

Summary Report
Unit Review for the Faculty of Kinesiology, University of Calgary

Date of Site Visit: May 14-16, 2024

Names and Affiliations of Reviewers:

Ashley Stirling	Vice-Dean, Programs, Faculty of Kinesiology & Physical Education, University of Toronto
Amy Woods	James K. and Karen S. McKechnie Professor in the College of Applied Health Sciences, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Alison Oates	Acting Associate Dean Academic, College of Kinesiology, University of Saskatchewan
Michael Kallos	Department Head and Professor, Biomedical Engineering Department, Schulich School of Engineering, University of Calgary

Preamble

The external review committee visited the University of Calgary's Faculty of Kinesiology (KNES) on May 14-16 at the invitation of the Provost. In advance of our visit, the review committee were provided with the University of Calgary's Ahead of Tomorrow Strategic Plan 2023-30 and the Faculty of Kinesiology's Strategic Plan 2024-29, a self-study report with extensive appendices, a pre-set agenda for the visit, and a final report template which we have used to organize our report.

During our visit, the review committee engaged in two and a half days of interviews with senior administrators at the University and in KNES, the Dean, academic and business unit leaders, staff and faculty members, and undergraduate and graduate students. They had the opportunity to meet with Deans from cognate Faculties and participated in an Indigenous engagement session. A tour of the KNES buildings, including a walk-through of the research, classroom, clinic, and athletic spaces was also undertaken during the visit.

The review team wishes to thank each of the Provost and Dean's offices for preparing and facilitating such a comprehensive visit, and for the ongoing sharing of materials. They also extend their sincere thanks to everyone they had the pleasure of speaking with. All individuals were highly engaged and forthcoming in sharing their observations and experiences.

Executive Summary/Overview:

The mission of the Faculty of Kinesiology at the University of Calgary is to provide excellence in research, education and community programs related to human movement, sport, health, and wellness. In advancing this mission, the Faculty is a highly-ranked sports science school, consistently ranked in the top 25 schools worldwide and the top 3 schools in Canada (e.g., QS World Ranking for Sports-Related Subjects; Shanghai Global Ranking of Sport Science Schools and Departments).

In visiting the city and the Faculty, the transformational impact of the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Games is notable. Stemming from the hosting of the Olympic Games and the infrastructure built in KNES for these games, there is a commitment of KNES to the community, high performance sport, and University students for equal parts usage of the high performance facilities. This commitment to broad access and participation is still felt strongly today as a main driver of the Faculty mission, as well as the

strategic plans of the institution and the Faculty. It is commendable to see how this commitment still influences day-to-day operations and is proudly communicated by members of the KNES community.

In support of the University of Calgary's Strategic Plan, Ahead of Tomorrow, in 2023, the Faculty of Kinesiology launched its own Faculty-wide and comprehensive strategic planning process, resulting in Together, Stronger which guides the Faculty's priorities over the next five years. Three strategic themes have been identified in the plan: (1) Foster World Class Research and Innovation; (2) Enhance the Student Learning Experience; and (3) Connect with Communities. This strategic plan will serve the Faculty well in informing decision-making and areas of focus in both the short and long term. The strategic plan is deemed authentic to the Faculty, leverages the Faculty's strengths and unique opportunities, and aligns with the institution's strategic plan. Analogous Canadian Faculties of Kinesiology are shifting in disparate directions regarding the positioning of athletics and community recreation within the academic Faculty of Kinesiology. The commitment of the KNES mission and organizational structure uniquely positions KNES to continue and to expand their leadership role in the community, institution and the academic discipline of kinesiology nationally and internationally aligning athletics and physical activity within the academic mission of the University.

The Faculty has developed a successful environment for research and learning and stands out in its provision of opportunities for sports, physical activity and clinical programming for the broader University of Calgary student population, as well as for high performance athletes and the local community beyond the University. It is clear the Faculty of Kinesiology places communities at the centre of everything they do and is committed to working in collaboration and reciprocity with partners. The esteemed recognition of the Faculty, and the relevance of the Faculty's mission, were demonstrated by traditional research and academic success metrics and were also expressed in sentiments shared by leaders of cognate Faculties at the institution. The reputation of the Faculty is further reflected in the remarkable philanthropic support received in recent years. This philanthropic support provides a wealth of opportunity for KNES in the years ahead, and the funding is further augmented by significant recent and ongoing CFI and research grant funds.

