and a complete redesign of human resources processes, including benefits sign-on and payroll.

Participants from earlier structured change projects are much sought after as team leaders and consultants on upcoming BPR and PS projects, and a train-the-trainer culture has developed. As successful implementation of each team's solutions proceeds, most of the critics (and there always are some!) are being won over.

Structured change methodologies are definitely labour intensive and require teamwork and high levels of commitment, but these investments have paid out huge dividends in organizational performance at UBC. If your institution is in need of a fundamental change, and "dramatic improvements in performance" sound appealing, Business Process Redesign or Process Streamlining may be worthy of consideration.

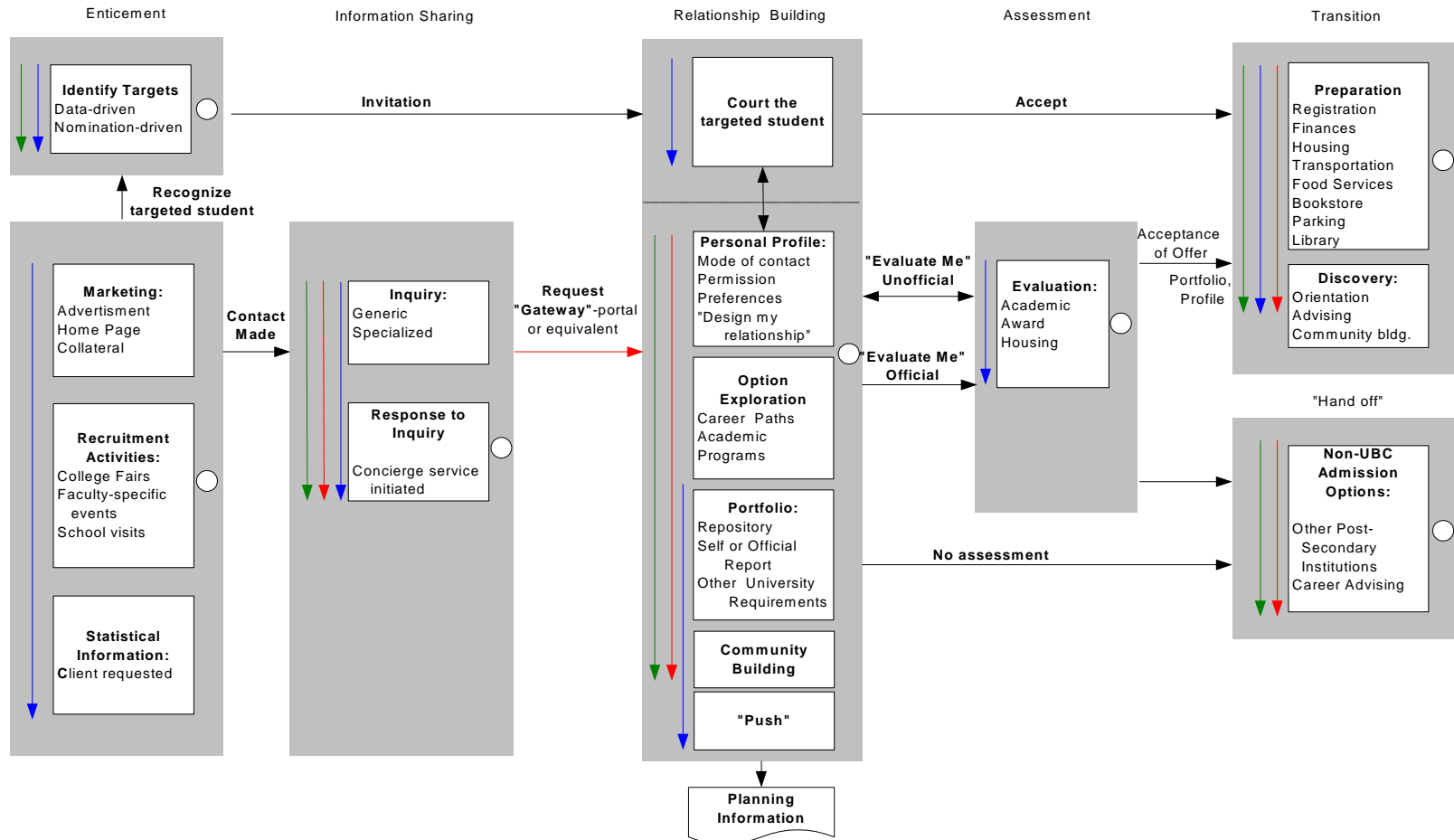
### About the Authors:

Gaylea Wong is Associate Registrar and Director for Records and Registration at the University of British Columbia. She has more than 20 years experience in higher education administration and has held leadership roles in various professional associations both in Canada and the US. Gaylea served as PACRAO Vice President for Professional Development from 2000 to 2002. She was the SIMPL project coordinator during the planning and team activity phases, a member of the implementation planning committee and currently sits on the advisory committee for SIMPL.

Lisa Collins is the Assistant Registrar, Senate & Curriculum Services at the University of British Columbia. Lisa recently completed a Master of Library and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia, focusing on information-seeking behaviour and information architecture. Lisa's professional interests lie in the governance of post-secondary educational institutions in their political, cultural, and legislative contexts, as well as in the development of sound institutional policy. Lisa is also currently working toward certification as a Registered Parliamentarian.

## Appendix A: SIMPL Core Process Diagram

# NEW CORE PROCESSES



**KEY**

- Red arrow: Student-driven processes
- Blue arrow: UBC-driven processes
- Green arrow: Indicates Involvement of Influencers: high school counselors, parents, others

**Fundamentals of the new design**

- CLIENT CARE PHILOSOPHY
- CLIENT RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (CRMS)
- INFORMATION GATHERING (Data mining, e-opinions, statistics)
- QUALITY CONTROL
- STAFF SUPPORT, TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT