

# Faculty Reaction to the SIR Results Being Incorporated into the PPR

*Is the SIR intended to be a punitive performance planning tool?*

In Spring 2003 instructors began receiving a revised Performance Planning and Review form that had incorporated into it six Key Success Factors, which apparently were part of the SAIT Academic Plan. At least that's what it indicated at the top of the document although instructors had not received any other information or communication about a SAIT Academic Plan nor had they heard of Key Success Factors.

One of the six Key Success Factors is Teaching Excellence. The PPR *Faculty Accountabilities in Support of SAIT's Academic Plan*, Item 4 Teaching Excellence, Bullet 7, states "Using SIRs results to maintain and seek improvement in the quality of instruction in the classroom in order to achieve or exceed an overall SIR ranking of 3.8 with a minimum expectation of 3.5." When instructors learned that this specific rating was being incorporated into the PPR, red flags began waving, lights were flashing, and bells were ringing. Instructors immediately saw this as a punitive action. The SIR was no longer intended, as it was originally, to help improve instruction. No, not at all! Instructors interpreted this move as a step in the direction of showing cause to terminate staff.

Keep in mind that there had been no communication within the academic division on this initiative—the SAIT Academic Plan. Instructors were merely being told by their coordinators that this was now part of the Performance Planning process. Where was this directive coming from? Was it HR? No HR, didn't seem to know anything about it. They had no idea that the six Key Success Factors were being incorporated into the Performance Planning Review process and had become part of the form—news to them. Well, where then did this originate? If not HR, was it within the academic division? Absolutely. The SAIT Academic Plan was developed by the Vice President Academic and the Deans of the academic departments, but they had overlooked one minor item—they didn't communicate this to faculty. It was put together in a hurry. It seems they got the cart before the horse. What was the rush to incorporate the six Key Success Factors (and particularly the specific SIR results) into the PPR form?

Was the intent of the Student Instructional Report (SIR) ever to be a punitive tool in performance planning? Absolutely not. The intent of the SIR is to improve instruction.

*The Student Instructional Report (SIR) was developed to aid in evaluating and improving instruction. It provides faculty members an opportunity to systematically obtain feedback on their students' experiences in the classroom, and it gives students a chance to describe and assess their courses and instruction.*

(General Instructions on the SIR, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey)

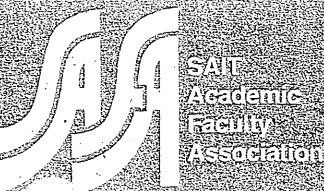
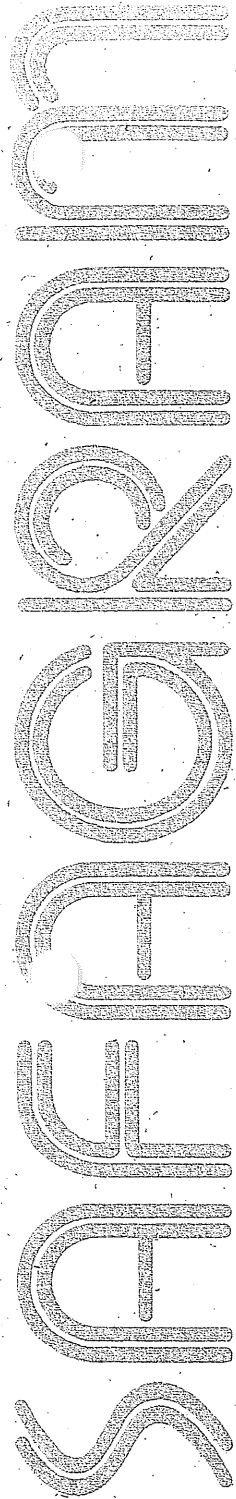
The Performance and Planning Review document INSTRUCTIONS state

*The Performance Planning and Review (PPR) process integrates individual performance to the Strategic Plan, helping to focus individual and collective efforts on a common set of goals and values. The PPR process is an essential tool to ensure that we practice our stated values and more specifically that we remain customer driven, people-oriented, accountable to our stakeholders and committed to excellence. The PPR document comprises three parts for completion by the employee's supervisor—The Performance Plan; The Performance Assessment, The Individual Development Plan.*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



by Ed Logue

If you could become Canada's premier institute of advanced technology, among a handful of the world's finest, setting the standard for excellence in education, training and innovation just by repeating these words every chance you get, SAIT should be well on the way to the achievement of this lofty goal.

