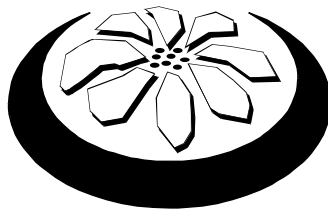


A Preliminary Plan for a Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies

Prepared for the Interim Council of Associated Centres
of the

UNIVERSITY OF THE ARCTIC



By

The BCS Program Development Team

Jon Haukur Ingimundarson, Chair

April 1999

Dear Members of the Interim Council of Associated Centres of the University of the Arctic,

As Chair of the Program Development Team, it is my pleasure to present the first report of our work on the development and delivery of a Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies Program. The Team recognises the importance this initiative has in giving real substance and meaning to the goals of the University of the Arctic. We believe that the following report reflects those values, and the mandate we were given by the Interim Council. It can hopefully provide a useful starting point, and a basis for discussion of the proposal during the University of the Arctic Interim Council meeting in Akureyri, April 11-14, 1999.

With dutiful regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jón Haukur Ingimundarson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Jón Haukur Ingimundarson, Chair
Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies Program Development Team
The University of the Arctic**

Introduction

In October 1998 the Interim Council for Associated Centres of the University of the Arctic established a Program Development Team (PDT) to carry out the “development and delivery of a Baccalaureate Program in International Arctic Studies” (see Appendix One). The Interim Council felt that the early development of such a program was important; not only would it help define the institution’s identity it would serve as a pilot of needed curriculum development and distributed learning systems.

The Council asked Jón Haukur Ingimundarson (Stefansson Arctic Institute and University of Akureyri, Iceland) to serve as chair and Richard Glenn (Ilisagvik College, Alaska), Aron Senkpiel (Yukon College, Canada), and Steven Young (Centre for Northern Studies, USA) to serve as members. Scott Forrest of the University of the Arctic Coordination Office was invited to serve as secretary. The Council also encouraged the PDT to seek additional members as the need arose. To this end, Outi Snellman (University of Lapland, Finland) and Robin Fisher (University of Northern British Columbia, Canada) were invited to join the Team.

Early in its work the committee recognized the need to construct a preliminary plan fully consistent with the goals, values and intended outcomes of the University of the Arctic as specified in the Terms of Reference set by the Interim Council (see Appendix One). More specifically, members of the PDT felt that the program must clearly reflect the following goals or principles. The program must:

- incorporate interdisciplinarity and focus on major themes, issues, problems and opportunities of the Circumpolar World;
- validate both Western and traditional learning systems as well as multiple languages and cultures;
- encourage the portability of the curriculum and transferability of credit across national boundaries;
- recognize circumpolarity and foster a sense of a circumpolar community;
- ensure the flexibility needed to respond to specific regional academic and professional needs;
- allow for the use of diverse delivery methods including new information technologies (web) and other distance learning techniques, course work, and field work to overcome obstacles to access;
- foster student and faculty mobility; and,
- build on, not duplicate, the considerable academic and professional expertise in the circumpolar community.

Rather than duplicate work already done elsewhere, or compete with existing programs, the Team chose to examine other northern or Arctic studies programs at the undergraduate level. These programs, partially listed in Appendix Two, served as models, showing past experience and best practices. As well, they are potential candidates for participants in the programs.

Another fundamental understanding of the committee was that the program must fulfil several citizenry functions, building connections between northern neighbours and developing a shared sense of the lands, peoples and issues that comprise the Circumpolar World. This program would enable knowledge and skills transfer from regions that have undergone certain experiences that can then share with others facing those issues later.

Arctic, Circumpolar, or Northern?: What's in a Name?

Early in its work the Team had to re-examine the name of the degree. Originally the Bachelor of International Arctic Studies had been proposed, as reflected in the Team's initial mandate. Others suggested that "Northern Studies" was more inclusive of the region. Ultimately, the group felt that "Circumpolar Studies" had the advantage of highlighting that the program encompassed the entire international region, not just a sector of it, and avoided some of the conceptual difficulties created by terms "Northern Studies" and "Arctic Studies." As well, it better captured many of the above-noted principles.

