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

ARTS STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Structuring for Success: Governance and Resources
- Conditions for Success: Space, Community and Enhanced Student Experience
- Positioning for Success: Programs and Advancement
- Building on Success: Teaching
- Building on Success: Scholarship

Introduction

The strategic planning consultation process allowed members of the Strategic Planning Task Force to be in touch with students, staff and faculty members from all parts of Arts, and with our allies and partners within and outside the University of Waterloo. Participation in this process has given us a much better appreciation for an impressive array of research and teaching achievements about which Arts can boast. We were also impressed by the high aspirations all these groups have for making Arts even better in the coming years. In the next several pages, we outline the five areas of strategic priority for the Faculty of Arts that have been identified through our extensive consultation process. Within each area of strategic priority, we include short-to medium-term actions that the Task Force recommends to move the Faculty forward in addressing our priorities.

STRUCTURING FOR SUCCESS: GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES

While we heard many expressions of determination to continue to increase research funding, hope for more strategic and effective fund raising, and confidence that Arts will do well under proposed "activity-based accounting" practices for the University as a whole, especially in light of the very large amount of teaching Arts does of students enrolled in other Faculties, it nevertheless seems unlikely that the resources available to Arts will increase dramatically enough to allow us to meet our aspirations without changes. Our first group of strategic priorities therefore have to do with making the Faculty as effective as it can be, both organizationally and in terms of its use of resources (with the time of faculty and staff being the most fundamental resource we have).

In our consultations, it became clear that for strategic initiatives that involve significant change to longstanding practice success depends on the commitment of the people involved, and that such commitment depends in turn on the use of decision-making processes that are transparent and fair. Moreover, success for the Faculty as a whole will require that we get beyond zero-sum thinking. The perception that there are "special deals" for some or that units are in competition with one another is corrosive to the communal effort needed to make Arts successful. It was striking that in almost every department, when we raised the question of "interdisciplinary research" the response was that research in the unit in question was "interdisciplinary by nature." What was called for was a culture in which cross-departmental collaborations can arise when they make sense, without undermining the departments that sustain them.

Actions:

1. *Undertake a transparent, consultative review of the structure and governance of the Faculty.*
   a. Are current staffing arrangements most effective for helping Arts meet its goals, and if not how might they be better organized? This process should make full use of the insights gathered from staff through a newly formed Staff Advisory Council (see B, below).
   b. Can we clarify the relationships and improve decision-making processes involving the Faculty of Arts, the Federated University and Affiliated University Colleges (FUAC)?
   c. Are there opportunities for greater cooperation between departments? In particular, can we reduce the amount of time, effort and resources devoted to administrative matters, and make better use of teaching resources?
   d. Each year, Arts spends over $1.4M on stipends and course buyouts for faculty in administrative roles: can we reduce the number of such roles without creating a situation where the same people are doing the same work, but now without compensation or recognition? Could some of the same work be done as effectively and more efficiently by staff, if staff received proper training?
   e. Can we improve the decision-making structure of the Faculty? Should we, for instance, revisit the question of how decisions are made at both the Graduate Affairs Group and the Undergraduate Affairs Group to reduce the number of people involved while preserving collegial decision making, and make the Arts Faculty Council a more significant forum for inter-departmental discussion?

f. Should we change the name of the Faculty to better communicate who we are and what we do?

2. *Create a Staff Advisory Council and a Dean's Advisory Council.*
   a. The Staff Advisory Council should be broadly representative of staff in Arts, and provide advice from a staff perspective to the Dean and to Arts Faculty Council about the effective functioning of the Faculty.
   b. The Dean's Advisory Council should include selected alumni, faculty and staff, and meet semi-annually to discuss priorities of the Faculty.

3. *Ensure that the performance review process for both faculty and staff is used effectively.*
   a. In order for faculty performance reviews to play their legitimate role promoting organizational success, Chairs must take seriously the task of providing useful written formative advice that is part of the process, especially for junior colleagues.
   b. The functioning of the Faculty should be enhanced by using merit review scores to incentivize a well-balanced contribution to teaching, scholarship and service by all faculty, and by regarding those contributing strongly in all three areas as our "Star" faculty.
   c. Part of the organizational review recommended in Recommendation 1 (above) should be consideration of the question "to whom should staff report?"

