After reading 19th century prose all day...

DOUG PEERS, Dean of Arts

The end of term finds me in my happy place as I sneak in a week at the British Library where I continue to plough through records that I’ve recently unearthed after searching for nearly thirty years. Now that I have found them, I am like a kid at Christmas. Once the library closes, seasonal ales and a nice London porter accompanies marking final papers from my graduate class. And to top it all off, Tate Britain has opened an exhibition on Art and Empire for which I will be in the queue on Sunday.

All told, this trip caps off a great year, one in which the many accomplishments of faculty, students, and staff were acknowledged at our annual Celebration of Arts. I was delighted that we could be joined on that happy occasion by the president, provost, and vice president research, all of whom spoke passionately about our contributions to the university and to our wider communities.

The undeniable markers of excellence in teaching and research are powerful reminders of the strength of the Faculty. At the November meeting of Arts Faculty Council I provided a progress update on the Faculty Strategic Plan, and we have repeated that update in this issue.
Much remains to be done, but I am pleased to report that we have made great progress on so many fronts. Looking ahead, we will be putting a lot of emphasis on spreading the message about our undergraduate programs. One of the most trenchant conclusions of the Strategic Enrolment Management report we commissioned is that, while we excel in converting applications to admissions, we need to boost initial applications.

We also want to reach out to the wider community. Following on the success of our panel on radicalization and security at the Kitchener Public Library last spring, we recently organized a public panel on the local and global legacies of the Battle of Waterloo - by squeezing it in earlier this month, we still fell within the 200th anniversary year of the Battle. Hosted by the Waterloo Public Library, it was a standing room-only event as professors Lynne Taylor, Julia Roberts, Kate Lawson, and myself ranged widely from Byron and the heroic, to the silencing of local voices in the naming of our city, to how Waterloo played out in popular memories in Europe and the Empire. Given the popularity of these off campus events, we are planning more for the future. I would happily receive suggestions for topics and speakers.

There are still more instances of how significantly Arts intersects with wider society. 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence was an important campaign led by Women’s Studies and involved efforts of numerous Arts students, faculty and staff. Heather Smyth and David Moscovitch, Arts’ HeForShe advocates, are working across the Faculty and beyond to inspire engagement and action toward gender equity on campus. And I can readily dispel popular stereotypes of academics cocooned in their ivory towers by pointing to the many faculty, staff, and students involved in charitable and social justice activities, whether it is locally through the United Way or globally through efforts to support Syrian refugees. Stay tuned as there will be some more initiatives launched in the new year. In closing, let me wish you and your families the very best of the holiday season and a safe, healthy, and happy new year.

Celebration of Arts: raising a glass to honour many

On December 2, members of Arts and the University leadership gathered to honour many accomplishments across the Faculty of Arts, and especially the seven recipients of the 2015 Arts Awards for teaching, service, and research. Congratulations to them all!

Teaching Award
Jonathan Fugelsang, Psychology
Bessma Momani, Political Science

Research Award
Joanne Wood, Psychology

Service Award
Tara Collington, French Studies
Joan Coutu, Fine Arts
Veronica Kitchen, Political Science
Sheila McConnell, MPS program
Proust questionnaire

The recipients of the 2015 Arts Awards for Service do the Proust Questionnaire.

Tara Collington (French Studies), 2015 Arts Award for Service

What is your idea of happiness? Sitting in the sunshine, reading, in the Luxembourg Garden in Paris with my husband.

What is your idea of misery? Being stuck in an interminable security-check line at the airport, then being stuck in a plane for hours to reach the Luxembourg Garden—I am a miserable traveler.

Who are your favourite fictional characters? Hadrien (from Yourcenar’s Mémoires d’Hadrien), Zénon (Yourcenar again, L’Oeuvre au noir), Dorothea Brooke (Middlemarch).

What is your favourite food or drink? Anything made by my mother, who is Austrian, and an amazing cook.

What natural talent would you most like to possess? The ability to play any song on the piano, by ear.

Joan Coutu (Fine Arts), 2015 Arts Award for Service

What is your idea of happiness? Sitting in my living room with my family, watching a film with absolutely no suspense; travelling anywhere, anytime, preferably with my family.

What is your idea of misery? Driving on the autobahn in an under-powered non-German flimsy car; watching horrific monuments being built and being powerless to do anything about it.

Who are your favourite fictional characters? As an art historian I’m changing that to favourite artists and favourite art: any paintings by Canaletto, for their evocative sense of place; any contemporary commemorative art that really engages people in a positive way (e.g. Christopher and Marc Bauder’s “Lichtgrenze” (Light Border), the 8000 balloons commemorating the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall). (If you want a fictional character: Norman the Doorman, Don Freeman’s mouse-doorman at the ‘Majestic Museum of Art’)

What is your favourite food or drink? Easy. Veneziana pizza from Pizza Express in the U.K. - great pizza and 25p goes toward the ‘Save the Venice Fund’; Orangina (the fizzy beverage that must be the drink of the gods) and a really good pale ale.

