

STATE OF THE FACULTY: SUMMARY

This document is intended as a brief overview of what was learned by the Faculty of Arts Strategic Planning Task Force during its work from January until April 2012. Many sections of the summary refer to information available in more detail in other documents. Most of these other documents are collected on the [Faculty of Arts Strategic Planning website](#), and are available to members of the Faculty with their WatIAM passwords.

Community and structure

In our consultations, we consistently heard justifiable pride from departments about their accomplishments in teaching and scholarship, and significant ambitions for the future. We also heard that people have been much more likely to identify with their academic units than with the Faculty as a whole. While some took this to simply be the way of the world in the disciplines that make up the Faculty of Arts, many lamented this state of affairs. The Task Force was impressed with the strength with which “community” emerged as the key theme in our consultations. Some of those consulted suggested that efforts to build community must begin within the units, for example, through interaction between faculty, staff and students to enrich the intellectual life of the department. For others, a lack of community *at the level of the Faculty* was seen to have significant costs. To name just two: when faculty do not know what sort of research their colleagues are carrying out in other units, opportunities for fruitful collaboration are missed; a lack of community life for students, caused, in the opinion of many, by the deficiencies of the physical space in the part of campus in which Arts is located, means students' time in university is not the rewarding experience it could be---which is a disservice to our students, and moreover is an impediment to continuing to attract the high quality students we want in the future. Many of the Task Force’s recommended strategic priorities have to do with building community in the Faculty of Arts.

The people in Arts are well aware that new initiatives will require resources. In what look to be years of financial restraint from the Provincial Government and where a slow economy limits donation income, it is clear that pursuing new initiatives while maintaining what we do well will require some creativity, some changes to how we do some things, and perhaps that we stop doing some of what we do now. While some of the recommendations of the Task Force will require investment, many do not, and others will develop the ability of the Faculty to secure resources that are available within the University environment.

We heard from staff that they have ideas to offer about how things can be run more efficiently. We heard from faculty that they are overwhelmed by their workloads, that it's not clear to them that all of it is productive labour, and that there are structural impediments to some fruitful collaboration that could happen within the Faculty. The Faculty includes 16 academic units, plus the Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges. Small units have traditionally meant heavier per capita service requirements than in larger departments, perhaps to the detriment of Arts' research profile and teaching effectiveness and certainly increasing the level of stress for members of these units; each year the Faculty spends over \$1M on stipends and teaching reductions for chairs, associate chairs and program directors. Some staff expressed unhappiness with the lack of career prospects within departments, and some faculty expressed frustration, in conversations they initiated with Task Force members rather than in writing or public meetings, about spending many hours doing work themselves in their roles as Associate Chairs or Chairs that might have been done more effectively by staff with different training. Some of the Task Force's key recommendations have to do with governance and with structural and operational matters.

We heard many expressions of discontent about how some major recent initiatives and directions in Arts were determined, with the decisions perceived as top-down, lacking in transparency, and taken without due attention to the long term interests of the Faculty. While this discontent makes the transparency and fairness of decisions even more important than they would otherwise be, it also means there is an appetite for change in the way we do things. The broad consultation carried out by the Task Force was a good start: many people remarked that they had "never been asked" their opinions about Faculty matters. But we also heard anxiety that the Task Force's job was to produce belated rationalizations for decisions that had already been made. It is important, in our view, that the changes be recognized all around as something important in the pursuit of our aspirations, not as a simply another bureaucratic exercise.

Size and growth

As part of the consultation process Robert Park (Associate Dean, Computing) collected data about the size of the Faculty of Arts, its growth, teaching activity, and student evaluation of teaching quality (through Arts Course Questionnaire or ACQs) in recent years, and data comparing Arts to other Faculties at Waterloo. His [report](#) has been posted to the Arts Strategic Planning web site. While the Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges are important contributors to the programs run by Arts it was not possible to include data about their teaching and research activity in the report. Here we will summarize a few key points from that data, as well as some data provided to the Task Force by the Centre for Extended Learning.

The Faculty of Arts is large, growing, and changing. In 2011-2012 there are about 8,000 people in our community (excluding alumni), about a 3% increase from just five years ago. Growth has not been evenly distributed across the Faculty. For instance, more than one in six undergraduates in 2011-2012 is an AFM major, up nearly 400 from 2007. Liberal Studies enrollments have also grown, but not dramatically in the five-year period covered by the data. Most established programs are holding their own in numbers, but a few are quite small, and some are declining relative to the past or in proportion to the whole. At the same time, the Faculty and its units have shown agility and responsiveness in the development of new programs and options across a range of disciplines and interests.

