

## Faculty of Arts Strategic Planning 2012

Submitted by the Strategic Planning Task Force to the Dean of Arts, May 4, 2012

# DESCRIPTION OF CONSULTATION PROCESS

In late 2011, the Dean of Arts, Doug Peers, initiated the process of developing a strategic plan for the Faculty of Arts at the University of Waterloo. His goal in doing so was to develop a plan that reflects the goals, strengths and aspirations of the people who make up the Faculty that can serve as a guide to decision making over the next several years. He envisioned this as a multi-stage process. The first step, which he hoped to have completed and approved by the Arts Faculty Council by late spring of 2012, was to involve broad consultation with the people who make up the Faculty of Arts and others with a stake in its success to create a high-level strategic plan. Later phases of the planning process would work out more specific implementation plans for the faculty as a whole, including metrics to measure success in achieving the high-level goals identified in the first phase, and the creation or updating of plans for the academic units in Arts in light of the Faculty plan.

## Task Force

The Dean first approached two senior faculty members, Theresa Libby of Accounting and Finance and David DeVidi of Philosophy, about chairing an [Arts Strategic Planning Task Force](#). In consultation with the Task Force Chairs, the Dean then invited other members to be part of the task force, including faculty members (Katherine Acheson of English Language and Literature, Kieran Bonner of Sociology and Legal Studies and St Jerome's University, Tara Collington of French Studies, Myra Fernandes of Psychology, Doug Kirton of Fine Arts), staff members (Eric Breugst of the Arts Undergraduate Office and Barb Yantha of Arts Computing), two graduate students (Jill Campbell-Miller from History, and Kyle Scholz of Germanic and Slavic Studies), and two undergraduate students (Bradley Moggach of Political Science and Alana Vandervoort of Sociology and History).

## Goals

The first item of business for the Task Force was to decide what it would try to accomplish in the time available. The goals set were: a) to consult broadly with those who would be most affected by and essential to the success of an Arts Strategic Plan; b) to produce a high-level plan that reflected the feedback received, was both ambitious and realistic, and that set out the distinctive and valuable features of Arts at Waterloo; c) to provide useful information for the more detailed planning process to follow. We decided that the initial high-level plan should include a mission statement, a vision statement, a list of the key values that motivate what is done in Arts, a statement of the principles that will guide activity and decision-making in Arts, and a list of strategic priorities for the next few years. As well, we established a [Strategic Planning website](#) (hosted within the Arts website) for communicating process updates, posting meeting schedules, and facilitating online feedback and discussion.

## Consultation meetings

Because the Task Force was working with a short time-line but wanted to consult broadly, the Task Force adopted a strategy of relying primarily on small group meetings, supplemented by other research, as the first phase of its work. The Task Force developed a [list of “discussion starter” questions](#) to be used at each meeting, slightly modified for different groups. At least one of the Task Force chairs attended each small group meeting along with another member of the committee. For most meetings, notes were taken by a support person hired by the Dean’s office. The raw notes of the discussion were edited for clarity and compressed by the Chair who attended the meeting, then read for accuracy by the other task force member. These notes were then shared with all members of the Task Force. In each meeting the Task Force encouraged people to speak frankly, feeling that gathering opinions when people felt bound, for instance by concerns of collegiality or for fear of “political” consequences of speaking out about something they regarded as misguided, was not a worthwhile exercise. The notes of these meetings are therefore not being shared beyond the Task Force, except insofar as they may be useful to groups put together at later stages in the strategic planning process.

We also encouraged people to contact task force members directly or to provide feedback through the Task Force website if there were things they felt should be said but that they would not feel comfortable saying in a meeting.

Forty such [meetings](#) were held :

- One meeting with each Department in Arts, and with the School of Accounting and Finance
- Four meetings for groups of Arts staff: each staff member was invited to at least one meeting
- One meeting with faculty in each of the Federated University and Associated University Colleges (FUACs)
- One meeting for staff from the four FUACs
- Two meetings with groups of graduate students (all graduate students in Arts were invited to attend these meetings)
- One meeting with a group of undergraduate students
- Special meetings of groups in Arts
  - One with interdisciplinary programs and the Balsillie School of International Affairs
  - One with the faculty and staff at the Stratford Campus
  - A special session of General Group with department chairs
- Meetings with “allies” of Arts

- The Arts affiliated academic librarians
  - The Centre for Teaching Excellence
  - The Centre for Extended Learning
  - Cooperative Education and Career Services
  - The Associate Deans, Undergraduate from the other Faculties at Waterloo
- Three meetings with Alumni, two in Toronto and one in Waterloo
  - One meeting with retired faculty and staff

It was particularly challenging to get useful levels of response from undergraduate students. The Task Force therefore held one meeting with a group of interested undergraduates, but has relied primarily on research carried out by others. In particular, we have made use of research carried out for the University's Undergraduate Recruiting Office, and of a very useful survey about space carried out in 2012 by the Arts Student Union. Since there will be somewhat longer timelines for future, operational planning, it will be possible and beneficial to arrange more direct undergraduate student input in the process.

## Data

The Task Force also worked with the Associate Deans, and Robert Park, the Associate Dean, Computing in particular, to gather [data](#) that might be relevant to the Task Force. Once a suitable report was available, the Task Force arranged for it to be made available to all faculty and staff in the Faculty via the Strategic Planning website .

## Discussion and feedback

The Task Force met regularly during the Winter 2012 term to discuss feedback as it was gathered. On March 23, and again on April 4, the Task Force posted material reflecting some of what it had heard in the consultations to those points on its website. Messages were sent to the whole Arts community asking for responses to the posted material (see <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/strategic-planning/reactions-wanted> and <http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/strategic-planning/more-reactions-wanted> ).

## Developing the report

In April, the Task Force met regularly to go through the challenging process of distilling what we have heard and making decisions about what would constitute a worthwhile strategic plan in light of it. The report produced was submitted to Dean Peers on May 4.

## Support to the process

The Dean's office provided important support throughout the process. The Task Force would like to express its thanks to all those involved, in particular: Harman Brar, who was hired on a short term contract and did an excellent job recording the discussions at most of the small group meetings; Sherilee Diebold-Cooze who had the thankless job of arranging all the meetings, along with other administrative jobs for the committee; Wendy Philpott who created and maintained the website and provided important advice about communications; Patricia Cook who looked after arrangements for some of the special meetings with people not usually on campus; and Lynne Jelokhani-Niaraki, who kept records of the Task Force meetings and coordinated all the other support.