For the above reasons, the committee RECOMMENDS that the degree be called the **Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies (BCS)**.

A Circumpolar "Currency" for Education

One of the first challenges the group faced was to agree on a common understanding of what constitutes a baccalaureate degree in terms of length and level of study as well as the kind and number of instructional units, credits, or courses required for the degree. It was strongly felt that these needed to be answered in such a way as to ensure maximum transferability on the one hand and minimum administrative difficulties on the other.

To this end, the group agreed to think of the baccalaureate as a four-year "first" degree. It also agreed to use one of the more widely used post-secondary credit accounting systems and describe the baccalaureate as 120 credits normally completed at a rate of 30 credits a year (three per half course, six per full course) for four years. While this system is not used by all participating national systems, it has the merit of being the one "other" system that most educators have had experience converting credits to and from. That is, the use of this *lingua franca* of the academic transfer world would at least minimize the considerable problems of credit conversion or transfer.

Thus, the committee RECOMMENDS that the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies be a four year, 120 credit program.

The University of the Arctic as a "Credit Bank"

One of the major challenges facing the new University will be to track students who register for the BCS and take courses towards it, not only from the University itself and participating partner institutions but from other institutions as well. That is, a system will be needed to closely monitor the **transfer in** and **transfer out** of credits to ensure that the University knows when students complete the requirements for the degree and are eligible for graduation.

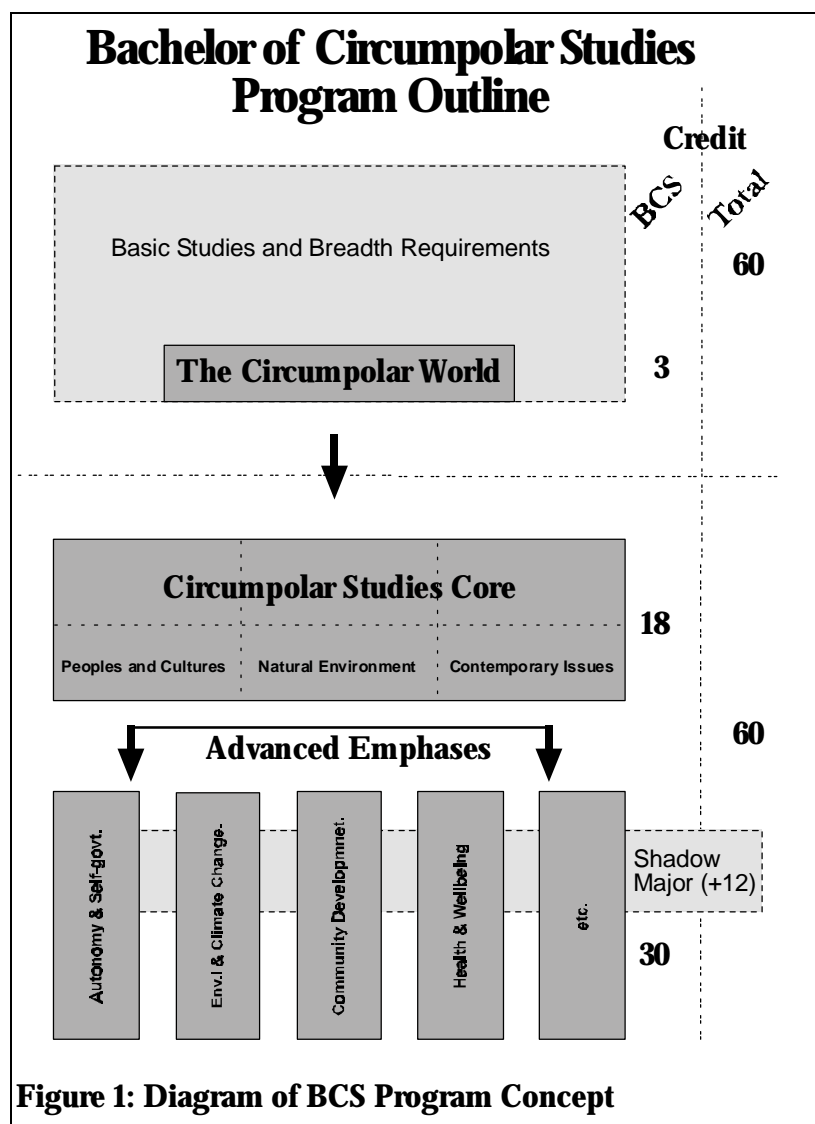
There are many excellent examples of **credit banking/transfer systems** of the sort needed by the University. These have been developed by several major open universities as well as by the European Commission to ensure student mobility amongst EU members states. These deserve study prior to the establishment of a University of the Arctic registrarial capacity.

