WITH APOLOGIES TO SHAKESPEARE AND JOHN STEINBACK, I am optimistic that we are at long last leaving the winter of our discontent. Spring seems to be finally making a few tentative steps in our direction (though the geese do not seem to have been given any notice of its arrival), and coupled with progress on our Strategic Plan and the positive energy injected by some excellent recent hires, things are definitely warming up.

Budget 2014-15 continues to interrupt my sleep, but the Strategic Plan will help position Arts better for the future. Ever since I arrived here, it was clear that there were unique characteristics to UW in general and to our Faculty in particular, and that we had a compelling story to tell. Articulating those characteristics and then ensuring that we deliver upon them is the primary purpose of the Plan. There are no surprises in it: it is based upon the extensive work undertaken by our colleagues who served on the task force and subsequently in the four working groups.

Moreover, we have already begun to work on a number of recommendations that emerged from the extensive strategic planning consultations. The desire to build a stronger sense of community and raise our profile has led to publications like this one, which includes a new section that asks colleagues to share their insights into their departments. The Arts Award reception in November will become an ongoing event to honour excellence in teaching, service and research.

Enhancing the student experience is another obvious priority and it became apparent very quickly that the one overarching issue
was the lack of study and social space. I was delighted that the Board of Governors approved the Hagey Hall atrium extension which is being designed with direct student input (and caffeine addicts who have espress-o’d their hopes to me). We intend to show preliminary plans of the extension to our community over the next couple of weeks. And as long as winter ends and/or next winter does not descend too quickly, we plan to break ground later this summer.

We also plan to invigorate the curriculum to align it better with intended outcomes while also making it more comprehensible to our students. One aspect that we will be particularly focused upon is how best we can help our incoming students find the program for which they are best suited and in which they are most interested. It is incumbent upon us to help them navigate more easily through the excellent programming we have to offer.

I hope that you will come out and join us at the forthcoming Strategic Plan town hall that will be announced shortly, as well as the subsequent Arts Faculty Council meeting in which we will present the Strategic Plan for final approval.

**Inside History**

**IAN MILLIGAN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, HISTORY**

**What should we know about History at Waterloo?**

Despite the overall tech-focused reputation of the University of Waterloo (for better or for worse!), our department is a hidden gem. This isn’t just idle boasting: my colleagues produce an incredible amount of top-notch scholarship in diverse fields. They’re socially engaged and strike the right balances between popular and academic audiences. Plus, we have a great reputation, at least amongst the students I’ve worked with, as a fun, engaging department.

So I guess I would say that it’s a very strong department and - gulp - I’d better keep working hard if I want to keep up. Luckily, my colleagues aren’t just supportive of their students - they’re supportive of their new faculty members too!

**What is the most popular History course now, and why?**

Right now it’s Andrew Hunt’s “History of Rock n’ Roll” course, which consistently fills up at the lofty cap of 200 students. I think there’s some intrinsic interest in the topic - it’s the sort of course I could see myself wanting to sneak into - but is a testament to Hunt’s student-focused engagement.

I’ve had the privilege of both teaching before and after his class: beforehand, my students are obviously looking forward to it, discussing some of the neat things they’ve learned so far or listened to on the course tumblr page; afterwards, they are often brimming with paper ideas, coming down from the high of an engaging, fun, and informative lecture.

**What strikes you as especially unique (or odd) about the department?**

The first departmental meeting, where we all made that pledge to Skull and Bones... ;)

The big thing that struck me, from my interview onwards, is actually how many undergraduates are around the offices and what that means for day-to-day life in the department. Coming from a (much) larger commuter school where I completed my PhD, and even Queen’s for my undergraduate, professors’ offices were just that: a row of offices, tucked away from the rest of the school, academic
buildings, etc. You'd pop in to talk to a professor, maybe, and then quickly leave.