Across the various administrators, faculty, staff and students we met, phrases we heard repeated include "astounding professors – all of them", "academic generosity", "community of collaboration", "feels like a privilege to work here", and "shining star on campus."

While there is a lot to celebrate about the people and accomplishments of KNES, to advance the goals of the strategic plan and to attract and support a thriving culture of faculty, staff and students, attention to Faculty-wide culture and transdisciplinary collaboration within KNES is critical. Specifically, there is an opportunity to further extend collaboration across siloes in pursuit of advancing the Faculty Mission as "One Faculty." At the same time as there is fantastic collaboration within teams in KNES (e.g., sharing of research equipment, scheduling of activity spaces), "often by necessity", major divisive siloes threaten the culture and advancement of the Faculty mission. KNES should seek to advance greater deliberate integration in the collective advancement of the Faculty mission as one Faculty unit and work with intentionality to break down the siloes currently existing between academics and the business units of the Faculty and within disciplinary siloes uniquely entrenched and reinforced by the operational management of research space and organizational structures of the Faculty – both physical and cultural. There is a sense that the activities of the business units of KNES beyond the Sport Medicine Clinic are not being fully leveraged for educational and research opportunities – particularly for undergraduate and professional master's students. Similarly, disciplinary siloes in research groups and physical research

space allocations (i.e., HPL), have fragmented the professoriate and are negatively impacting student and faculty experience and belonging in KNES, as well as limiting the transdisciplinary collaboration potential of KNES as a unit.

A transdisciplinary approach to advancing research and the collective integration of research, education, and community engagement aligns with the University's Strategic Plan, *Ahead of Tomorrow*: 1) Access to education; 2) Harness research and innovation to tackle problems; 3) Locate community at the centre of all we do; 4) Clear and simple processes, and existing unique interdivisional and transdisciplinary strength of the University and Faculty. This potential also aligns and builds upon the Faculty of Kinesiology's Strategic Plan, *Together, Stronger*, inviting an opportunity to continue to expand who is included and sees themselves as working within and in partnership with the Faculty of Kinesiology and identifying within the grouping of "Together" in *Together, Stronger*. The Faculty of Kinesiology can leverage its position as a nationally and internationally recognized Faculty to show how to maintain excellence with more diverse ways of knowing and doing, particularly in the research and teaching areas. The institutional strategies and TRC Calls to Action provide frameworks to follow.

Another major challenge faced by KNES is the ability to expand and renovate facilities, particularly athletic facilities which are currently "held together by love and duct tape", and this undermines any effort to grow physical activity programs. The same challenge applies to teaching and learning space, including necessary technological advancements to classroom spaces, and both lecture and teaching lab space restrictions currently limiting the potential for growth in student enrolment in current academic programs and/or potential academic program expansion.

Other challenges and opportunities for improvement include the structure of the KNES senior leadership team, specifically: the complexity of the Dean's responsibilities and the potential of adding a senior academic administrative role to augment the support for the Dean and strategic priorities of KNES; Faculty-wide social events; orientation and mentorship of new and mid-career faculty members; strategies to expand graduate education and support of supervisors in funding research-based graduate students; and the centralizing of space allocation including both research and physical activity space allocations and prioritization for space booking.

The Faculty of Kinesiology has accomplished many things in terms of research, teaching, community engagement and high performance. With strategic integration and a transdisciplinary approach to advancing the collective work and culture of the Faculty, KNES is uniquely positioned to continue and expand their leadership role in the community, institution and academic discipline of kinesiology nationally and internationally. There is an expressed desire amongst the KNES community to see further growth to continue to be exceptional. The recommendations included in this report are shared in this spirit.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FACULTY RESPONSES

January 17, 2025

Recommendation 1: Expand and Renovate Facilities

Faculty Response:

Infrastructure development is a key objective in the Faculty strategic plan, described as “the catalyst for growth.” We are pursuing several projects to expand and improve Kinesiology facilities.

