Honk for the past year, lace up for more action

DOUG PEERS, Dean of Arts

POISED BETWEEN THE END OF ONE ACADEMIC YEAR and the start of the next, I am struck by how much we have accomplished over this past year. The last several months have been particularly active for the Faculty of Arts. Congress was a major undertaking and its success would have been inconceivable had it not been for the many faculty, students and staff who pitched in and made it a truly memorable event. Attendance topped our expectations, the weather cooperated, most delegates managed to navigate themselves without the intervention of search and rescue, and even the geese appeared to sense the significance of the occasion. It was an exhilarating eight days, though sadly we had to bid farewell to the beer tent and the temporary signage.
And then it was time for Convocation. There we honoured 1,110 undergraduates and 141 graduates from Arts, including the first graduating cohort of the Master of Public Service program. François Paré was honoured with a university professorship and Betsy Zanna’s deep commitment as an advisor to our students was acknowledged. All told, it was a great event, one which captured so singularly the accomplishments of our faculty, staff and students. I encourage faculty and staff to join me at the fall convocation when we gather to celebrate our next group of graduands.

Congress was not the only major initiative in Arts these past twelve months. We now have an approved strategic planning framework which was produced in a remarkably short period of time by a task force, ably and adroitly led by David DeVidi and Theresa Libby. The task force engaged in a whirlwind of consultations, the outcome of which was a report which not only spelled out eloquently a vision and mission reflective of our values and traditions but more importantly identified priority areas and principles that will give shape and meaning to our future planning efforts.

Strategic planning does not always rest easy within academic culture in general, and the Arts in particular, given our commitment to free and critical enquiry. But the changes that we face within the university sector, witness the Drummond Report, recent cuts to the tri-council budgets, or pressures towards ‘efficiency’ and ‘differentiation’, necessitate action on our part. Put simply (and inelegantly), either we plan, or we be planned for. Obviously I am a strong proponent of the former and over the next several months we will be assembling working groups to dive more deeply into the priority areas. Our objective will be to develop plans of action as well as measures to help determine if we are making headway. We will be seeking broad-based participation in these efforts and will get back to you with details as soon as we have assembled the working groups.

With the start of this new academic year, I would like to welcome our new associate deans, Tim Kenyon (Research) and Linda Warley (Graduate Studies), who will play vital roles over the next several years. And I bid A Bientôt to Bruce Muirhead who has decamped to Needles Hall to take on the role of AVP Research. The fact that an Arts person is moving into such a critical role is testimony not only to Bruce’s well-earned reputation but also to the enhanced standing of Arts. As of July we also welcome to campus many new faculty members. One of my great pleasures this past year (besides learning how to do the Waterloo shuffle around goose ‘presents’) has been the hiring of more than 24 faculty members. I don’t believe any other Arts faculty in Canada has had that opportunity, and the addition of so many promising researchers and teachers will help us to build upon the sense of excellence and community that was so abundantly evident over the 8 days of Congress.

Have a great summer – and I look forward to seeing everyone, if not over the summer (when not dodging geese on campus, you will usually find me in Home Depot – maybe it’s their tasteful use of an orange logo that has such a seductive effect on me), then next term.

A
Life beyond Waterloo for new graduates

AT WATERLOO’S SPRING CONVOCATION CEREMONIES on Thursday, June 14th, the Faculty of Arts celebrated over 1,200 students as they walked across the stage to accept their hard-earned diplomas. Given the number and range of programs available, students in Arts graduate with a vast array of knowledge, experiences, and new insights with which to meet their professional endeavours. We caught up with several of the new graduates to find out about their plans and aspirations as they take their next steps armed with freshly minted bachelors’ degrees.

EMILY PITTMAN
BA 2012, Joint Honours in Political Science and History, with a Specialization in International Relations and Global Governance; currently interning at the Canadian High Commission in Australia.

Co-op is great preparation for what’s next
The co-op program was one of the main reasons I decided to come to Waterloo, and it has prepared me extremely well for the next stage of my career. I worked twice in the federal government, and once each for the non-profit sector and humanitarian field, which has given me an inside look at what each of these different pathways offer...even before graduation!

Expanding university experience
Volunteering with various groups on campus has really shaped my aims for the future. I became passionate about refugees and displacement in my second year after joining the planning committee for WPIRG’s human rights conference (Waterloo’s Public Interest Research Group is a student-funded environmental and research group). At World University Services Canada (WUSC), I then campaigned with a team of hard-working students to implement the Student Refugee Program; the elation of pushing that through, and the joy of organizing the human rights conference, were some of the most memorable university experiences and inspired me to pursue humanitarian work on a grassroots level.

How to be a ‘good fit’ for that next step
My prior experience in the federal government prepared me well for the administrative duties required in Foreign Service. More than anything, though, it has been my experience living abroad that has helped me in my role here in Australia, a large part of which is to promote Canadian education to Australian students. My exchange to France, in particular, allowed me to speak about the challenges and excitement of living and studying in another country. The experiences of international friends in Canada have also been key in advising Australians about life in Canada.