Hagey Hall is different (and trust me, it isn't because of the engaging, friendly architecture). The undergraduate society has an office, where they sell snacks, drinks, but most importantly, offer a hub of social activity. More importantly, we have a hidden gem in our departmental reading room/library/conference room. When we evil faculty haven't kicked the students out for meetings, comprehensive exams, defences, etc., the students are welcome to gather there. And they do!

Finally, we also have the annual MacKinnon dinner held here in Waterloo. Honouring a late professor in our department, it's a fun and unique celebration organized by the students. They bring in a speaker and students, staff and faculty and their guests alike dress up and gather for a great meal. The event serves as a fantastic social capstone for the academic year.

**What is good about living in Waterloo region?**

Coming from Toronto, I'll admit to being initially a bit apprehensive about relocating to Waterloo. But honestly, moving here has been incredible. One of my life goals was to be able to live, on a daily basis, without a car. Uptown Waterloo lets me do that: great cafés, a downtown grocery store (sadly all too rare in many parts of Canada), and good restaurants and pubs. It's an area with a vibrancy that comes from the number of students, but without the carnival atmosphere that I've experienced in other small or mid-sized cities with a large student population.

Plus my walk through Waterloo Park is awesome: I have the choice of commuting through an animal farm (when I was teaching at 8:30, I felt I had an early morning solidarity connection with the llamas) or through a pretty dense, little forest.

I feel spoiled - I don't know if I could return to a subway-based

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**Inside Drama & Speech Communication**

**JENNIFER ROBERTS-SMITH, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DRAMA & SPEECH COMMUNICATION**

**What should we know about Drama and Speech Communication?**

This is a place where individual voices are heard, and where people care passionately about working together to make a difference in the world. I know that sounds trite, but my experience here has been one of an ever-expanding understanding of what that actually means in practical terms, in terms of how we spend our time each day and how we speak to one another. It's a place of possibility.

**What is the most popular course (or courses), and why?**

Speaking for the Drama program, rather than the department as a whole, here: Students love to make theatre. None of our production participation courses is required, but students take as many as they can possibly fit into their schedules. I think - and this is probably true for all theatre makers, not just students - that it's the transformative potential of the theatre that is so attractive. The theatre actually expands reality, by using objects and bodies in ways that make us think of them as different from and hence bigger and more complex than they are in ordinary life. And theatre production has the extremely satisfying ability to let us see an idea materialize in a really concrete way in a short period of time.
Any particular traditions in the department?

One of the things I love about the place is that everyone is on not just first-name terms, but nick-name terms - students, staff, and faculty alike. Students have been calling me “JRS” practically since the day I arrived. When I tell colleagues in other institutions about this, they are horrified! And of course, in the Drama program, our work space is a theatre. I remember in my first meeting with then-Chair Gerd Hauck, he drew a picture of the Drama facilities with the Theatre of the Arts at the centre and the faculty and staff offices, dressing rooms, and production spaces all interspersed with one another in a circle around it. I thought: that looks like a home for me.

What is good about living in Waterloo region?

After several years of commuting from downtown Toronto, I have at last bought a house in Kitchener. There were great reasons to live in Toronto, not least my partner’s career - he is a full-time theatre professional, so that’s his market. But over time, I’ve become increasingly connected to the UW and K-W communities. I’ve reached the point now where I don’t want to go home at the end of the day! A lot of that has to do with loving my work, but so much about the community is exciting and full of opportunity, too: the long history of sustainable agriculture, the pockets of fantastic art production (I’m thinking of theatre companies like MT Space, for example, or some of the Classical music programming in the city), the intellectual life of UW, Laurier, and the Perimeter Institute, the high tech startup culture. Even the public transit planning gets me excited - that’s my Toronto history talking! I’m looking forward to being a neighbour here rather than a drop-in visitor.

Moving research in new directions

This past fall the Arts Research Office launched a workshop series exploring some of the newer, or at least for many, less familiar, aspects of research. This “how to” series has provided an opportunity for path breakers in our midst to share with their colleagues strategies and advice on incorporating social media, non-academic partners, and undergraduate students into the research endeavour.