The committee RECOMMENDS that a Registrarial Committee be struck to undertake the development of a University of the Arctic Credit Bank.

Building on Existing Capability

After surveying the “breadth” and “depth” requirements common to many baccalaureate programs and the current programming capability and needs within the region, the Team noted that there was little apparent need to duplicate programming already available at the junior level. Rather, the Team felt that it would be better to focus its efforts and the University’s resources on the final two years or sixty credits, the years in which students would normally focus their studies, either along disciplinary or thematic lines (see Figure 1). It is at this senior level that core courses in Circumpolar Studies and/or areas of issue-based or interdisciplinary study make the most sense.

Students could thus be admitted to the BCS after completing 60 credits or two years of study at their home institutions. Or, in other words, students could be awarded 60 credits towards the BCS on the basis of an equivalent amount of work done at their home institution. Thus, upon admission to the program, students would immediately begin to focus on developing a common understanding of the environment, peoples, and issues of the circumpolar North, a sense of the circumpolar community, and advanced knowledge and skills in one or more areas of special emphasis.



The committee RECOMMENDS that the BCS build on the existing capability of northern institutions and develop only the curriculum and delivery methods needed to support the final two years or sixty credits of study.

The BCS Concept: Circumpolar Studies Core

As reflected in the organizing principles of the BCS one of the intended outcomes of the degree is to encourage circumpolarity and a common understanding of the Circumpolar World, its peoples and the issues they face. If this is to be achieved the BCS should include a relatively modest slate of core courses required of all students. Viewed as a coherent or unified block of programming, the Circumpolar Studies Core would serve both as an introduction to and a cornerstone of the BCS. The PDT felt that the courses should be developed in the following three areas:

- The Physical and Natural Environment (Biophysical systems: geology, physical geography, biology, oceanography, climatology, glaciology, *etc.*).
- The Peoples and Cultures of the Circumpolar World (Sociocultural systems: anthropology, history, archaeology, languages, arts, religions *etc.*).
- Contemporary issues of Sustainability in the Circumpolar World (Human-environment interaction: political science, economics, social work, health sciences, education, law, *etc.*).

As the above list suggests, while these three areas overlap with or build on multiple areas of traditional disciplinary study, they do suggest cross- or inter- or multi-disciplinary thinking and analysis. Ideally, six credits (two half courses) should be developed in each area. This would mean that the core would comprise 18 of the final sixty credits. Taken together the courses of the core would not only give students the shared knowledge base required for advanced study in the remaining credits but also introduce them to the modes of thought and analysis required for it.

The PDT felt that the Circumpolar Studies Core is one of the areas in which the University of the Arctic can best make a contribution and best exert its influence. Given this, rather strict control should be maintained over the core to ensure that it lives up to the goals and values of the University.