New Research Building: We are finalizing the Taylor Family Kinesiology Building (TFKB) design. It is funded by \$15M (of a \$20M) gift from the Taylor Family Foundation, plus funding from CFI and other sources. The TFKB was approved by the Board of Governors on December 13, 2024. We anticipate construction will begin in the Spring of 2025.

Renovation/Expansion: We are in the early stages of planning renovations of the teaching facilities and academic spaces in our existing buildings. This project will leverage the remaining \$5M of the \$20M Taylor Family Foundation gift.

Critical Maintenance: We continue to work with the University to identify a plan for addressing a major asbestos abatement project.

Sport Facilities: We are seeking opportunities to improve our sport facilities. We have a funding request under consideration for critical renovations of the Olympic Oval. We are also in the early stages of exploring fundraising opportunities for new sport facilities on campus.

Recreation Facilities: Although no major expansion of our recreation facilities is planned at this time, we are exploring creative ways to repurpose spaces to meet the growing demand among students for recreational facilities.

Recommendation 2: Expand collaboration across siloes in pursuit of advancing the Faculty Mission as “One Faculty”.

Please see our responses to recommendations #3 and #5, which address this issue in more detail.

With regard to the specific notion of expanding collaboration across disciplinary areas (or “siloes”), we wish to highlight that we have launched the “Big Ideas” funding initiative from the Joan Snyder Fund for Excellence in Kinesiology research. The first two funded projects involve research teams from across multiple disciplinary areas in the Faculty. This initiative will result in enhanced collaborative research across areas.

Recommendation 3: Further leverage the activities of the business units of KNES for educational and research opportunities.

Faculty Response:

This response includes our response to recommendation #2.

A number of organizational and operational strategies are now in place to help foster integration of the business units, which include but are not limited to: (a) Unit directors are now voting members of Faculty Council, (b) Biweekly meetings for all unit directors are chaired by the Dean (in addition to individual monthly meetings), (c) Each unit is required to have "Collaborative Initiatives Across Units" in each of the three themes identified in the Faculty strategic plan, (d) Unit directors are required to report on strategies enacted in relation to these themes.

We have initiated research activities leveraging the units. For instance, there is a longitudinal tracking study with Dinos athletics teams along with several projects with specific sports (e.g., swimming). The Sport Medicine Centre is involved with over 20 studies. The Outdoor Centre is supporting academic research expeditions which study the effects of altitude on human performance. Active Living summer camps supported a research project in adapted physical activity. The Olympic Oval continues to house research facilities and support research projects.

Additionally, the units support graduate and undergraduate education. For instance, one recent initiative involved partnering with the Faculty of Graduate Studies to support the new on-campus internship program to provide Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities for graduate students. Furthermore, Active Living, Dinos, the Sport Medicine Centre, and the Olympic Oval also provide practicum opportunities (as well as paid employment) for undergraduate students. We recently created a video highlighting the practicum opportunities provided by several units, which will be used for domestic and international student recruitment.

Recommendation 4: Advance excellence with more diverse ways of knowing and doing, in particular, in the research and teaching areas.

Faculty Response:

In the summer of 2024 we hosted a Teaching & Learning Retreat on the topic of EDIA and Decolonization. The retreat commenced with a presentation of a review of literature on research published on EDIA and reconciliation in Kinesiology. A guest panel followed, featuring former students from equity-denied groups who shared some of their experiences as students. Content included general and specific barriers encountered, microaggressions, and discrimination experienced in their studies, along with suggestions for how we might move forward to be more meaningfully inclusive of our diverse student body. The retreat also included a facilitated workshop. The next step (fall 2024-winter 2025) involved hiring two EDIA consultants to support instructors in making changes to improve our capacity to facilitate EDIA in our course content, learning activities, and classroom atmosphere. The consultants have provided four short information guides for promoting EDIA in teaching. Additionally, the Associate Dean Academic provided each faculty member a book relating to EDIA in science and she has launched a book club to discuss key ideas contained within the book. In the Spring of 2025, we will host a second Teaching & Learning Retreat to reflect on lessons learned, success stories, and areas for future work.