Arts has also seen significant increases in the number of graduate students, from about 400 in 2006-2007, to nearly 600 in 2010-2011, with close to double the number of PhDs between the two points.

Student-to-staff ratios have declined over the five-year period, but student-to-faculty ratios have increased (from 30.0 to 30.7). The student-to-faculty ratio remains much higher in Arts than in other Faculties at Waterloo. The number of tenured and tenure-track positions has remained about the same, but the number of “other” appointments has risen from 31% to 39% of total teaching. In 2007-2008, there were 82,966 enrollments in Faculty of Arts courses; in 2010-2011, there were 90,712. The difference is nearly 8,000 enrollments, and close to a 10% increase. Arts continues to do a large and increasing amount of teaching of undergraduate students registered in other Faculties, going from 28,500 students in 2007-08 to 33,500 in 2010-11, an increase from 34% to 37% of the undergraduate teaching in the Faculty. In our consultation, the Associate Deans for Undergraduate Studies from the other Faculties made it clear that the undergraduate teaching Arts does of their students is regarded as an important part of the education of their students, and that if it could be made economically sensible, they would like to cooperate further in cross-Faculty teaching, which might also usefully increase the exposure of Arts students to courses in other Faculties.

Arts is also the key player in Waterloo’s extended learning efforts. In 2010 and 2011, 49% of all online courses at Waterloo were Arts courses. These Arts courses are also more popular, on average, than course offered in other Faculties, as in 2010 65% of enrollment in online undergraduate courses were in Arts courses, rising in 2011 to 72%. The Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges are also active participants in extended learning, accounting for a further 29% of undergraduate online courses and 12-13% of undergraduate enrollments.

Teaching quality

Arts' instructors are regarded very highly by their students. The median Arts Course Evaluation (i.e., student evaluation) score in the period 2002 to 2010 was 4.24/5.00. However, the quality of classroom experience is clearly eroded, from the point-of-view of the student, by larger classes, as mean scores for larger classes are consistently and considerably lower than for small classes within each academic unit. Faculty complements roughly correspond to the number of majors in each department, but do not align with numbers of non-majors, in classes that are more likely to be large. Because data is not available for Liberal Studies (class sizes, teaching evaluations, or instructor-activity), it is not clear what its impact is on the overall perception of students of the quality of our teaching.

Waterloo Arts offers an extraordinary number of possibilities to undergraduate students: 30 majors and 57 minors or diplomas, and an uncounted number of options within programs. The distribution of majors and minors between units in the Faculty is uneven, as are both service teaching and teaching loads, resulting in a wide variation in teaching situations for both students and instructors.

Incoming student averages in Arts remain high and are consistent with other Faculties at Waterloo. Arts enrolls women students at a higher rate than any other Faculty at Waterloo, one comparable to that of other major Canadian universities. The proportion of female full-time Arts' faculty, on the other hand, has remained steady at 40%.

Research intensity

In addition to the data about research activity included in Robert Park's report, the task force consulted Angela Roorda, Research Development Officer for the Faculty of Arts, about changes in research intensity over the last 5 years.

Research activity in Arts has continued to increase over the past five years, with more Arts researchers applying for, and winning, external grants. There were 29 applications in 2006 to the SSHRC Standard Research Grant program (since replaced by the Insight Grant program), compared to 51 in 2010 and 50 in 2011, a 72.4% increase in applications. This increase was not achieved by encouraging those without a real chance of winning funding to apply, as the success rate increased by 200% over that five year period: there were seven new SRGs awarded in 2006, compared to 21 in each of 2010 and 2011. The increased numbers of 4As (that is, grants approved for funding, but not funded due to budgetary limitations at SSHRC) similarly reflect a positive trend in research intensity.

These improved success rates were not the result of increased availability of such grants, as the success rates nation-wide declined in this period. In 2006 Arts' success rate of 24.1% was well

below the national average of 40.4%. In 2010 Arts' success rate was 40.4%, compared to the nationwide average of 36.3%. This positive trajectory continued in 2011, with a 42% success rate that exceeded the national average of 37%. Of course, not all Arts researchers do SSHRC-eligible research, but the results are similar when other sorts of grants are taken into account. Arts has seen a steady increase in the numbers of research grants awarded, from about 213 in 2007-08 to about 230 in 2010-11.