Tweeting your way to a tome

The series was kicked off on September 23 with a workshop led by Aimee Morrison (English) on How to use social multimedia to advance and mobilize your research. In this well attended session, Morrison (aka @digiwonk) walked us through some of the ways strategic use of Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and online archiving sites can extend, amplify, and enrich the process of research dissemination and the conduct of research itself.

Stepping outside the ring road

The October 29 session shifted attention towards research partnerships. With SSHRC and other funding agencies increasingly encouraging university researchers to look outside the academy for research partners, questions of “where do I start?” and “how does it work?” abound. How to work with industry and community partners drew upon the collective wisdom of Neil Randall (English), Jill Tomasson Goodwin (Drama & Speech Communication), and Susan Roy (History), all of whom have experience in this area. Arts Advancement Director Kim Bardwell and Industry Liaison Officer Bridget Moloney were also available to describe resources available to faculty members seeking to move in this direction.
Co-sponsored by the Arts Teaching Fellows program, the third event in the series, How to bring your research into the undergraduate classroom, was kicked off by Fellow James Skidmore, who underscored the importance of moving beyond the sometimes compartmentalized way we think about research and teaching. Igor Grossmann (Psychology), Frankie Condon (English), and Ian Milligan (History) then shared some of the successful strategies they have adopted to mobilize their research in undergraduate settings as well as to draw upon their undergraduate students when framing new research questions.

Three, two, one….you’re on

The fourth (and final, for now) session in this series will be How to talk to the media, scheduled for March 17 (9:30-11:00, HH 373).

In this session, Colin Ellard (Psychology), Aimee Morrison (English), Emmett Macfarlane (Political Science), Veronica Kitchen (Political Science), and Lorne Dawson (Sociology) will tell us about some of their experiences communicating on TV, on the radio, and via print media. Waterloo Director of Media Relations and Issues Nick Manning will also be there to point to some of the resources and supports his office is able to provide for those wanting to reach out to the public in this way.

If you have ideas for future “how to” research sessions, be sure to let me know: aroorda@uwaterloo.ca

Congratulations to Elise Vist, winner of the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Arts heat on March 6th.

The 3 Minute Thesis (3MT) is a university-wide competition for research-based masters thesis and doctoral students at the University of Waterloo. Competitors have 1 static slide and 3 minutes to explain the breadth and significance of their research to a non-specialist audience.

Each faculty at the University of Waterloo hosted faculty-based heats to determine who would compete at the university final on March 27th. The Faculty of Arts heat showcased 5 wonderful presenters from English, Psychology, French, and the Balsillie School.

In a close race, Elise Vist, PhD candidate in the Department of English, was named our winner and will be representing Arts at the university finals. Elise is currently studying the intersections of feminism and game studies, and is a member of the Games Institute.

Elise’s presentation, When Fans Get Their Hands on Canon, examined how fans cross the boundary between fan fiction and canon and what happens to their stories when they do.

On April 24, 2014 the Ontario provincial 3MT competition will be held at McMaster University, Hamilton. The winners of the provincial competition will advance to the first Canadian national 3MT competition in May 2014.

Thank you to Ian Milligan (History) for chairing the event and to our esteemed judges, Owen Gallupe (Sociology & Legal Studies), Kayla McKinnon (Economics), Susan Simon Daniels (Alumna, English), and Lynne Taylor (History).
The Anthropology department’s loyal volunteer Larry mans the booth at March Open House.

Drama and Speech Communication present multimedia play, exhibit and symposium on mental health in the context of the Ashley Smith story, March 19-22.

Arts staff! Don’t forget to connect with your Staff Advisory Council members.

Feedback, please

We publish five issues of Inside Arts per year. We’d love to receive your feedback. Send comments and ideas to wphilpott@uwaterloo.ca.