As we all know, just saying something does not make it happen. Becoming the best takes hard work and dedication. Until now the hard work and dedication of faculty (and other frontline workers) has managed to keep SAIT viable in the eyes of our students and the public. The question is "How much longer can the Employer rely on faculty to continue to work hard while overcoming impediments such as outdated lab equipment, bad timetabling, ergonomically challenged offices, and increased duties outside of the classroom?"

The SAIT, SAFA and ACIFA climate surveys have all pointed to a morale problem at SAIT, yet it seems nothing is being done to address these issues. To the contrary, it is almost as if the Employer is going out of the way to aggravate the situation. Things like requiring a SIR between 3.5 and 3.8, scheduling classes for 6 hours in a row, increasing class sizes, and putting large numbers of instructors in small community offices are not morale boosters.

The SAIT Board of Governors is ultimately responsible for seeing that SAIT is managed properly. For the past two years, the SAIT Board of Governors has held the majority of its meetings in secret. This is unusual because SAIT is a public institution supported by public funds and as such

should be answerable to the public. The Association has made a FOIP request for the Board minutes in an effort to see if the Board is being apprised of the true situation at SAIT. The Board is fighting tooth and nail to prevent the release of these minutes. One wonders why. What world-altering decisions could the Board be making that would require such secrecy? If the Board succeeds in keeping meetings secret, we may never know. ➔

## WebCT @ SAIT



by Tim Loblaw, Faculty Development, Centre for Learning

Online learning, blended learning, and course management systems: what are these terms and what is this thing called WebCT?

WebCT—or, Web Course Tools—is an online course management system. Simply put, you use WebCT to develop, deliver, and manage your course online. The software was developed at the University of British Columbia in 1995 and has evolved into an enterprise-scale e-learning system (WebCT, 2001). SAIT is one of thousands of institutions (in over 85 countries) that have adopted WebCT "to expand the boundaries of teaching and learning" (WebCT, 2003).

More and more SAIT courses are either online or going online. Each department has committed to moving one course per program into WebCT. Like all educational technology, WebCT is designed to support and enhance teaching and learning. You can use it to deliver a course in a completely online (web-based) environment, or you can use the features of WebCT to support your face-to-face classroom (generally referred to as "blended learning – a blend of online and face-to-face delivery). How you use WebCT will depend on what features you adopt; for instance, you can use it for organizing course content, communicating with your students, delivering assignments and assessments, or facilitating access to course resources. Online learning is, however, affecting our role as instructors; this role is shifting from that of traditional teacher (the sage on the stage) to online facilitator (the guide by the side).

Will the transition to WebCT affect you? If you need training and support, Faculty Development Services offer a number of workshops that range from using the basic tools of WebCT to delivering and facilitating an online course. As well, the institution has announced the availability of WebCT Development Grants; these grants are intended to "support faculty's use of the full set of functionality, and multi-media tools related to WebCT for technology-enhanced delivery." Look for details on these development grants soon.

## References:

WebCT, Inc. (2003). WebCT website. Available from <http://www.webct.com>.

WebCT, Inc. (2001). WebCT: a brief overview of WebCT [Electronic document]. Retrieved November 13, 2003, from [http://www.courses.umd.edu/webct\\_overview.pdf](http://www.courses.umd.edu/webct_overview.pdf) ➔

## SAFAGRAM

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SAFAGRAM editorial policy, as approved by the SAFA Executive on June 14, 1995, is as follows:

1. The Editorial Board has the final say as to what is included or deleted from the newsletter.
2. Editorial Board decisions about newsletter material must be agreed to by consensus.
3. The newsletter will include a disclaimer stating that the views expressed in its content do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.
4. All material included in the newsletter must
  - be signed by the author when submitted to the editors but anonymity may be requested and granted for printing.
  - be based on "reasoned argument" if personal criticism is used.
  - not involve name-calling.
  - not include sexist, racist, or homophobic comments.
  - be related to SAIT, although this will be interpreted broadly.

The views expressed in SAFAGRAM do not necessarily represent the views of the Editorial Board or SAFA.

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Faculty Reaction to SIR Results

Is every faculty member provided with a copy of the Strategic Plan? Does SAIT still have a Strategic Plan?

*The Performance Plan. Write expectations with clear linkage to Organizational or Departmental objectives, within the scope of the individual's position description. Review the plan on an ongoing basis and record progress on at least two occasions during the academic year . . . .*

Is every faculty member provided with a copy of the Organizational or Departmental objectives and with a position description? Is the plan status reviewed on an ongoing basis and is progress recorded on at least two occasions during the academic year?

The Performance Planning Review document also states

*Base expectations on Organizational or Departmental objectives using the SMART criteria: make each objective Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time bound . . . .*

There is a table provided in the PPR to list Performance & Development Expectations—3 to 7 max.

