



## RESOURCES PLANNING TASK FORCE

### Appropriate Workforce for KPU: Report and Recommendations of the Subcommittee

#### **The Question**

How does KPU attract, retain and engage an employee cohort with the appropriate skills needed to

- effectively operate a polytechnic university in 2020, and
- realize the goals of VISION 2018?

#### **Committee's Approach to its Task**

The Committee began with examining how KPU had changed over the last twenty years and what changes could be expected in the next decade; members read different articles and shared their own experiences and observations. From this platform, the Committee examined what influenced employee behaviour at KPU and what implications past and anticipated changes had for KPU employees and the KPU workforce as a whole.

The Committee met five times between 28 March and 2 May, and again 5 June to consider the feedback from the Task Force.

#### **Changes at KPU**

Between 1994 and 2014 KPU changed from being a community college with 923 employees offering one and two year programs to 8,500 students to being a polytechnic university in 2013/14 with almost 19,000 students and close to 1300 "regular" employees augmented by another approximately 500 on casual service contracts. The kinds of work being done by employees, especially by staff and administrative employees, has changed considerably over that 20-year period. There have been increases in regulatory and accountability requirements, societal attitudes towards public bodies have shifted, and the region in which KPU operates has seen massive growth and demographic change.

Many of KPU's policies, practices and agreements related to employees have changed little.

#### **Changing student body**

##### **The KPU Student 2014 – 2020**

- Computer adapted and reliant; more likely to have been using electronic devices since early childhood; the generation raised on the 140 character sound bite
- Intolerant of poor service & difficulty finding desired information; likely to expect quick responses to questions

- Many attend part-time; majority are employed part- or full-time
- Increasing demand for summer and non-traditional class times
- Want increasing flexibility, accommodation for personal needs
- Expect engaging education delivery
- Under-prepared for academic success
- Collaborate well; may need support dealing effectively with conflict
- Less likely to come direct from high school; increasing number of 25+ students; lifelong learning
- Increasing cultural diversity

Are KPU faculty and staff prepared to meet the “new” student that will face KPU?

The Committee identified policies and practices related to meeting student needs at KPU that have changed little in the past 20 years. Some roles have stayed the same, while the amount of information the employees require to fulfil them has multiplied. In other areas resources have stayed the same while demands for service have multiplied.

- What adjustments must be made by KPU so that KPU can address changing student population needs?
- What adjustments must be made to KPU employee competencies to address changing student population needs?

#### **KPU’s Competitive Advantages as a Teaching-Centered Polytechnic University**

- Small classes
- Large program variety (124); laddering options
- Open access
- Non-traditional class times
- Convenient locations: large, fastest growing population centre in BC with the youngest population
- Emphasis on applied programs and experiential learning

#### **Challenges facing the KPU work force in 2014**

The committee discussed a number of challenges facing KPU’s workforce in 2014:

- People are expected to work differently, often in teams, mostly using computers.
- Much work is increasingly complicated and less structured or routine, often with few applicable rules, requiring employees to use analytical and judgment skills.
- Pressure to be quick is ever-present.
- Staying abreast of evolving technology and knowledge and organizational changes to stay current is challenging and can lead to cognitive overload. The vast increase in access to information has made work both easier and more difficult.
- Some areas face too many rules, that are not always applicable or suitable to current circumstances

- Different aspects of the KPU culture came up in discussion in different contexts – some are strengths while others are not.
- Working within systems designed for a very different institution in different times means that employees are often putting on “band aids” or finding workarounds for outmoded and sometimes dysfunctional systems.

#### **Characteristics of KPU’s Workforce in 2014**

As the Committee discussed how to find answers to the guiding questions, the following characteristics of the existing KPU workforce were identified.

- 35% of employees age 55 & over (39% of faculty) (See Appendix A)
- 27% of employees at KPU 15+ years
- Increased number and diversity of professional group at KPU
- Employee status and configuration increasingly does not meet current challenge – difficulty hiring in some areas
- The job evaluation process is frustrating for many as is the lack of clear career development processes

#### **KPU in 2014: Structural Conditions Impacting Employees**

- No clear KPU “brand” for employees and prospective employees
- Inflexible working conditions, especially for support staff
- Need to explore the impact on KPU roles as KPU students’ expectation of service changes
- Limited information regarding employee turnover, time-to-fill positions, and reasons for employee exit
- Some practices impede effective employee planning; no opportunities for graduated retirement
- implications of end of mandatory retirement not yet addressed