4. *Facilitate new research and teaching initiatives, including those that cross departmental boundaries.*
   a. Identify and remove ill-considered structural barriers to cooperation, such as the perception that cooperation could result in a unit being punished if the number of honours students declines, and provide incentives to explore ways to encourage and implement cooperation between units when this makes sense.
   b. Flexible resourcing should be available to allow such initiatives to grow up organically when research developments make them worthwhile (e.g., faculty from several units discovering overlapping interests in behavioural decision theory, or, as could soon happen in various ways, as the implications of "big data" for humanities and social science research become clearer), but all initiatives should be structured so that they do not undermine the ability of departments to function.

    c. Most such collaborations should be explicitly understood to be temporary from the start.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS:
SPACE, COMMUNITY AND ENHANCED STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The most consistently heard theme in our consultations, and one raised in every consultation with departments, FUACs, staff and students, was the need for *better space* if Arts is to meet its goals in education, research and student engagement. The urgent need for study space and social space is made clear by a recent survey conducted by the Arts Student Union. The lack of both sorts of space is regularly cited as a dissatisfying factor about education in Arts. We also heard consistently about the need for research space (one faculty member reported that his lab is currently "in a truck") and office space for graduate students and new faculty.

There is broad agreement that Arts needs to develop as a community of scholars; to do so will involve more opportunities for student-faculty interaction (e.g., undergrad involvement in research), easy access for students to appropriate support provided by staff (advising, counseling, etc.), opportunities for faculty to get to know what their colleagues are up to so research opportunities can be identified, and opportunities for staff to interact across departmental lines. A vibrant intellectual community was also identified as a key reason high quality faculty can be recruited to Waterloo. Many of these community-building activities would be facilitated by the right sorts of space.

Actions:

1. *In the short-term, find ways to make the most effective use of existing space.*
   a. Examine ways to renovate current space to better serve the needs of students, faculty and staff.
   b. Work with the Arts Student Union to renovate existing space in ways that begin to address the priorities expressed by undergraduate students responding to the recent ASU space survey.
   c. Examine ways to provide more and better office space for graduate students.

2. *Work with the University to address the urgent need for more classroom space, and for increased flexibility in the space we currently have.*

a. New and more flexible classroom space is a priority if new pedagogical methods and techniques are going to be feasible.

3. *Determine what new space is needed and plan to the stage where Arts' new buildings are "shovel ready."*
   a. Government support for new infrastructure often has a short timeline attached. By planning ahead we can maximize our opportunity to win both government support and support from other potential donors.
   b. Conduct a study of Arts space in comparison to applicable standards, for instance COU guidelines. Locate all recent space-related surveys and architectural plans (e.g., ML expansion, others) for consideration and prioritization of new space-related projects.

4. *Continue holding special purpose workshops and other gatherings of faculty and grad students whose areas of research overlap.*
   a. Currently spearheaded by the Arts Research Office, these gatherings have been an important step in allowing researchers to connect across boundaries.

5. *Consider ways to ensure that graduate students in research programs have access to and awareness of courses offered in other departments that may enhance their education in their chosen field.*

POSITIONING FOR SUCCESS: PROGRAMS AND ADVANCEMENT

Arts has recently hired new development people to build relationships with the community beyond the University, especially alumni, and to raise funds for Arts objectives. In our consultation process we were pleased to meet and learn more about the successes of many of our alumni and of their desire to become more involved with Arts in the future. In our meetings with community leaders, it became clear that there is ample opportunity for more engagement by Arts with the local community in Waterloo Region. In discussions with departments we learned that there is significant enthusiasm for more involvement in all manner of development activities including, where appropriate, fundraising. However, we consistently heard concern that fundraising needed to be done for the right reasons and with our eyes open. Poorly designed donor agreements can lead to resources being deflected from more important initiatives to the priorities of donors, especially when the donation does not

cover all expenses. Moreover, success of new initiatives or programs depends on their academic credibility, and their consistency with the values of the Faculty.

The continued prosperity of Arts depends on its ability to continue to attract excellent students in a time of increasing competition. One of the main reasons students give for turning down Waterloo offers of admission to the Faculty of Arts is that Waterloo "is known only for its technology-oriented programs." Things important to those students who do choose Waterloo include the academic reputation of the University and Faculty, the presence of co-op or other career-oriented options, and opportunities such as international exchanges. Many students are attracted by the idea that Arts programs can provide them with both an opportunity for intellectual and personal growth and preparation for success in careers. In discussions with employers and alumni, it became clear that the analytical, critical, research, communication and creative skills that education in humanities and social sciences bring are highly prized by employers. However, it is insufficiently clear to graduating students that they have these marketable skills, to employers how their education in Arts provides these skills and to prospective students that they will acquire them.