The list of *Faculty Accountabilities in Support of SAIT's Academic Plan* (based on six Key Success Factors) have been incorporated into the Performance Review document. Instructors will be accountable for meeting or exceeding SAIT's standards in the following areas:

1. **Learner Experience**
2. **Market Responsiveness**
3. **Curriculum Effectiveness**
4. **Teaching Excellence**
5. **Resource Management**
6. **Stakeholder Engagement**

In reviewing the 39 accountabilities, the majority of them are very general in nature with the exception of the item that refers to the SIR results and the specific rating; yet there is provision to list only 3 to 7 max in the Performance and Development Expectations. Who selects the 3 to 7 expectations for the faculty member?

Now let's apply the SMART test. How many of the accountabilities based on the Key Success Factors in the Academic Plan are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time bound? Very few.

Are faculty members concerned about this? Many faculty members view the specific SIR rating as nothing more than a punitive tool in the Performance Planning process.

#### **FACULTY NEED ANSWERS...**

SAIT faculty members have the most at stake with management's new administration of the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Student Instructional Report (SIR II) and its application to our Performance Planning and Review (PPR). A number of questions require answers:

1. As the major stakeholders, why were we never consulted about such a major change to the PPR process before this initiative was instituted?
2. The introductory statement to the PPR's 39 faculty accountabilities states: "You will be accountable for meeting or exceeding SAIT's standards in the following areas: . . ." What are SAIT's standards?
3. Are SAIT policies and procedures on the SIR II available? Have they even been written, approved, and published for instructor review?
4. Who decided on the SIR ranking range of 3.5 to 3.8? On what basis?
5. What definitive resources relative to things the instructor can control are in place to assist those who have a SIR rating below 3.5? How many SIRs below 3.5 must take place before follow-up action is called for?
6. How many educational institutions in Canada use the ETS's SIR II? Which ones?
7. How many educational institutions in Alberta use the SIR II? NAIT doesn't use it; U of C doesn't use it. Who in Alberta does?
8. SAIT instructors are being told that they rank the lowest in Alberta. Who are we being compared to? Are we being compared only to institutions in Alberta that use the same evaluation tool? Do we have equivalent resources and the same type of training as those we're being compared to?

9. How many SIRs per year are to be administered for each instructor? We've heard anywhere from two to six, with contract instructors having every one of their classes SIRed.
10. How much is it costing SAIT to administer anywhere from two to six SIRs per instructor per year? (Not to mention the extra time spent by coordinators or newly hired contract employees to administer the SIRs.) Could the extra money be coming from the 35% salary decrease some service workers have been asked to accept?
11. Why were the SAFA President's questions in his October 24 letter not specifically addressed?
12. Why aren't instructors being given the opportunity to evaluate their perceptions of the classes who are evaluating them? Many factors can influence the SIRs outcome: dynamics of the class, instructors' expectations of their students, physical attractiveness of the instructor, gender of the instructor or student, instructor popularity, SIR administrator's tone and demeanor, timing of the SIR in the semester, time of day, size of the class, level of course, students' interest in the subject matter, number of SIRs each student is completing in a short time span, students' general experience at SAIT (lack of parking, no daycare, large breaks between classes, etc.).
13. Why are students not held accountable for the comments that they make as part of the SIR? Are their names or signatures available to someone should there be an issue with a particular statement? The U of C uses a system whereby students are identifiable if a libelous statement is made by a student.
14. Why is there such a long turnaround time before we get the SIR results? Wouldn't the results be more useful if we knew what we had to change for the class that's doing the evaluating?

Faculty has the opportunity to evaluate management on the Hay Group Employee Survey. Why isn't management held to some kind of percentage deviation from the norm? "What's good for the goose is good for the gander." ♦♦



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## Academic Advising

by Lynn Hoover, Enrollment Management Project Coordinator

We have all had students withdraw from our classes, maybe never knowing why...

**Reason For Withdrawal #1:** Flunked a course; couldn't get the one I needed to finish the program, so dropped out.

**Reason For Withdrawal #2:** Couldn't keep up with courses and a part-time job, and needed the job to pay for tuition and expenses, so dropped out.

**Reason For Withdrawal #3:** Had a death in the family and couldn't concentrate; grades were declining and I missed deadlines, so dropped out.

Sometimes we don't know why students drop out, why their grades decline, or why they have problems keeping up. However, it is within our power to find out and help retain students. Student success is not solely the responsibility of the learner. We play an important role in helping students succeed by intervening and helping students achieve their academic goals and by making referrals when additional assistance is required.