We have also allocated the first round of grants, graduate scholarships, and undergraduate research awards from the Joan Snyder Fund for Excellence in Kinesiology Research. This funding supports

research that has a focus on women and girls, who have been underrepresented in kinesiology research to date.

Finally, we have made several changes to the physical environment to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment. For instance, we have installed a permanent exhibit in the atrium area celebrating women in sport.

Also see our response to recommendation #11.

Recommendation 5: Take a careful look at HPL and the rest of the Faculty to improve collaborative inclusive excellence in advancing the transdisciplinary research and learning goals of KNES and the institution

Faculty Response:

This response includes our response to recommendation #2.

We will note that the majority of academic staff report feeling included and engage in a number of collaborative activities. We have a strong sense of collegiality and support. Nonetheless, we recognize that, historically, a small number of academic staff have felt excluded, and these concerns were raised with the unit review team. In part, this may be related to the fact that two-thirds of the academic staff are in the HPL building while the remainder (primarily faculty members in the social sciences) are located in a different building. Improving our physical infrastructure may help to address some of the physical barriers to collaboration.

While there is not a single or simple solution to this recommendation, we feel that a number of small changes may be beneficial. For instance, we are looking at ways to leverage social events to create more cohesion across areas (e.g., Faculty-wide events at the Kick Off game and Crowchild Classic).

We will revise Terms of Reference for certain Faculty committees (e.g., research advisory committee and graduate education committee) to ensure there is representation from all the thematic research areas.

We have bi-weekly academic leadership team meetings (Dean, Associate Deans, Manager – Academic Programs and Administration), which is a forum to discuss matters that impact individuals across the academic Faculty. The Associate Deans are developing initiatives to promote collaboration and inclusive excellence.

The Manager – Academic Programs and Administration, the Manager – HPL, and the Director – Facilities and Operations are reviewing policies and procedures to ensure a consistent approach to the management of academic spaces (e.g., graduate student space assignment).

The Taylor Family Kinesiology Building is designed to include a number of flexible spaces that will support transdisciplinary research across all disciplinary areas of the Faculty. A CFI Innovation grant application is being prepared to support the final phase of the Taylor Family Kinesiology Building. This application is being led by researchers from all disciplinary areas and one of the co-leads is from the social sciences.

With regard to celebrating inclusive excellence, the Associate Dean (Research) will form a working group to create a framework for acknowledging faculty, staff, and student achievements and excellence. We anticipate the first suite of ‘recognition awards’ will be adjudicated in 2025. We have also embraced the DORA principles and have used them within recent recruitment processes.

We anticipate these small, but thoughtful on-going attempts to enhance collaboration will realize benefits in the long-term.

Recommendation 6: Augment senior leadership support for the Dean to advance strategic priorities of KNES.

Faculty Response:

The unit review team suggested the addition of a Vice Dean role or, as an alternative, a new Associate Dean role to support the Dean given the complexity of his leadership role. We are aware that Canadian Kinesiology faculties with a similar structure to ours (e.g., University of Toronto) and faculties that only have academic programs (e.g., University of Alberta) have Vice Dean roles to support the Dean. Although we recognize the potential benefits of this additional leadership role, the Faculty is unable to appoint a Vice Dean because of stipulations in the UCalgary Collective Agreement (i.e., a Vice Dean can only be appointed in a Faculty with 125 academic staff members).

Having considered the options, our response to this recommendation to augment leadership is twofold:

First, although we cannot appoint a Vice Dean, in the coming months we will assess the merits of elevating the role of the Associate Dean Academic to a “Senior Associate Dean” role.

Second, on November 25, 2024 we appointed a new role (Director, Kinesiology Facilities and Operations) to augment senior leadership. This new position directly aligns with the strategic plan and the focus on infrastructure as the catalyst for growth. It will oversee the operation, maintenance, and/or renovation of spaces for teaching, research and social interactions, as well as expand spaces to serve the university and broader communities.