What natural talent would you most like to possess? A good ear for languages. My name is Coutu and my oral French is horrible - really rather pathetic, isn’t it?

Veronica Kitchen (Political Science), 2015 Arts Award for Service

What is your idea of happiness? A warm day and a good book at the cottage.

What is your idea of misery? Cold feet.

Who are your favourite fictional characters? Anne of Green Gables

What is your favourite food or drink? Cheese.

What natural talent would you most like to possess? A green thumb.
Sheila McConnell (Master of Public Service), 2015 Arts Award for Service

What is your idea of happiness? Laying under my favourite tree on a warm summer’s day, just knowing that it’s all going to be okay.

What is your idea of misery? Plenty of Fish.

Who are your favourite fictional characters? Shera Princess of Power; Xena: Warrior Princess; Falkor the Luckdragon from the Neverending Story; and George Bailey from It’s a Wonderful Life.

What is your favourite food or drink? Spinach smoothie with almond milk.

What natural talent would you most like to possess? Intercepting dreams.

Arts Staff Advisory Council: Community matters, and staff matter to community

Throughout my professional theatre career I have collaborated with others to create community, both artistically and in daily life – and to give back to the community around us.

Similarly, the Arts Staff Advisory Council (ASAC) collaborates with the Dean to represent and support 150+ staff members in the Faculty. ASAC has worked hard to respond to feedback from an Arts staff survey conducted by the first ASAC cohort. The survey results emphasized social and professional matters, such as staff career enhancement, new staff onboarding and orientation, staff roles in enhancing the student experience, staff recognition, and community-building activities.

In 2015 we offered two professional development workshops, one on Generation Z to help us understand our incoming students, and one addressing Mental Health and Wellness – both were well attended and inspired us to do more. We held two successful coffee breaks where staff had an opportunity to meet with new and familiar colleagues in an informal setting to share their experiences and expertise. And in this issue of Inside Arts you can read how staff play a role in enhancing student experience - by sharing our stories, we can all learn from and be inspired by one another.

Our latest initiative is the launch of a website, New Arts Employee Resources, a central hub that features guidelines and links to help incoming Arts staff members become well-oriented, as well as provide a resource point for current staff members. We welcome feedback/suggestions for this new site.

In the New Year we plan to continue with staff support initiatives, such as a second Mental Health and Awareness workshop that would address staff issues and the possibility of getting Arts staff involved with the FEDS’ Can Build 2016.

ASAC posts all our meeting agendas and minutes on our webpages. As always, we encourage staff to contact any council member with ideas and concerns.

Finally, I’d like to welcome Trish Van Berkel (Political Science) as the new ASAC Chair, and invite all Arts staff to be part of our collaboration and ensure everyone in the community thrives.
How staff enhance the student experience

Arts Staff Advisory Council invited a range of staff members to share examples of how they enhance student experience, a high priority area in our Strategic Plan. The idea was that we should first reflect upon and share the ways in which staff members interact with and support students; then ASAC will explore ways to, well, enhance that enhancement. Here are snapshots of staff narratives, with links to the full text.

“I see many students who are requesting deferred final exams. These students are often sick, but the number of students requesting deferrals for anxiety, depression, stress, or other forms of distress seems to be increasing. These students often times have already sought help through resources such as counselling services, but sometimes have not. I have a concrete system in place for these requests now – I am empathetic, yet follow the policy...” read more

- Kayla McKinnon, Undergraduate Coordinator & Advisor, Department of Economics

“I’ve been able to act as referee for students in their ‘after graduation’ job search activities. It has been a great honour to relay to potential employers my impressions of the individual students and give an account of their particular skills...” read more

- Todd Marshall Taylor, Language Computing Consultant

“I’m always very appreciative of the efforts put forth by my co-op students, especially those who are being exposed for the first time to a professional working environment. Supporting them and ensuring their specific needs are met, personally and professionally, is a strong focus for me...” read more

- Sherri Anne Arsenault, Advancement Assistant, Arts Advancement

Arts Strategic Plan in action

The Strategic Plan was approved in the spring of 2014 following the most extensive consultation process undertaken by our Faculty, with over 80 meetings involving students, staff and faculty, and was chaired by David DeVidi (Philosophy) and Theresa Libby (Accounting and Finance). At the November 2015 Arts Faculty Council meeting Doug Peers presented this update on our Strategic Plan achievements 1.5 years in and the objectives yet to be tackled.