Also, the Circumpolar Studies Core is an obvious place to focus the University's commitment to and efforts towards multi-mode curriculum development and delivery. The Core could be developed as a "ready-made" package which could be provided at all participating institutions. As well, the curriculum could be flexibly designed so that it can be offered in a wide variety of academic situations: in conventional comprehensive universities, in smaller northern colleges, as intensive semesters in particular locations, and especially through distance learning methods such as web-delivery and other open learning systems.

Clearly, the coordinated development and delivery of the Core would also make it an obvious choice for multilingual delivery. Once developed, the curriculum could be translated into other languages

The committee RECOMMENDS that the Interim Council approve the concept of a Circumpolar Studies Core. It further recommends that the Interim Council draw up (or ask the PDT to draw up) terms of reference for the development of the curriculum for the Circumpolar Studies Core. These terms of reference should ensure that the curriculum materials are developed for multi-modal (at least print and web) delivery.

The BCS Concept: Advanced Emphases

While the Circumpolar Studies Core addresses many of the University's major goals – specifically those which speak to building a sense of circumpolarity and shared understanding – it does not address the core belief that the University needs to support systematic, sustained, flexible, and advanced study in areas or about problems of particular importance to the region and its peoples. Also, given the emphasis that needs to be placed on interdisciplinarity in content and flexibility in delivery, the PDT felt that it needed to avoid all the disciplinary assumptions and presumptions associated with meeting the “depth” requirements traditionally associated with the baccalaureate degree, especially those associated with the concept of the “major.” These were felt to be too prescriptive and too static for a degree like the BCS or an institution like the University of the Arctic.

Given this, the PDT thought a new, more flexible concept of advanced study was needed. It began to think in terms of flexible configurations of advanced study that:

- focussed on specific themes, topics or problems,
- incorporated coursework from multiple disciplines,
- ranged in size from 24 to as much as 36 credits of study,
- could be developed by small partnerships or consortia of University of the Arctic partners,
- made use of various delivery options,
- could be added and subtracted as needs and funding changes, and
- could be language- or culture-specific.

This thinking led the PDT to the concept of the **advanced emphasis**: 24 to 36 credits of coursework devoted to the in-depth study of a major academic issue or theme or to the development of the knowledge and skills for a particular profession. Some areas in which advanced emphases might be developed are:

- Sustainable Development and Community Viability
- Local Self-Government, Northern Autonomy, Indigenous Management Regimes
- Rural Education
- Indigenous Culture
- Environmental and Climate Change
- Marine Resources and Maritime Law
- Tourism
- Health and Wellbeing
- Language and Language Training
- Information Technology and Applications

Following the completion of the Circumpolar Studies Core, students would then proceed to an advanced emphasis organized by one or more Associated Centres. While the University of the Arctic would not need to control the content of the coursework, it would need to define the areas of thematic or issue-based emphasis and approve specific proposals. The core values of the University of the Arctic would need to be maintained through this oversight function. For example, one criterion for the approval of advanced emphases might be the formation of partnerships between institutions of different sizes and from different regions.

The Advanced Emphasis allows for myriad programming and delivery options. Part of the concept's appeal lies in its ability to quickly and flexibly respond to specific needs and interests. For example, emphases could be developed by partner institutions and aboriginal organizations in response to the latter's training needs. It also offers students options. They could travel through a relatively defined set of courses, programmed by an institution or partnership of institutions. More independent-minded students could pick and choose at will from a catalogue of courses which qualify for a particular emphasis. It is here that student and teacher mobility would be of most value. Participants would be able to travel from their home institutions to others which have expertise and resources in their area of interest and have developed emphases that match these. This would result in excellent opportunities for comparative study, another natural "value added."

Finally, as suggested above, some emphases could be configured to serve as professional training programs in response to specific regional needs. Teacher, paralegal, nurse, or social worker training, among others, could be mounted as a professional/applied training function. This role would be particularly beneficial to those areas and communities which do not have the resources or expertise to meet their own professional training needs.

The committee **RECOMMENDS** that the Interim Council endorse the concept of **Advanced Emphases**.