Five years from now...
I would like to be doing meaningful and satisfying work at an organization that I believe in and am passionate about.

more »
RALON NAZARETH
BA 2012, Honours Speech Communication/Arts and Business Co-op; currently working at Waterloo’s UAE Campus as employment manager for Co-operative Education.

The benefits of education and soft skills
The university prepared me well academically, however, it was the soft skills I gained that really made an impact. The ability to interact with different people from all over the world and take in their viewpoints helped me mature as a young adult. The co-op aspect of my education gave me the experience I needed to begin my career. My professors made a profound impact as well...opening my mind to different opportunities I could pursue.

Learning from others’ experiences
Observing others at different stages in their life has helped me make decisions that are best for me. Seeing my older friends graduate and understanding the decisions they had to make in their careers, family, and relationships, gave me a background as to what can be possible when you graduate.

The right mix of majors, electives and more experience
My education and work experience has enabled me to communicate with a variety of professionals at different levels at UAE Campus. Having an education in speech communication and human resources management, as well as the ability to take electives that met my needs, gave me the necessary skills to easily fit into my current role. Further to this, my co-op experiences provided me with the maturity required to be successful in my current position.

In five years...
I would like to be doing something that could make an impact in the world and fulfill me personally.

JANA ZACHARIAS
BA 2012, Honours Drama/International Studies Option; entering Master of Digital Experience Innovation (MDEI) program at Waterloo’s Stratford Campus this fall.

Knowledge and skills spark new areas of interest
The Drama department at Waterloo gave me ample opportunities to put into practice the skills I had learned in the field of stage management. Because of this training, and the parallels the UW REAP (Research Entrepreneurs Accelerating Prosperity) program saw between stage management and project management, I was able to work with REAP as a project manager. This role both utilized the knowledge I gained as a drama major and sparked a greater interest in an area I hadn’t previously considered.

Taking advice and running with it
I have been guided by a few very influential people at the University, who have been genuinely interested in my future and concerned with helping me achieve everything I put my mind to. The knowledge and advice I have been given has been invaluable, and I wouldn’t be graduating if it wasn’t for the constant support I received.

Creativity enhances that good fit
I think that businesses are looking more and more for creative people. Growing up in and completing my undergraduate studies in the theatre has taught me to be both extremely precise in how I manage myself and innovative when it comes to problem solving. This, and my experience working with REAP, a program that strives to develop creative solutions in the growing fields of technology and media, has prepared me for the MDEI program.

Simply put, be happy...
Setting goals is important, but I also have come to appreciate the excitement of pursuing new and unexpected opportunities. I wouldn’t be here now if I hadn’t chosen to take a leap of faith, so I guess quite simply, in five years I’d like to be happy.

simply put, be happy...
Strategic Planning Task Force

co-chairs reflect

IT WAS A SURPRISE FOR BOTH OF US to be invited to chair the Arts Strategic Planning Task Force. While we’ve joked in our small group meetings about the bad advice the Dean must have been relying on when he appointed us, we were honoured that he was willing to entrust us with this job. Now that the work of the Task Force is completed, we’d like to offer some reflections on the process.

Planning with sentient beings
We were gratified by the reactions we got from people when we met with them. We heard a good deal of scepticism about the value of strategic planning processes. But we also heard from many people that in their long careers at Waterloo, nobody had ever asked them the kinds of questions the Task Force was asking. We worked hard to make clear that our report was not written in advance, that the Dean was not secretly writing the plan in the background, and that we were genuinely of the view that any strategic plan only has value if it is built from the ground up.

Remarkable commitment to students
While one of us has been around Waterloo for a while and both of us are fairly involved in Faculty-level activities, we were startled and impressed by the number of high quality, innovative and important teaching and research activities taking place in every part of the Faculty. The faculty and staff in Arts display a remarkable commitment to giving students a chance to become well-rounded and productive members of society, and to advancing knowledge in their fields.

A force to be reckoned with
Finally, we want to say something about the people who served on or provided support to the Task Force. We had a hand in deciding who would be on the Task Force, so expected them to be good. But the intelligence, strategic sense, dedication and willingness to work together shown by this committee made being part of this process a special thing. We think the final report does not read (too much) like it was written by a committee, even though there was much wrangling over wording. There are good turns of phrase due to every member of the group. Moreover, the staff who consistently and cheerfully met our unreasonable demands made our lives much easier and made the final report much better.

We hope members of the Arts community will find themselves reflected in our report, and that the report serves as a useful basis for the next phase of planning. We thank everyone who took the time to meet with us, write to us, call us, or reply to our calls for feedback. It has been a very intense process for us, but one we are glad to have been part of.
Congress 2012: Skid calls it a wrap (and carries on)

I KNOW WHAT YOU’RE THINKING: Congress is over, so why do I have to read another Skid-missive about it? Well, you don’t. But I’ll carry on to congratulate and thank everyone in the Faculty of Arts for such fantastic support during Congress. From the parking attendants to the a/v technicians, from the caterers and retail services employees to the volunteers who looked like gigantic Hi-Liters in their phosphorescent t-shirts – hundreds of people pitched in to make sure Congress was a success, and we owe them a huge thank-you.