There have been several new research centres established in the Faculty over the past five years, including the Critical Media Lab (CML) in 2008, the Waterloo Institute for Hellenistic Studies in 2010, the Games Institute in 2010, REAP (Research Entrepreneurs Accelerating Prosperity)/Felt lab in 2011, and the Chanchlani India Policy Centre in 2011. Waterloo Arts researchers have successfully launched a number of multi-disciplinary/multi-sector projects involving the new SSHRC Partnership and Partnership Development Grant programs, the NSERC CREATE program, MITACs, and the Ontario Research Fund partnership grant program. Also noteworthy is the increased numbers of Ontario Early Researcher awards (ERA), while in the past five years some of our senior scholars have won prestigious awards, including the Killam Prize, membership in the Royal Society of Canada, a Molson Prize, a CIHR Knowledge Translation Award, and a Trudeau Foundation Fellowship.

The issue of space

Both community and teaching emerged in our consultations as key concerns for the people in the Faculty of Arts. In connection with both of these topics, the issue of space came up repeatedly. The Task Force therefore considers space a key "enabling priority", essential to achieving the other priorities for the Faculty of Arts.

In a large majority of our consultations, space was cited as the critical resource required for Arts. Identified areas of concern could be grouped into three broad themes: social and study space, teaching space, and research-related space. Coincidentally, the Arts Student Union surveyed students on the issue of space while our consultation process was going on. We rely on the ASU survey for some of the points below, and with permission of the ASU, we include a link to their full report on the Strategic Planning web site [link to be added].

Social space was not merely a concern mentioned by students, as it was highlighted in most of our small group consultations. For many, a key problem is the lack of an "Arts hub." For others, it was less significant that there be a central hub than that Arts lacks places for students to meet and interact after class, to hang out and talk, or to work together in groups. Additional food options and longer operating hours were consistently mentioned. There is also a serious

lack of space for students to interact with faculty, and for faculty and staff members to meet informally, which is seen by many to significantly impede the development of a properly collegial atmosphere. Some student societies (e.g., English, History) have space in their departments; others have much less satisfactory small offices on the ground floor of PAS. The aesthetic and functional deficiencies of Arts' space was also frequently pointed out, sometimes in terms of its failure to reflect the humanistic values that should be part of what an Arts Faculty stands for: civic engagement, aesthetic value, and social diversity and inclusion. We want to stress that space issue is not simply a "social" issue: everyone we talked to pointed out that a vibrant and active intellectual community has significant and undeniable academic value.

In February 2012, the Arts Student Union surveyed 1455 Arts students about how important they considered three types of "student" space. All spaces were identified as "spaces that will be available for the Arts community as a whole regardless of department or major." It was proposed that each would have a coffee/tuckshop, microwaves, and Wi-Fi Internet Access. The three types of space were described as follows:

1. *Study Space*: access to computers/printers with large number of outlets and tables for studying.
2. *Social Space*: a comfy lounge with couches and other lounge seating with a smaller number of computers and tables (comparable to the current 'Math comfy-lounge')
3. *Meeting/Event Space*: more space for Arts student events to be held, which would be available for booking by student societies and for meetings.

The need for Study space ranked #1, followed by Social Space, then Meeting space. 94% of respondents agreed that having an Arts common space would contribute to their student experience.

ASU survey results – priority rankings:

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Study Space	836 (57 %)	418 (29 %)	201 (14 %)
Social Space	476 (33 %)	608 (42 %)	371 (25 %)
Meeting/Event Space	143 (10 %)	429 (29 %)	883 (61 %)

Many faculty raised concerns of various sorts about teaching space. Some departments cannot follow standard practice for their disciplines by offering tutorials because it is not possible to book small classrooms for them. Some faculty raised concerns that the way existing classrooms

are equipped or furnished prevents them from attempting innovative pedagogical techniques. Many students have some of their first Waterloo classes in the Humanities Theatre, which is not designed as a classroom space.

While there is some variation between departments, offices for graduate students are in short supply, and are often crowded and poorly furnished. Many graduate students report not wanting to come on campus because their offices do not provide them with useful space to do their work. Departments and students are unhappy with graduate student offices located away from the department; as a result this space may not be well used.