The BCS Concept: The Circumpolar World

Two of the very practical questions addressed by the PDT was "How do you interest students in Circumpolar Studies?" and "How do you get students to commit to advanced study of the Circumpolar World, its peoples, and the issues they face?"

The PDT believes that, in addition to the Circumpolar Studies Core, the University should develop an engaging, "broad brush" survey course at the first or second year level. Called Circumpolar Studies 100 – The Circumpolar World. The intent of the course would be to attract students and identify Circumpolar Studies as a legitimate focus for continued study. To this end, the course should focus on engaging contemporary issues in the Arctic region.

Like the Core, Circumpolar Studies 100 should be developed for multiple modes of delivery (including print and web) at multiple sites, ideally by as many participating institutions as possible.

The committee RECOMMENDS that terms of reference be drawn up for the curriculum and materials of a survey course, Circumpolar Studies 100: The Circumpolar World, and that it be developed in conjunction with the courses of the Circumpolar Studies Core.

The BCS Concept: The “Shadow” Major

One of the major challenges that an interdisciplinary program like the BCS must face is attracting students from and securing partnerships with disciplinary-based institutions. Many prospective students, for example, might be discouraged from enrolling in the BCS if they believed that it might limit their opportunities for discipline-based graduate study (that often requires extensive undergraduate preparation in the discipline to be pursued at the graduate level).

Given this, the PDT felt that students should have enough room, enough unspecified credits, to complete a significant block of senior level programming in a conventional discipline at the same time as he or she completes the Core and Advanced Emphasis requirements of the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies. This “shadow” major could be an area completed in a discipline “contiguous” to the chosen area of emphasis, possibly with some coursework counting towards both.

The committee RECOMMENDS that ample flexibility, in the form of unspecified credits, be built into the BCS to allow students to complete a significant block of coursework in a traditional discipline.

The BCS Faculty Committee

The ongoing development and management of the BCS will require some form of committee with department-like functions. Answerable to the Interim Council (or Senate should one be established), the committee would have an important role in ensuring that the BCS remained consistent with the University’s goals and values. It would do this primarily by assuming responsibility for the ongoing development and delivery of the Core, and by assisting partner institutions with the development and recommendation (to the Council) of advanced emphases

To be effective the BCS Faculty Committee would need to be big enough to be truly representative of the Circumpolar community yet small enough to be able to effectively manage the program. The Board would be representative of the various constituencies of the region, and be responsible to the Interim Council.

The committee RECOMMENDS that the Interim Council develop (or ask the PDT to develop) terms of reference for a BCS Faculty Committee to oversee the ongoing development and management of the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies, and ensure the goals and values of the University of the Arctic are reflected throughout the program.

Governance

Although the PDT felt that the question of who might actually grant the degree – whether one or more partner institutions or the University of the Arctic itself – needs to be addressed, it determined that the issue was beyond the mandate of the committee. Nevertheless, the proposed structure of the degree allows for flexibility in this matter. The degree could be awarded by either participating institutions (in partnership with the University of the Arctic), or separately by an accredited University of the Arctic. This allows for the possible scenario that initially one or more of the Associated Centres might award the degree on behalf of the University of the Arctic until such time as the University is able to award degrees in its own right.

Timeline/Workplan

If the Interim Council accepts this preliminary plan and its recommendations, development of the BCS can proceed. Work needs to continue on several fronts. First, there is need to begin the development of the curriculum of the Circumpolar Studies Core and the introductory survey course. Ideally, the budget required for this work (see below) needs to be secured and the terms of reference developed so that the curriculum can be ready for delivery in September 2000.

Second, the PDT or (should the Interim Council wish to replace it or reconfigure it) the BCS Faculty Committee needs to develop detailed terms of reference for the development and approval of Advanced Emphases so that a Call for Proposals can go out to partner institutions which might want to undertake one.

Third, the Interim Council needs to determine how it intends to develop the registrarial capacity needed by the University. While this work falls outside the mandate (and expertise) of the PDT, it is critical to the future successful delivery of the BCS as well as other programs the University might offer.