Actions:

1. *Explore opportunities for expanding our involvement with the external community*.
   a. Involve willing alumni in the education of students as mentors, guest lecturers, and connection makers---they should not be treated as merely a potential source of donations.
   b. Develop cultural and educational programs of interest to the external community. Advertise them locally and in the GTA and host them on campus, using the Perimeter Institute's cultural programs as a model, but with an Arts twist.
   c. Develop programming for high school students to get them interested early in what Waterloo Arts has to offer, using the Faculty of Mathematics' high school competitions as a model.

2. *Ensure that our successes and the quality of our programs are vigorously promoted and communicated*.
   a. This will involve cooperation with the university's development and recruiting offices, but Arts should not be shy about promoting these things itself when necessary.

b. Consider expanding the number of communications staff to allow us to develop and implement an effective communication strategy.

c. Take a more active role in Arts-related student recruitment efforts.

d. Identify and involve successful alumni in this process. Where they are willing, advertise their success as evidence of the value of education in Arts at Waterloo.

3. *Ensure that every Arts degree program provides both identifiable skills that prepare students for success and the breadth and depth of education that comes with an Arts degree.*

a. While our students value the intellectual and personal growth that an Arts education provides, they are also concerned that their degrees prepare them to succeed in their careers after university.

b. Arts should find ways to define and help students provide evidence of the important skills they have acquired. The Centre for Career Action should be a useful ally in this endeavour.

c. A calling card for our career-oriented degrees should be the breadth of education available to students because of their location in an Arts Faculty. Promote the benefits of including Arts breadth requirements in career-oriented programs.

d. Track and advertise success rates of undergraduate students. For instance, success rates in being admitted to graduate research or professional programs and professional accreditation exams would be useful indicators of quality for prospective students.

4. *Involve the departments, and in particular the chairs, in development activities for the Faculty of Arts.*

a. It should at all times be clear that Arts seeks donations to pursue its priorities, and that it does not tailor its priorities to where funds can be raised.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS: TEACHING

The Faculty of Arts has a well-deserved if under-publicized tradition of excellent teaching, something we should celebrate. Nevertheless, changes in technology and society present new challenges to some existing teaching methods and some opportunities to improve our teaching. In our consultations it became clear that where pedagogical innovation offers the prospect of

better learning outcomes or providing high quality education to students we do not currently reach, the faculty and staff in Arts are enthusiastic. We have partners on campus, in the Library, the Centre for Teaching Excellence, Extended Learning, Co-operative Education and Career Action, and the Research Office who are supportive of such efforts. There is, however, little support for experimentation or adoption of technology as an end in itself.

People in Arts recognize the educational value, especially in an age of increased global interconnectedness, of providing students with exposure to other cultures. The value of learning that happens in employment placements, in other off campus opportunities, or through undergraduate research opportunities are recognized throughout the Faculty.

Actions:

1. *Encourage informed experimentation in pedagogy.*
   a. Faculty members should be encouraged to investigate new pedagogical techniques and, in consultation with their chairs, to experiment when appropriate.
   b. Merit review committees must exercise good judgement when faculty members experiment. Not all experiments turn out well, and some take time to work out, and people should not be punished for showing courage. But it is also a mistake to reward experimentation for its own sake.
   c. Arts should ensure that it makes best use of University-wide resources, for instance support available from CTE and academic librarians for matters of course and program design and creating undergraduate research opportunities.

2. *Expand opportunities for our students to participate in co-op and other co-op-like programs that allow them to put theory into practice.*
   a. Arts is a successful participant in co-op education, one of the best known opportunities Waterloo offers to students. However, only 25% of Arts students are in co-op. Some departments want to create or expand co-op offerings. The feasibility of doing so should be investigated.
   b. Arts should look at other forms of co-op-like opportunities students could participate in, for instance internships, placements with charitable organizations or cultural organizations, and so on.

3. *Expand opportunities for international exchanges, terms abroad and other international academic experiences.*

a. There was broad agreement that internationalization provides educational benefits for students. However, this will look different in Arts than in Mathematics or Engineering, the two Faculties at Waterloo that attract many international students. In Arts, we can provide international opportunities to our students by facilitating and supporting opportunities for international exchanges and placements, terms abroad, and the like.