Recommendation 7: Facilitate early and mid-career faculty support.

Faculty Response:

The Kinesiology Mentorship for Support program was re-launched with four new faculty members in fall 2024. This program supports connection between mentors and mentees across theme groups, creating opportunities for instrumental and psychosocial support as well as providing diverse perspectives on how our institution, and Faculty, operates.

In addition, the Research Committee provides feedback and guidance for early and mid-career faculty members. New hires and Associate Professors are invited to present their research programs to the committee. Typically, they return to the committee within 18-24 months to provide progress updates and receive further career support.

Furthermore, it is relevant to note that the “Big Ideas” Joan Snyder funding competition requires applicants to demonstrate that funding will lead to new collaborations. The two projects funded to-date have created major research collaborations involving a number of senior and early career faculty working together, which provides opportunities for the mentorship and new collaborations.

With regard to more recent changes to support new faculty, in the summer of 2024, we assigned an individual to be the onboarding coordinator. We have developed a thorough checklist of onboarding activities, which includes check-ins with the leadership team, assignment of mentors, and a range of other activities.

Recommendation 8: Develop a Faculty strategy to increase graduate student numbers and minimum funding guarantees for doctoral-stream graduate students (MSc, PhD).

Faculty Response:

The Faculty, led by the Associate Dean Graduate, is currently in the process of reviewing graduate student funding and developing recommendations for process improvement. The anticipated outcomes are (a) increased minimum funding guarantees and (b) a more efficient system for providing graduate student funding. The initial iteration of the revised funding strategy was discussed at Faculty Council on November 27, 2024 and we anticipate it will be implemented in the Fall of 2025.

We continue to work with the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) on graduate enrollment planning. FGS has introduced a new dashboard which provides detailed data on enrollment that was not readily available previously. We will be able to make data-driven decisions moving forward.

Additionally, it is relevant to note that we are reviewing the structure and enrollment capacity of the course-based MKin degree. Future considerations will include the development of certificates that could be ‘laddered’ into this degree.

Finally, we are exploring graduate student recruitment (e.g., targeted advertising both domestically and internationally).

Recommendation 9: Centralize space allocation including both research and physical activity space allocations and prioritization for space booking.

Faculty Response:

The new Director, Kinesiology Facilities and Operations, will be instructed to conduct a thorough audit of space use, allocation, and associated policies. We wish to note that a centralized space booking process has been in place for many years.

Recommendation 10: Continue and expand participation in cluster hiring initiatives to enhance diversity and inclusivity within the Faculty.

Faculty Response:

The Faculty will continue to engage in cluster hiring initiatives as they become available, pending budgetary constraints. Additionally, in the summer of 2024 we updated our Equity Recruitment Plan.

Recommendation 11: Dedicate more resources to uplift Indigenous Engagement

Faculty Response:

We have supported several initiatives/activities since January 2023 (e.g., pipe ceremonies, Indigenous basketball tournament, a reconciliation sharing circle). Since the unit review we have inventoried the Indigenous initiatives in progress, and formed a small working group to develop a more integrated and coordinated approach moving forward.

Recent initiatives/activities (i.e., since the unit review) include:

- The new Taylor Family Kinesiology Building is informed by principles of ‘decolonizing architecture’ and plans have been informed by an Indigenous architectural firm and reviewed by a group of University Elders to ensure that Indigenous perspectives are thoughtfully integrated into the design of the building. These consultations have resulted in a number of significant changes to the design.
- In the summer of 2024 we appointed a full professor with expertise in Indigenous research.
- We are in the process of creating an Indigenous Admissions Pathway for fall 2025 registration.
- We will create undergraduate and graduate awards for Indigenous students.
- We are in the early stages of developing a course in Indigenous Sport and Physical Activity.
- We continue our work with the Kakatosiiks association and seek to expand engagement and relationships with other Nations in the region.
- The Dean will have regular scheduled meetings with the Vice Provost (Indigenous Engagement) to advise on Indigenous engagement activities.