There is also a shortage of space for research activity and for housing new programs. One of Arts career-oriented Master's programs is located off campus, in rented space downtown. In our consultations, we heard about new faculty who have trouble getting space for their labs or for equipment they use for their scholarship, some resorting to renting space off campus (and, in one memorable case, setting up "on a truck"). This makes their work less efficient, and is a particular problem for early career researchers because it can slow down their work pre-tenure. As Arts is increasingly successful in acquiring research funding, and as research funding is increasingly tied to matching funds, the Faculty is often asked to commit space (and other resources) during the grant application processes, but it is not clear how the Faculty could deliver on these commitments if a larger than expected percentage of applications were successful.

Graduate Studies

The Faculty of Arts offers programs leading to a variety of graduate degrees (MA, MAcc, MTax, MFA MASc, MPS, PhD). The Faculty offers 11 PhD programs, 16 MA programs and seven other Master's programs in Arts. Most departments and the School of Accounting and Finance offer research-based graduate degrees at the Master's or PhD level. The PhD in Religious Studies is a joint program with Wilfrid Laurier University, while the History MA and PhD programs are run jointly with Laurier and the University of Guelph. The Global Governance program and the Master of Peace and Conflict Studies housed at Conrad Grebel University College both involve faculty from several units. The Faculty has some career-oriented course-based Master's degrees, including the MTax program, the Master of Public Service, and the Master of Digital Experience Innovation offered at the Stratford Campus.

Arts attracts excellent graduate students. The Faculty currently has 672 students enrolled in its various programs. In 2011-12, 38% of graduate students hold external awards, a number that understates the success rate as it includes students in career-oriented Master's programs who are not eligible for most fellowships. Perhaps not surprisingly, graduate students cited the

quality of the research in their department or the work of a prospective supervisor as their key reasons for choosing Waterloo for graduate work. But many of the Arts programs are distinctive, and so stand out among graduate programs even within a particular field. The MA in Experimental Digital Media offered by the English department, the joint MA in Intercultural German Studies offered in conjunction with the University of Mannheim, the Master of Taxation offered by the School of Accounting and Finance, and the PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience offered by the Department of Psychology are just a few examples of programs unique to Waterloo. Many other programs have other distinguishing features, such as the Shantz Summer Internship Program in Fine Arts, or the Waterloo-Université de Nantes Exchange in French Studies, and the links with local “think tanks”, such as the connections between the philosophy department and the Perimeter Institute, and the involvement of several departments with the Centre for International Governance Innovation through the Balsillie School of International Affairs.

In our consultations, we consistently heard that the state of graduate student funding for Arts students puts the ability to continue to attract high quality students at risk. Because of continuing cuts to Faculty budgets, graduate funding in Arts is run on “soft money” which makes longer-term planning difficult. Programs initiated by the University in recent years, such as those designed to incentivize increasing graduate enrollment, have involved time-frame assumptions about funding arrangements that reflect the realities of Science or Engineering programs, rather than Arts-based studies. In particular, the assumption that a student could complete a PhD program within three or four years of graduation from a Bachelor’s program, and be funded accordingly, has long been seen in Arts as hampering the ability of graduate programs to recruit and plan. Given that the trend in other competing Ontario universities is to adopt longer funding guarantees for students in Arts programs, the problem becomes increasingly acute. Several departments noted that while there are some international graduate students in Arts, the University’s International Master’s and Doctoral Student awards in effect function as a subsidy for graduate studies in Engineering and Mathematics, where the proportion of international students is much higher.

We also heard several expressions of concern about the graduate studies governance, particularly around the development and implementation of new graduate programs in recent years. Concerns included: programs being designed without due consultation with faculty experts in the relevant fields; misleading claims about the results of surveys of prospective students for a proposed graduate program, claiming enthusiasm when the data did not show it, being forwarded to Senate when the program was up for approval; programs launched with the explicit goal of being revenue-positive for the Faculty without a clear business plan; programs launched with the idea of having teaching and supervision done by faculty already teaching full-time and with supervisory responsibilities in other programs, without due consultation or

consideration of implications for existing programs; and, at a graduate student consultation, about a career-based program advertising something it could not deliver, in this case a work term, with the program therefore having to be revised after the first year.