#### **KPU in 2014: employee currency**

- Gaps in employee knowledge and skills
- Need to use technology effectively; require investment in training (e.g., Moodle, SharePoint, Banner, Microsoft Office)
- A teaching–focused university must ensure effective educational practices in class and beyond
- Unfulfilled employee desire for training

#### **KPU in 2014: KPU culture**

- No requirement to take training
- Discomfort with measurement of and accountability for results
- Unmet demand for employee performance feedback
- Discomfort with accepting responsibility
- Many employees do not see selves as a contributing part of a larger whole
- Many areas work transaction to transaction rather than strategically

### **What challenges do these characteristics pose for KPU?**

The Committee discussed the need for KPU employees to be resilient and flexible. How does KPU provide an environment that enables people to deal effectively with setbacks and treat failures as learning experiences?

### **KPU Challenges 2014 - 2020**

- Facing increased turnover due to retirements and external competition for employees
- Imposed constraints put KPU at a disadvantage in terms of salaries for some positions; beginning salaries are attractive while those at upper levels are not competitive; need to become competitive in non-monetary areas
- Likely expanded hours of operation
- Greater diversity of programs and students (ages, ethnicity, needs)

### **KPU's External Constraints on Workforce management**

- PSEA/PSEC rulings; increasing oversight; concern about the predominance of community college needs in PSEA
- Work Safe BC: regulates working off-site
- Provincial consortia for employee benefits
- Collective agreements – many province-wide limitations/ clauses
- Variety of federal & provincial regulations; e.g. carbon emissions, energy use
- Pension plan regulations
- Declining government funding

### **What will attract and retain new KPU Employees in 2020?**

They are likely

- to be younger and better educated
- to have different attitudes towards work than “baby boomers”
- to place higher priority on flexibility (work-life)
- to be more technically adept

### **KPU's Competitive Advantages as an Employer**

- Varies with employee groups and positions:
  - Salaries and benefits for some
  - Working conditions for some
- Large employee pool in geographic area, but also only one of ten public postsecondary institutions in region
- Labour relations stability and predictability
- University status
- University awards and recognition
- Diverse job opportunities within one organization
- But . . . . KPU has not defined a clear brand as an employer; what should it be?

### **Implications of anticipated employee turnover 2015 –2025**

- Concerns about sustaining the complicated and lengthy hiring processes in the face of anticipated volume; will our search processes, especially faculty, need revision?
- Opportunity to re-think processes and, therefore, workforce needs and forms of employment: full-time, part-time and casual
- A great deal of knowledge will walk out the door; need to ensure adequate documentation, cross-training, succession planning
- Opportunity to re-think workforce needs; the needs of a polytechnic university are different from those of a community college. KPU needs to create a model for recruiting, deploying, training, supporting and mentoring its human resources that is appropriate for a polytechnic university in 2020
- Possible requirement to adjust our expectations – if we can't attract enough faculty how can we adjust how we deliver education and training

### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Workforce development:**

The Committee recognizes that, as an educational institution, KPU should be encouraging life-long learning of employees as well as students. KPU employees have identified their need for current and relevant knowledge and skills to do their jobs well. The importance of mentorship programs and succession planning was identified.

**The Committee recommends that KPU assign responsibility and resources to an office to enable all KPU employees to access a wide-range of work-related training and professional development opportunities including, but not limited to, such topics as technology and software used at KPU, manager/supervisor skills, diversity, change management, university processes (e.g., faculty search committees), instructional skills, and effective public speaking.**

**The Committee recommends that the office responsible for coordinating training and professional development develop an effective, possibly mandatory, employee orientation process, some of which is common to all employees while other topics are position and unit specific. Part of this orientation would be an overview of how different units within KPU contribute to the successful operation of the University as a whole. Providing mechanisms for continuous improvement of the orientation program, including feedback from employees throughout their careers at KPU, is essential.**

The Committee discussed the need for the University to support faculty in the delivery of excellent instruction, particularly as it relates to the distinctive student body KPU serves, the requirements for experiential learning, and the use of technology for education, but did not develop a specific recommendation on this topic.

#### **University Operations:**

The Committee discussed at some length factors that impede KPU from functioning as effectively as people would like, and determined that, while the nature of work and the workforce at KPU have changed considerably over the past two decades, many of its policies, practices and agreements related

to employees have changed little and are no longer fully meeting the needs of the University or many of its employees.