According to the National Academic Advising Association

(NACADA), regular contact with students gains meaningful insight into their academic, social, and personal experiences and needs. This helps students feel like a part of the educational community, which helps them achieve academic success.

Academic advising is ongoing, proactive support for enabling students to succeed. By advising your students, they will be more inclined to select careers wisely, be better prepared for academic success, and know how and where they can find the help they need from the different service areas on campus. In turn, you will find your students are more committed, knowledgeable, and personable.

In the past, some faculty have taken the initiative to conduct student advising. Now the Enrollment Management Project Retention Team is administering a more formal advising pilot with nine full-time daytime programs. The intent is to learn from those who are already doing advising with their students and to encourage and provide a path for

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## LIBRARY REPORT



by Dave Weber (284-8476) and  
Nora Robinson (210-4073)

- ⇒ **1,000,000.** That's the number of visitors who have come through the library gates since we moved to the Heart Building in August 2001. The Library is, indeed, a busy place.
- ⇒ We have added several new subscriptions to our Electronic Resources collection in the past two months. You can now access the full text electronic versions of individual journals such as *New Directions for Higher Education*, *New Directions for Student Services*, *Echocardiography*, and the *Canadian Journal of Economics* by going to the SAIT Library website, [www.sait.ca/library](http://www.sait.ca/library), and clicking on the Electronic Resources link. We also have new subscriptions to the *Business and Company Resource Center* and the *Canadian Business Resource* databases. You can access these journals and databases both on and off campus. If you want off-campus access, you need to be registered with the SAIT Library as the distance log-on requires a library borrower number and PIN. If you are not yet registered as a library borrower, bring your staff card to the Library Information Desk, and we will turn it into your borrower card and assign you a PIN.

- ⇒ The Library has an active liaison program with the academic departments. In this program, library staff work with designated liaison members from the academic departments to promote and enhance library services and collection development. The liaison program has three objectives:

- to identify and select resources needed to support the curriculum,
- to increase the library staff's understanding of instructional needs, and
- to share information about library services with the program liaison representatives in order to facilitate and increase library use by the SAIT community.

- ⇒ On October 30, we hosted a gathering for the Library Liaison representatives to thank them for participating in the Library Liaison program and to share with them information about our new and enhanced services (extended hours on Sunday, new computers in the Library classroom, new information available on the Faculty Resource Centre page of [mySait.ca](http://mySait.ca)).
- ⇒ If you would like to know who your program representative is, or would like more information on the liaison program, please call May Chan, 8617 (Energy and Health and Public Safety), Susan Brayford, 4477 (Transportation), Dave Weber, 8476 (CALS, Manufacturing and Automation), Zahina Iqbal, 7387 (CfL, Business and Tourism), or Nora Robinson, 4073 (ICT).

The Library Staff wish you a happy holiday season! ♦♦

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Academic Advising

those who are not. At the discretion of each department or program, advisors can be coordinators or instructors, depending on experience, workload, and level of trust with the students. Campus rollout for academic advising will be in place for fall 2004.

The primary goal of the Enrollment Management Project is to improve retention rates and student satisfaction with SAIT. By monitoring attendance, tracking marks, and noticing behavioural issues, as well as approaching students about observations, our retention rates have the potential to increase.

If you had some indication that the aforementioned students were going to withdraw, you could have intervened in the following ways to help retain the students:

**Intervention Student #1:** Worked with Con-Ed or CALS to ensure the student enrolled in the appropriate class; recommended a visit to the Learner Assessment and Skills Centre (LASC) to get a tutor; sent the student to Counselling to discuss career options.

**Intervention Student #2:** Sent the student to Customer Services to inquire about scholarships, bursaries and loans; advised the student to visit Customer Services Employment office to find a more accommodating part-

time job; visit the LASC for a tutor or study skills workshop.

**Intervention Student #3:** Recommended a grievance counsellor at Counselling Services; recommended LASC for time management and study skills workshops; organized peer support groups within your class.

As we continue to work with the programs involved in this academic advising pilot, we will gain further insight into the value of this retention initiative and provide you with an update in an upcoming issue. ♦♦



## SAIT Academic Faculty Association Professional Code of Conduct

*The Code of Professional Conduct was reviewed by Faculty Council in 2002/2003. This is intended to be used only as a guideline for faculty members.*

### Definitions

The Association shall mean the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology Academic Faculty Association.

The Institute shall mean the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT).

Members shall mean members of the Association.

A word used in the masculine gender applies also in the feminine.

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Inclusive of and in addition to the terms and conditions of employment, the SAIT Academic Faculty Association members bear ethical responsibilities to:

1. The students of the Institute
2. Colleagues in the Association, and the Association
3. The Institute

Insofar as the members are representatives of the Association.