In consultations with units that have graduate programs, the commitment to the quality and health of those programs was clear. In units without such programs, the faculty spoke of their desire to have opportunities to work with graduate students. While some departments feel they were disadvantaged in the recent past when they took too seriously assurances that they would be rewarded for sudden graduate growth with new faculty to share in the work of educating them, Arts is prepared to be an important contributor to Waterloo's commitment to graduate education. Success in doing so will depend on providing proper support, and transparent and consultative processes for making decisions about new initiatives.

Undergraduate recruitment and the meaning of an Arts degree

As part of the consultation process, the Task Force met with Christina Roberts of the University's undergraduate recruiting office, who provided access to proprietary research carried out for the University by a market research firm. With the permission of that office, a summary of some key points gleaned from the data is available in a password protected part of the Strategic Planning website [link to be added].

A few points from the data are worth highlighting here. First, students say what matters most to them when making the decision about whether to apply to Waterloo Arts, or whether to accept an offer from Waterloo Arts if they apply and are accepted, varies considerably depending on the program the students are considering. For students accepting offers to Honours Arts, the academic reputation of the university and high academic standards are the two highest ranked factors. For those accepting offers to Accounting or Arts and Business, the availability of co-op and the high reputation of Waterloo's co-op program are the top factors, while "high standards" does not even make the top ten. When all who applied to Waterloo were asked why they applied to post-secondary education, the top three reasons chosen by those who applied to social science programs were "personal, intellectual growth," "to increase knowledge", and "to explore options", while for those who applied to "business" programs the top three were "career preparation," "to increase knowledge," and "to increase earning potential." This suggests that Waterloo Arts is attractive to two quite distinct constituencies.

We asked every group in our small group consultations about why someone should come to Waterloo Arts to study for a degree. The discussions frequently involved the question of how to describe the value of a degree in the disciplines represented in the Faculty to prospective students. In discussions with alumni, many of whom are now employers, it was striking how often they remarked that the skills an Arts degree is well-suited to provide -- communication

skills (especially in writing), the ability to take a broad view, flexible research skills, logical acumen, analytical ability, creativity, etc. -- are what they really want in employees. Alumni often pointed to the skills that came from their Arts education as key to their success. It was also pointed out by some alumni that they'd have had an easier road post-degree if they'd known how to market these skills to prospective employers, and by employers that it would help the employment prospects of our graduates if there was something about their academic record that specified what sorts of skills their education "certified" them as having. Many faculty and staff said that the key message for marketing Arts degrees to prospective students should be that the degree is indeed excellent career preparation.

However, we also heard many voices who would object to this messaging as contrary to the spirit that motivates the academic enterprise. While students may gain valuable, marketable skills, this is only a by-product of the work they do to acquire their degrees. University is a time when people grow intellectually and personally, and both they and society are better for their education. Those voicing this view tended also to think that the key to marketing Waterloo Arts is to better advertise the quality of what is going on here already. Indeed, the consulting firm hired by the University suggests that "Arts and Humanities" is "the program area that holds the greatest potential for increasing application numbers" for the whole of the University of Waterloo. They recommend the development of a communication plan designed to raise awareness of our programs, one which will overcome the impression that Waterloo is "known only for technology" and that an Arts education is not good career preparation.

These approaches need not be incompatible. While the most cited priorities of the "career oriented" and the "curiosity oriented" students differ, career concerns are also very important to Honours Arts students and such matters as academic quality matter to Accounting and Arts and Business students as well. The location of the School of Accounting and Finance within the Faculty of Arts can be a competitive advantage, as it can provide students with a broader view of the world that leads to greater long term success than mere technical knowledge will provide. And while some in traditional social science or humanities disciplines would be disinclined to sell the education they provide as primarily "vocational", they all believe that the skills students acquire are "the most practical skills of all"; designing curricula and advertising all of our programs in ways that draws explicit attention to both aspects of an education seems to Task Force members to be a sensible step.

Data from the market research report and our consultations with a small group of undergraduate students suggested that the name "Faculty of Arts" could be an impediment to our efforts to recruit students, for instance because it suggests to some that the degree will actually be in the fine and performing arts as the only option. In consultations with faculty and staff, few have expressed strong opposition to changing the name to something that more

obviously reflects what we do, though some have expressed scepticism that any other name would better serve our goals.