**With regards to recruiting and retaining employees, the Committee recommends that KPU immediately take steps to:**

- **Increase flexibility of position classification systems to respond to changing job requirements,**
- **Identify and advocate resolution of systemic barriers preventing KPU from attracting and retaining the work force with the skills the university needs,**
- **Implement changes to create employment flexibility wherever possible, and**
- **Enhance and develop data systems to monitor and inform operations.**

What constitutes the “ideal work force” will vary by Faculty and unit – KPU is such a multi-faceted institution that there can be no single set of characteristics. The Science faculty may need PhD qualified faculty while other faculties may need more field experience. What constitutes “employment flexibility” will vary widely: working from home for some, permanent part-time work for others, different configurations of working hours may suit other employees and their employment situation. Rather than being “rule bound,” KPU may find it more effective to shift to empowering more employees to act within a policy framework.

#### **Strategic Workforce Planning:**

KPU anticipates a large number of retirements over the next decade, other postsecondary institutions in North America have similar workforce profiles, and there is a significant aging of the general population, KPU may be challenged to attract and retain the workforce it needs. This situation encourages the University to re-think what programs and services it provides and how it provides them and what alternatives it has.

**The Committee recommends that KPU immediately begin a strategic workforce planning process to be completed by June 2015.**

#### **Adapting KPU’s Institutional Culture:**

The Committee noted that VISION 2018 describes a vibrant, successful KPU; achieving those goals asks KPU employees to change how they do things and how they think about what they do. The Committee identified the need to shift from a culture of compliance to one of innovation and problem solving. KPU’s changing student body, in particular more international and older students, and more students seeking degrees, albeit on a part-time basis, demand different ways of doing things so that the University better meets the needs of our student body. This is essential to KPU’s future well-being.

KPU is Canada’s only teaching centered polytechnic university. It is a different kind of university, one that all KPU employees can be proud of.

**The Committee recommends that KPU design events and campaigns to realize its unique mandate described in VISION 2018, and infuse all KPU’s distinctive cultures with pride of place, identity, and achievement.**

Events such as KPU Day strengthen University identity. Celebrating employee contributions to the University and external recognition in whatever ways are available encourage a sense of a KPU community. KPU position postings can talk about KPU culture, flexible work environments, lifestyle

advantage, career development opportunities, a more customer focused culture, and innovative atmosphere. However, changing an institutional culture is a long-term project requiring a larger group than this Committee.

It is important that KPU instill a “thinking like a customer” approach for all units. For faculty it may mean delivering education in different ways, and in student service and educational support areas it will mean anticipating student needs with appropriate processes and materials. Business units of the University and those dealing with the external community have different sets of “customers,” internal and external, whose needs must be considered in KPU’s process design and delivery. For all units, communication is necessary if KPU is to operate as a cohesive whole.

This could result in such actions as

- Determining methods to deliver one-stop customer service to students and employees (e.g., BCIT call centre, central kiosk, compulsory student orientation),
- Ensuring that staffing for university services keep pace with growth in programs, in student numbers and in student diversity, and
- Developing simple and efficient processes for booking a room, ordering supplies, getting event information, etc.