### 1. Relationships Between Faculty and Students

- 1.1 The Association member may not inflict academic reprisals upon students for non-academic disagreements or conflicts.
- 1.2 The Association member shall not use his authority in any excessive or abusive manner, such as making unusual, extraordinary, or contradictory demands on students.
- 1.3 The Association member shall always be fair to his students. It is unethical to exploit the student for his private or personal advantage.
- 1.4 The Association member must keep in confidence all information gained about a student excepting:
  - i. Where it is given to a colleague for the purpose of aiding or evaluating the academic progress of the student; or
  - ii. When it is given with the prior consent of the student.
- 1.5 The Association member shall avoid all activities which undermine the confidence of students in a colleague.

### 2. Relationships Between Association Members and with the Association

- 2.1 The Association member shall refrain from making false statements, written or verbal about other Association members.
- 2.2 The Association member has the obligation to defend the right of his colleagues to academic freedom. It is unethical for him to act so as to infringe deliberately upon that freedom.
- 2.3 The Association member shall avoid damaging criticism of a colleague except when made to the colleague's immediate supervisor, or to an officer or committee of the Association, and then only in confidence and after the colleague has been informed in writing of the nature of the criticism.
- 2.4 All authority delegated to Association members should be exercised with proper restraint. Consequently, no member should use his authority in any excessive or abusive manner, such as making unusual,

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SAIT Academic Faculty Association  
Professional Code of Conduct

extraordinary or contradictory demands on other members.

- 2.5 The Association member shall not openly or covertly violate a stated or implicit bond of secrecy, privilege, trust or confidence between members; between members and the Association. Moreover, no member or group of members of the Association will speak for the Association without the knowledge and consent of the said Association or its Executive.
- 2.6 The Association member does not divulge confidential information pertaining to Association affairs received in the course of his professional duties, except as required by law or by consent of the Association.
- 2.7 Association members shall honour and uphold all agreements and policies adopted by the Association, and all verbal and written agreements among themselves, respecting their professional responsibilities and obligations.

### 3. Relationships with the Institute

- 3.1 Every Association member shall perform the duties of his position with impartiality and diligence, with candour and fairness, with courtesy and good faith, and with the strictest integrity.
- 3.2 The Association member has a responsibility to abide by the rules and regulations established for the orderly conduct of the affairs of the Institute, provided that these rules and regulations do not infringe upon the academic freedoms of any member or the principles of ethical conduct as set forth in these guidelines or in codes established by recognized professional or academic societies. At the same time, he has a responsibility to seek reforms which would, in his judgment, improve the Institute.
- 3.3 A member of the Association should avoid the appearance of professional impropriety. That is he should act in a manner which promotes confidence in the teaching profession even when explicit guidelines do not exist.

Updated October 2003 ♦♦

## **NEW: Summer@SAIT: Call for instructors, ideas, and FUN!**

by Phyllis Stanko, ICT Department

A new campus-wide project is seeking participants and really interesting topics for grades 7 - 12 students to participate in at SAIT.

**Dates:** July 5 - August 20, 2004

**Courses:**

- > usually one week long, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday - Friday

**Activities:**

- > age appropriate;
- > "things to do or produce and take home"; depending on the course, students will use SAIT equipment in SAIT classrooms.

**Participants:**

- > some courses will require a full-time SAIT instructor;
- > some courses will require a student teacher and be indirectly supervised by a SAIT instructor.

**Remuneration:**

- > negotiable in the case of a salaried instructor;
- > \$16 - \$18 per hour for student teachers.

**Purpose:**

- > to share the joy and interest of your content specialty with children who might not otherwise have this learning opportunity.

We are expecting an average of 5 children per week x the number of courses we are able to offer.

**Courses ready to go:**

- > Robotics, How to Make a Movie, Cooking for Teens, Digital Photography for Teens.

**Courses in the Energy Department**

- > chemical, petroleum, industrial, power, environmental and electrical areas.

All courses will take place on the main SAIT campus.

So ... next? Forward to [Phyllis.Stanko@sait.ca](mailto:Phyllis.Stanko@sait.ca)

1. your ideas for a one-week course, that would be fun to teach to 12 - 15, 12 - 18, or 16 - 18 year olds.
2. *your availability* — It can be delivered for one week, multiple weeks, etc., as it suits your summer plans.

*P.S. If you know of some adolescents and young adults who might be interested, ask them to join us at SAIT Open House in February 2004. ♦♦*

**THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET  
A LOT COLDER AT THE SALT POLE**



**BAD SANTA**