4. *Invest in technology, staff and faculty support for the development and expansion of on-line teaching, both in extended learning and blended learning models, where appropriate.*
   a. Export the model for extended learning pioneered in Philosophy and recently adopted in English to other departments interested in expanding their offerings.
   b. Make the appointments of Extended Learning Coordinators Continuing Lectureships. Temporary appointments prevent departments from sensibly planning for and making long-term investments in their extended learning offerings.
   c. Some faculty members who did not think extended learning appropriate for their disciplines did think the development of blended courses worthwhile. The Faculty should ensure that there is support for the development of such courses even in departments that do not have extended learning offerings.

5. *Address the student-faculty ratio.*
   a. While this is a long-term teaching quality initiative, Arts can take action now by ensuring that undergraduate students have an opportunity to take courses with our top researchers and have an opportunity to be in a small enrolment course early in every program.

6. *Re-examine the structure of the Liberal Studies program and consider ways to allow for interdisciplinary study without adding new programs.*
   a. Are there more effective ways to administer interdisciplinary programs?
   b. Should Liberal Studies be re-designed to serve as a program offering rigorous Liberal Arts education that students must opt into, and therefore be removed as a "default major"?

BUILDING ON SUCCESS: SCHOLARSHIP

We heard consistently about the pride departments take in the quality of scholarship they are producing. In almost all Arts disciplines, standard methods for measuring research impact in the natural sciences or engineering, such as citation counts, are of limited use. However, in parts of Arts where these are the appropriate measures, Arts has some of the top scholars in their fields in the world. Where appropriate indicators are used in, for instance, the traditional book-based disciplines, the quality, quantity and impact of scholarship in Arts is impressive, especially when such factors as relative teaching loads are taken into account. Many of those consulted also expressed pride in the increases in research intensity in recent years, and appreciation for the efforts of the Faculty to facilitate this increase and to make clear to the central administration that Arts is an important player in the research profile of the University of Waterloo. The expansive understanding of Scholarship written into the University's policies, of which Waterloo is justifiably proud, is especially important to the Faculty of Arts, where we have faculty working in fields where their contributions include artistic works, innovative social practices and advances in clinical techniques.

The Task Force was told consistently that even as the University has pushed to increase enrollment of graduate students, changes to graduate student funding and the administration of graduate studies has put the quality of some of the University's most successful graduate programs at risk. Graduate student funding has declined, and moreover has been very unpredictable from year to year, which has made long-term planning difficult. University-wide programs for recruiting and funding graduate students have been designed according to a model suitable for engineering, science or mathematics. The University provides substantial subsidies for international graduate students, which serves as a subsidy to graduate studies in Engineering and Mathematics where the proportion of international graduate students is much higher than in Arts. Complaints were received about the On-Base system, in particular about the amount of faculty and staff time wasted and that it made sensible decision-making difficult.

A key component of improved research performance is continuing to recruit excellent faculty and, in some cases, staff. In some fields in Arts there is a shortage of highly qualified, research-active job candidates. Even in those where there seems to be glut of available talent, there is stiff competition for top candidates. Several of the action items listed above play an important role in recruiting, including the creation of a vibrant intellectual community and enhancing the cultural life of the community. We heard consistently that quality-of-life issues are an important part of recruiting.

Actions:

1. *Consider whether increased staffing in the Arts Research Office will further increase research intensity.*

a. The Dean has recently decided to implement the model used in other large Faculties, separating the jobs of Associate Dean Research and Associate Dean Graduate Studies in hope of continuing the increase in research activity in Arts. Adequate staff support is another key to success in doing so.

2. *Work with the Graduate Studies Office and the Provost's Office to ensure that graduate student funding for Arts students is designed with the needs of research graduate programs in Arts in mind, and that funding for graduate students is predictable and adequate.*
   a. Nearby universities are implementing guaranteed funding for five and six years for PhD students in some programs. It is particularly important in some Arts departments that we be able to match such guarantees.

3. *Advocate for the university to provide support for new faculty that will aid in efforts to recruit research-capable faculty*.
   a. Often mentioned issues include the availability of daycare spots, support for efforts of spouses to find employment and assistance with immigration processes.

4. *Adjust the seed grant programs available for research projects to fill gaps (for instance in Arts projects that overlap with medical research) to ensure that they effectively support worthwhile new research projects, including those that cross departmental lines.*

5. *Improve staff support for administering grants.*
   a. May be most effectively addressed as part of the structural review of staffing recommended above.