**Conclusion**

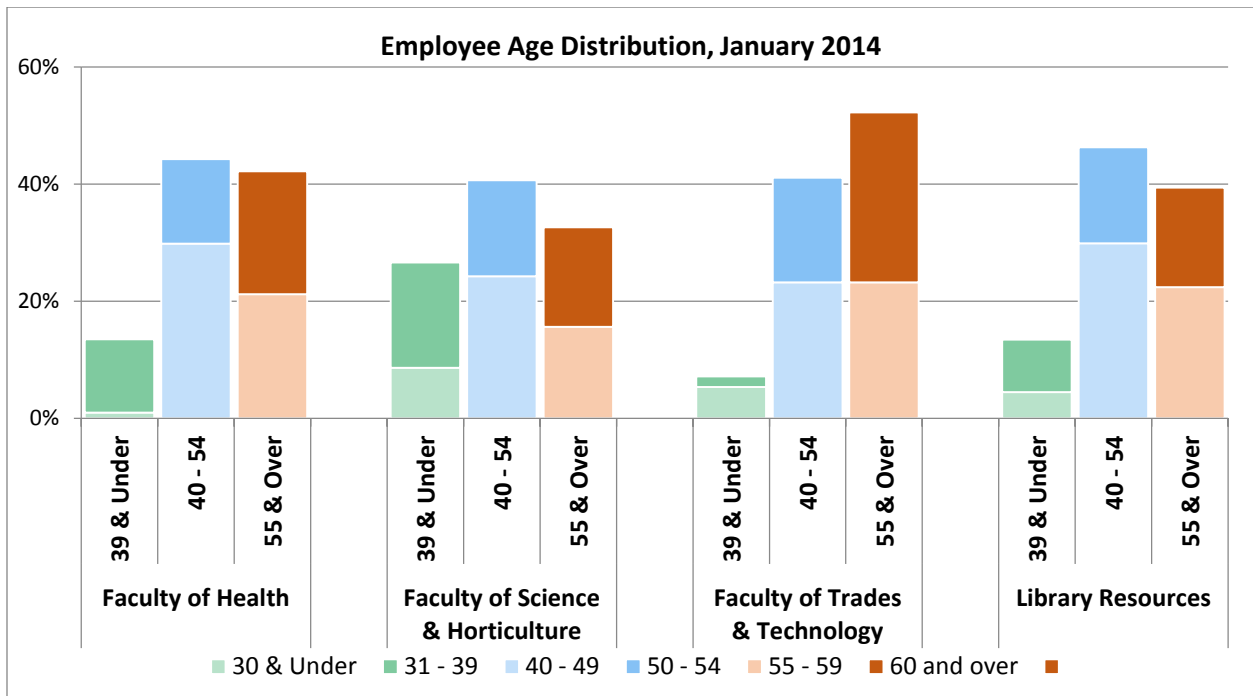
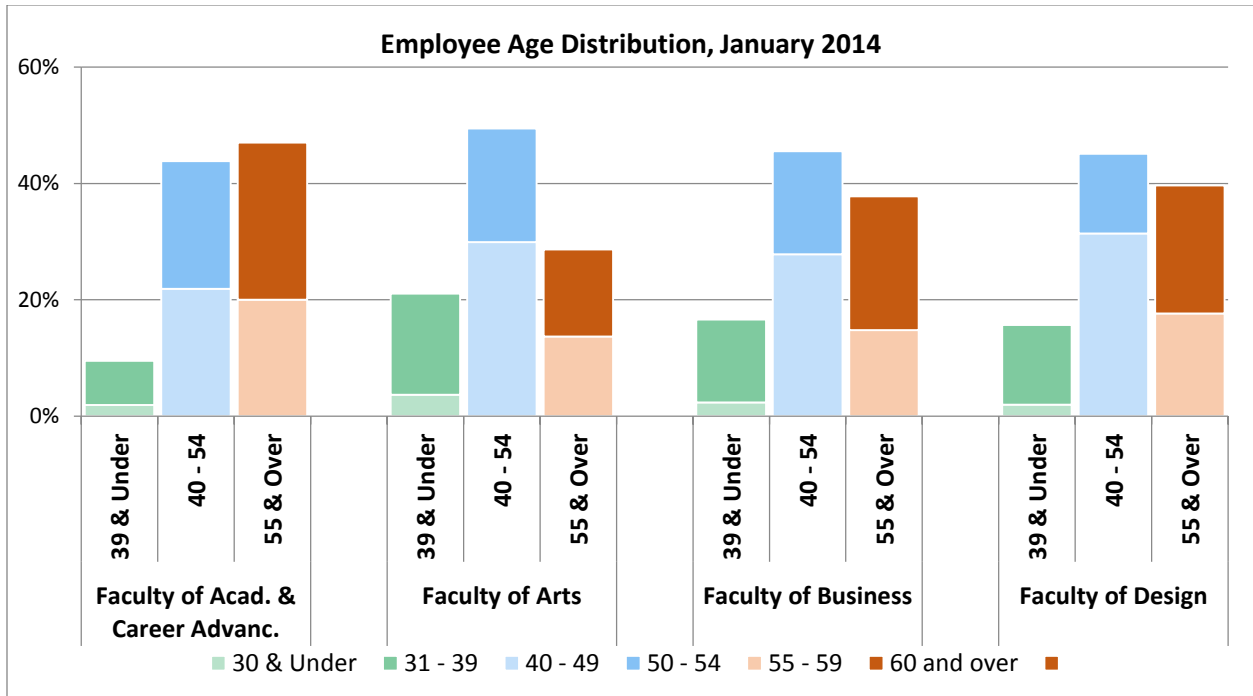
The Appropriate Workforce Committee requests the acceptance of its report and recommendations by the Resources Planning Task Force.