Priority I Undergraduate Students

Recruit and enrol students who will thrive in our programs

Objectives achieved Increasing success converting applicants to enrolled students; Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) study and plan is underway; Tailoring our communications, including social media, for prospective student audiences, for example Student Stories

What remains to be done (informed by SEM data)
Develop a high school outreach program; Develop events on campus to engage potential students; Develop an international strategy

Increase enrollment, retention and student success

Objectives achieved Review and improve curriculum structure and processes – plan standardization as outlined in new website Arts Majors Reset; Improved flexibility (see Arts Majors Reset); Introduce new and revised career-focused and interdisciplinary minors

What remains to be done Implement the new first year foundational programs; Explore opportunities for an online honours Liberal Arts program

Increase awareness of and the ability to articulate the connection between learning experiences and career readiness

Objectives achieved Learning outcomes identified and funding secured for first year foundational courses; Digital portfolios introduced for Honours and Arts and Business
What remains to be done: Explicate and substantiate learning outcomes for all undergraduate levels; Increase practice of digital/online portfolios

Promote experiential opportunities

Objectives achieved: Funding secured for a fourth year pilot capstone course; Funds set aside to promote study abroad/field trips

What remains to be done: Increase pathways into co-op; Introduce entrepreneurship opportunities; Create more research opportunities; Look at ways to internationalize/globalize across the curriculum

Build and improve facilities

Objectives achieved: Hagey Hub is on time, and we have been doing some further fundraising for facilities upgrades; Finance lab under construction

What remains to be done: Make the FOH ML lounge a permanent feature; Add more seating/crash spaces for undergraduates where we can; Assess current stock and usage of Graduate Student space; Develop plans/principles for a new Arts building

Priority II Graduate Students

Recruit the right graduate students for our programs

Objectives achieved: Graduate enrolments up about 5% - growth primarily in domestic grad students; Participating in a multi-university tracking of graduate students

What remains to be done: Identify opportunities to recruit and fund more international graduate students

Prepare students for careers inside and outside academe

Objectives achieved: Increased number of workshops and other activities for the acquisition of professional skills; Developed Arts Graduate Careers website with resources for graduate students as well as faculty members and departments

What remains to be done: Identify more opportunities to launch professional/career oriented Masters programs

Improve student satisfaction and retention

Objectives achieved: Better standardization of funding packages across the faculty; More departmental and faculty level oversight to ensure timely completion of programs; Better standardization of TA assignments and student workload

What remains to be done: Secure resources for a five-year funding package; Assess graduate space needs

Priority III Research

Strengthen and sustain the conditions that support high-quality research

Objectives achieved: Continued to hire new faculty: Since 2012 we have hired 12 tenured and 47 tenure-track faculty members; Established a pool of funds and appropriate guidelines to ensure matching funds are in place for external grants; Guidelines and processes are outlined on our website; More one on one meetings with new researchers

What remains to be done: Ensure research funding pool is migrated into the new budget model

Enable interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research

Objectives achieved: Built Arts research database, searchable by disciplines, themes, and researchers; Hosted multi-disciplinary public panels off campus

Lead national discussions about measuring research impact

Objectives achieved: UWaterloo took lead on development of a research impact study, which the Federation of Humanities and Social Sciences is continuing to develop and share with other stakeholders; Associate Dean, Research, was part of the group which produced the University Paper on bibliometrics

Enhance research stories/communications

Objectives achieved: Instituted annual awards event, Celebration of Arts; Increased number of stories and media releases and media pick-up; Increased presence of UW researchers on our websites and referenced in social media; Increased number of Arts researchers (5, up from 2) profiled in
2015 State of the University Report

Priority IV Space

Improve use of current space

Objectives achieved Up to date inventory of current stock; Implemented management policy

Construct new space

Objectives achieved Hagey Hub/student space under construction and will open Fall 2016; Finance Lab

What remains to be done Develop principles and identify needs for a new arts building; Identify opportunities to refresh and renovate current space

Priority V Outreach

Align Advancement plan with strategic priorities

Objectives achieved Fundraising priorities identification process rolled out across departments; Fundraising priorities on behalf of Arts incorporated in UWaterloo-wide priorities, overseen by Provost

What remains to be done Case for support prepared

Engage alumni

Objectives achieved Strategic alumni engagement events, e.g. Speed Networking for Arts and Business students; LinkedIn page established to enable Arts alumni and current students to interact

What remains to be done Develop more meaningful engagement and volunteer initiatives; Build Reunion participation

Communications

Objectives achieved and ongoing Majority of communications support Arts strategic objectives; Increased readership of Arts stories via social media amplification; More

Arts scholars appearing in media

Priority VI Governance

Ensure a culture of discussion and participation in collegial governance

Objectives achieved Peer-evaluated recognition awards for service, teaching, research; Working with Equity officer to introduce best practices in hiring and to compile base line of data for under-represented groups; Established the Arts Staff Advisory Council (ASAC)

What remains to be done Revitalize Arts Faculty Council

Review, and where appropriate, revise administrative structures

Objectives achieved Staff onboarding support website: New Arts Employee Resources; Increased support for staff training, with ASAC

What remains to be done Better integrate Stratford Campus into the Faculty of Arts; Review current Faculty
James Skidmore (Germanic & Slavic Studies) presents UW 12 Days of Christmas

On the twelfth day of Christmas UW gave to me:

12 Engineering buildings
11 Senators objecting
10 grad students moaning
9 profs a-droning
8 geese a-pooping
7 squirrels annoying
6 Deans a-whining
5 construction sites
4 branding exercises
3 LEARN shutdowns
too many students
and the statue of a pig outside ML.

Listen to Skid sing on Soundcloud