The committee RECOMMENDS that the Interim Council approve the continued development of the BCS and take the necessary steps to secure funding for the development of the Circumpolar Studies Core, assign the work of developing advanced emphases, and begin developing a registrarial capacity.

Budget

Curriculum and Materials Development Costs (Multi-Modal Development of Seven Core Courses)		
Faculty Advisory Board	Development Phase	\$36,000
Curriculum Writing	\$12,000 x 7	\$84,000
Print & Teaching Materials	\$8,000 x 7	\$56,000
Web Development & Distance Ed.	\$6,000 x 7	\$42,000
Translation (Russian)	\$6,000 x 7	\$42,000
Total		\$260,000

Figure 2: Curriculum and Materials Development Budget

Conclusion/Summary of Recommendations

As this Preliminary Plan hopefully demonstrates, the establishment of a Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies, a program that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of the new University of the Arctic and the people that it intends to serve, is both reasonable and possible. For this reason, the PDT makes the following recommendation to the Interim Council:

- that the degree be called the **Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies (BCS)**;
- that the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies be a four year, 120 credit program;
- that a Registrarial Committee be struck to undertake the development of a University of the Arctic Credit Bank;
- that the Interim Council approve the concept of a Circumpolar Studies Core. It further recommends that the Interim Council draw up (or ask the PDT to draw up) terms of reference for the development of the curriculum for the Circumpolar Studies Core. These terms of reference should ensure that the curriculum materials are developed for multi-modal (at least print and web) delivery;
- that the Interim Council endorse the concept of **Advanced Emphases**;
- that terms of reference be drawn up for the curriculum and materials of a survey course, Circumpolar Studies 100: The Circumpolar World, and that it be developed in conjunction with the courses of the Circumpolar Studies Core;
- that ample flexibility, in the form of unspecified credits, be built into the BCS to allow students to complete a significant block of coursework in a traditional discipline;
- that the Interim Council develop (or ask the PDT to develop) terms of reference for a BCS Faculty Committee to oversee the ongoing development and management of the Bachelor of Circumpolar Studies, and ensure the goals and values of the University of the Arctic are reflected throughout the program; and
- that the Interim Council approve the continued development of the BCS and take the necessary steps to secure funding for the development of the Circumpolar Studies Core, assign the work of developing advanced emphases, and begin developing a registrarial capacity.

Appendix I: Terms of Reference for the Program Development Team

Resolution of the Interim Council:

The Interim Council of the University of the Arctic resolves that a program committee composed of representatives from the University's associated centres undertake the development of an international undergraduate degree program in Arctic Studies in a manner consistent with the following terms of reference.

Towards a University of the Arctic – A Proposal for the Development and Delivery of a Baccalaureate Program in International Arctic Studies.

The Goal – For the University of the Arctic to organize, on behalf of the member states of the Arctic Council, the development and delivery of an international, decentralized baccalaureate program in Arctic Studies focussing on the sustainability of the cultures, environments, economics and politics of the Arctic. As a founding program of the proposed University of the Arctic, a Baccalaureate of Arctic Studies would ensure the early and full participation of northern residents, particularly northern youth, in the new university and, by extension, in the sustainable development of their communities. Following the development of a detailed curriculum plan, and its approval by University Council of Associated Centres of the Arctic Board of Trustees, the university intends to proceed with the initial delivery of the elements of the program in...