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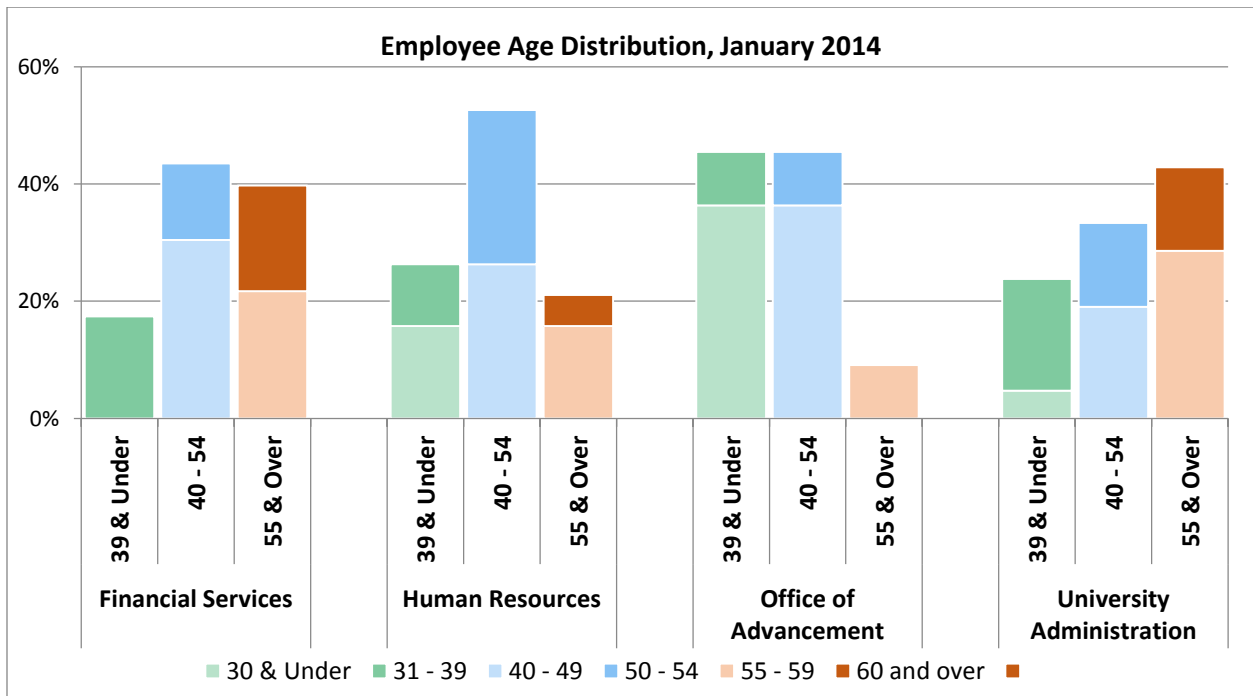
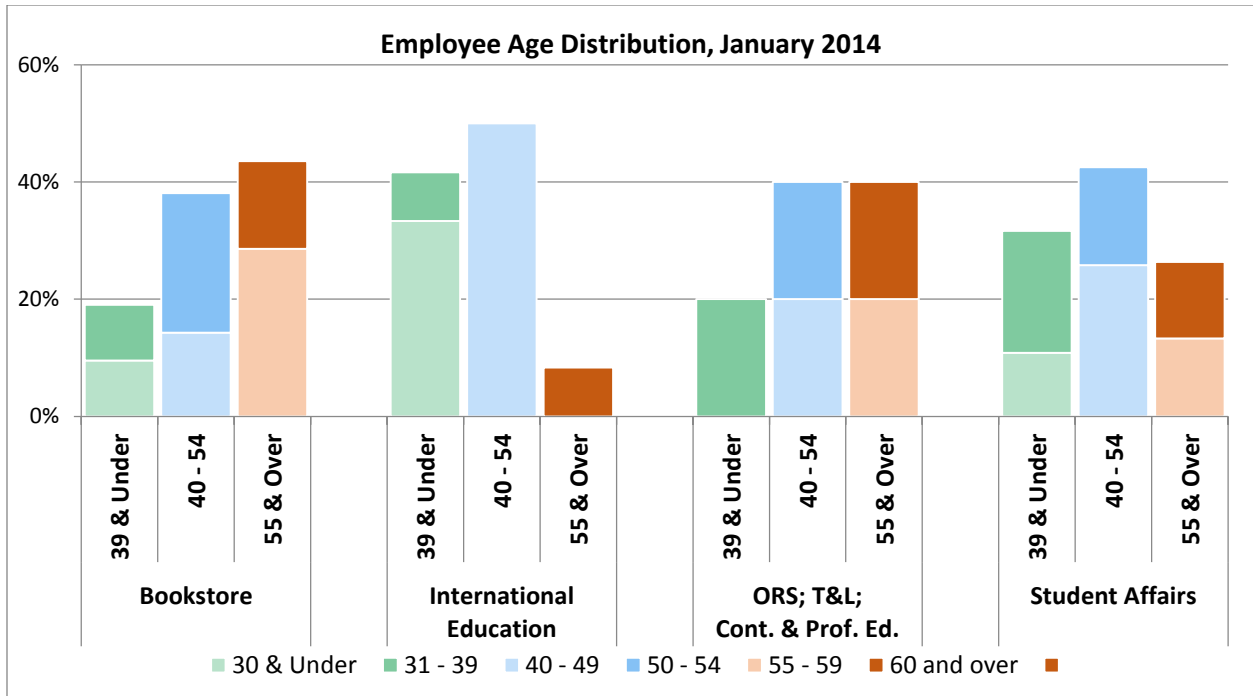
**APPENDICES**