Actually, if you read this piece you might learn something. Did you know we hosted about 3,500 delegates on our campus during the week, or that 7,500 people in total registered for Congress 2012? That Food Services served 10,000 cups of coffee? That the biggest complaint reported was not about parking or signage, but that Doug Peers didn’t actually hold office hours in the beer tent despite my having started a rumour saying he would?

You might also appreciate knowing that the wonderful Big Thinking lectures were filmed by the Waterloo Arts spin-off REAP Media and are available for viewing. You’ll be disappointed that Margaret Atwood and Jane Urquhart didn’t consent to having their lectures recorded, but all the other big hitters, such as His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Sidonie Smith, and Chris Hedges are represented in full YouTube glory.

And would you be surprised to find out how active our faculty was during Congress? Scores of faculty members and graduate students gave papers or participated in panels and other discussions or organized their associations’ meetings. Here’s a tip of the iceberg of Arts involvement: Rick Helmes-Hayes was presented with an award for the best monograph by a Canadian sociologist. John H Smith, Waterloo’s Diefenbaker Memorial Chair in German Literary Studies, gave a keynote address to a packed lecture hall (and it was not a small hall!) on the importance of humanist scholarship in an uncertain world (you can read about it here). Martin Cooke organized a symposium on the use of well-being indicators to measure community development, and Jay Dolmage chaired a panel on creativity and innovation from a disability studies perspective. And our colleagues Angela Roorda, Gerry Boychuk, Shannon Dea, Lynne Taylor, Monica Leoni, Jasmin Habib, and Lorne Dawson participated in career development sessions for visiting graduate students.

I could go on, but I think you get the point: Congress 2012 was an exciting event for the Faculty of Arts. Thanks to all of you for making it happen.

James Skidmore with Jane Kolb (L) and Gabrielle Smith (R) of Student Success.
A farewell to Arts

IT HAS BEEN A TUMULTUOUS FOUR YEARS! When I took on the post of associate dean of Arts, graduate studies and research, in 2008, little did I realize how frustrating, fulfilling and downright exciting it would be. A few things come to mind – the development of professional Masters programs, Stratford, OnBase, funding challenges and funding models, and grad growth and then its retrenchment. I would suspect that no other four-year period in the history of uWaterloo Arts has matched that in terms of the activity that characterized the graduate studies portfolio. I came to appreciate the efforts of graduate officers as we met once per month under the auspices of the Graduate Affairs Group, or GAG, an unfortunate acronym, to say the least. Still, I suppose it’s better than UGAG, which is, of course, its undergraduate equivalent.

The research side of the coin was similarly affected by the winds of change that blew through the University following the publication of the Sixth Decade Plan. While Arts’ researchers have always been active, senior administration became much more aware of that fact following a significant increase in faculty SSHRC success rates, as well as those of NSERC and CIHR. A highlight for our office was the January 2011 SSHRC success celebratory dinner. It was an absolute pleasure to be a part of acknowledging so many SSHRC grant holders and to confirm the ubiquity of external funding among Arts colleagues. SSHRC’s executive vice-president, Carmen Charette, attended, as did Waterloo’s president, Feridun Hamdullahpur, and other members of senior administration. My associate dean, research, colleagues from the other faculties also made a point of breaking bread with Arts on that occasion, signaling perhaps a new awareness of Arts and its research capabilities.

And what about the people in the associate dean’s office? As everyone in uW Arts knows, Carolyn Nelson has provided a rock of stability in the swirling eddy that was (is?) grad studies at Waterloo. I am continually amazed at her ability to find any piece of paper I ask for, no matter how long ago it was filed. She is also the best recycler I have ever seen. But what’s more, she is the institutional memory of the office, combining intelligence and organizational ability. Angela Roorda is the research rock in the faculty. From overseeing to advising to facilitating Arts grant applications to the Tri-Council and others, she has been instrumental in raising the Faculty’s research profile and its success. Finally, Wendy Philpott has been key to recruiting new grad students from other universities to think seriously about Waterloo as a destination. She has travelled the highways and by-ways of graduate education while also very successfully taking on the demanding role of Arts communications. It has been a rare privilege to work with these three incredibly accomplished women, and I will miss them as office colleagues. The one thing I do know is that Linda Warley, the incoming associate dean, graduate studies, and Tim Kenyon, who will occupy the research side, are in good hands. A
Feedback, please

Inside Arts is published five times per year: two Fall issues, two Winter issues, and one Summer issue. Send your comments and ideas to wphilpott@uwaterloo.ca.

LOOK at the blog philosophersinwaterloo, created by professors Shannon Dea and Mathieu Doucet – a "completely informal" (yet awesome) guide to eating, coffee-drinking, shopping and otherwise experiencing K-W. Originally produced for visiting colleagues during Congress, the blog continues as a resource for newcomers to campus and the rest of us. Thanks Profs Dea and Doucet!

And here’s Bill Chesney – looking très attirant doing stand-in for Doug Peers at the Keystone picnic. If only the hair net was available in orange!