The Need – The Circumpolar Universities Association's extensive feasibility study for the new University of the Arctic produced enthusiastic support from circumpolar governments, indigenous peoples organizations, institutions of higher education and research, and culminated in the Iqaluit Declaration by the Arctic Council to the effect that they, "Welcome, and are pleased to announce the establishment of a University of the Arctic, a university without walls, as proposed by a working group of the Circumpolar Universities Association. We note the kind offer of Finland to support the interim secretariat. We encourage the working group to continue its efforts and to consult with northern educational and indigenous authorities and colleges. We look forward to further reports on this issue and to seeking ways to promote the success of this initiative." This circumpolar community emphasized the following:

- The University of the Arctic must be more than *about* the region; it must be undertaken *in* the region, *by* the region and *for* the region. The early and full participation of residents from within the region, particularly youth, must be ensured. Northerners' rates of participation in higher education continue to lag behind those of other citizens of the member states of the Arctic Council. This is particularly true of the rates of participation by northern indigenous peoples.
- As the most pressing issue facing the Arctic, "sustainability" has overlapping cultural, environmental, economic and political dimensions. If the sustainability of one is to be ensured, the sustainability of the others must also be insured. Sustainable development within the Arctic is an international issue requiring new levels of dialogue and decision-making. It requires inter- or multi-disciplinary analysis and problem solving.

- The Arctic's institutions of higher education and advanced training are ideally placed to publicly promote sustainable development in the region and to provide the training and education needed to make it happen.
- New modes of electronic communication now allow for affordable, simultaneous, shared delivery of university-level curriculum throughout the Arctic.

The Model - The program development team will develop a model which will include:

- Building on the existing expertise and curriculum of participating institutions.
- A common core of courses required of all students (these would be designed to ensure that all students had a basic knowledge of the Arctic landscape, its peoples and the issues affecting them);
- The development of core curricula by leading faculty and researchers at participating institutions.
- Several themes of social and environmental science, such as language preservation and education; community development; ecosystem and and/or resource management; and indigenous or self-government.
- The distributed delivery of core courses.
- Opportunities for students to study, in person, outside their immediate region, but also allowing them to gain a Baccalaureate degree from their own home area should they so desire.

The Benefits – By building on the expertise already resident in the region's institutions and capitalizing on new communication technologies, the benefits of such a program would be enormous, even transformative. For example, it would:

- Provide a permanent forum for the discussion of sustainability and other pressing issues in the Arctic that would be both international and interdisciplinary.
- Provide easy, affordable and equitable access to students throughout the Arctic to a high-quality, relevant program of university study.
- Take advantage of the best of the world's Arctic expertise, make it available to students throughout the Arctic, and provide an means to disseminate important findings back to the local communities.
- Complement the research mandate of the University.
- Build a common core of Arctic Studies programming while at the same time allow for local adaptation.

- Build on the existing programs of northern institutions, thus maximizing students' opportunities to ladder into and out of the proposed program.
- Encourage the movement of students and faculty amongst participating institutions.
- Create electronic classrooms that would link students and faculty throughout the Arctic.

The Development Schedule

Following the establishment of the program development team, one of its first tasks will be to draft a preliminary timeline of the activities which it must undertake. It should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Review of existing programs and resources.
- Identification of key elements of the program.
- Tendering of the program elements to institutional sites
- Review of evaluation and accreditation practices throughout participating institutions in order to harmonize the matriculation of students through the University of the Arctic system.
- Development of a delivery schedule.
- Review and approval of initial program by the Council.
- Delivery of the first elements of the program through the Associated Centres.

The Costs

The establishment of a program development team and the development of a comprehensive program plan for a Baccalaureate in International Arctic Studies would cost approximately \$XXX,XXX. The plan will include a budget detailing both one-time and ongoing costs for curriculum development and program delivery.

Appendix II: Identification of Existing Programs (unfinished)

Sources of key research. Both of programs that we can emulate, and programs that will participate.

- Arctic Studies Program, Arctic Centre
- Masters of Northern Studies, Fairbanks
- Bach. of Northern Studies, UNBC
- Centre for Northern Studies/Middlebury College
- UNIS, Svalbard, Norway
- GETIC, Quebec
- Northern Studies diploma, Yukon College
- Inuit Studies program, Nunavut Arctic College?
- Scandinavian Seminar
- Finnmark/Sámi College?
- State-wide /open university model.

What information do we want? Just to identify?

Appendix III: Program Development Team Members

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