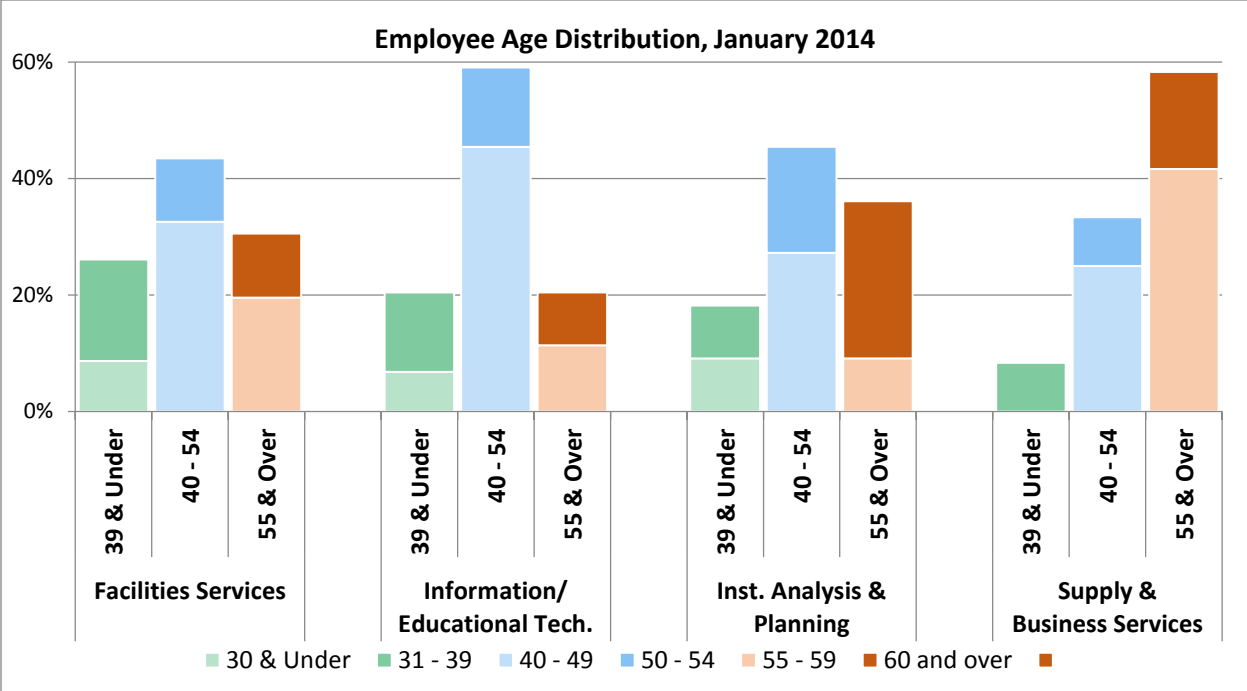
- A. Age Distribution of KPU Employees January 2014
- B. Reference Material
- C. Committee Members

**APPENDIX 1. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF KPU EMPLOYEES JANUARY 2014**









## APPENDIX 2: Reference Material

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**APPENDIX 3: Committee Membership:**

Harry Gray

Linda Heska

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Diane Purvey

David Harvey

Mike Harris

Laurie Clancy

Sukey Samra

Bob Davis

Support to the subcommittee:

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Kathleen Bigsby, Special Assistant to the Vice-President, Finance and Administration