Faculty of Arts Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Stakeholder Consultation Report

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1. <u>**Background and Consultation Process**</u>

In the Fall 2019 term, Sheila Ager, Dean of Arts, appointed a task force made up of faculty and staff representatives to lead the consultation process for the Faculty of Arts Strategic Plan 2020-2025.[1] The strategic planning process for 2020-2025 follows upon the <u>Arts Strategic Plan 2014-19</u>, which was the first public Arts Faculty strategic plan. The new strategic plan, which will operate within the context of the <u>University of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2020-2025</u>, aims to articulate the Faculty of Arts' vision and goals for change over the next five years.

The launch of the consultation process was initially delayed due to the global health crisis in early 2020, which prevented the committee from meeting in person with stakeholders, as planned. From June to September 2020, the committee moved forward with the consultation process in two principal ways:

1) synchronous consultation meetings by video conference. These were held with every department in the Arts Faculty (including both faculty members and staff), staff groups, student groups (both undergraduate and graduate), alumni groups, units on campus such as Co-op, CEL, CTE, and the Library, and other community stakeholders.[2] At all of these meetings at least one of the consultation task force co-leads (Greg Campbell, Andrew Faulkner, and Ranjini Jha) was present, together with at least one other committee member, including Caroline Brookes, who scheduled and facilitated all meetings. Anonymized summaries of each meeting were created.

2) an electronic survey,[3] which collected over 400 responses from the community. Separate summaries of survey responses were created for faculty/staff responses, student responses, and alumni responses.

The committee also encouraged stakeholders to contact task force members individually should they wish to share their views privately. A small number of individuals did so, and their feedback was recorded.

The current report aims to provide an executive summary of priorities identified in the feedback received and, on the basis of the feedback, recommend four pillars for strategic change. The anonymized detailed summaries from the synchronous meetings and electronic survey will not be made public but remain

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[1] See list of committee members in Appendix A.
[2] See list of all consultation meetings in Appendix B.
[3] A copy of the questions asked in the survey is included in Appendix C.

available, together with the working documents of the consultation task force, for confidential consultation by future Arts strategic plan working groups.

2. <u>Priorities Identified in the Community Feedback</u>

Upon review of the feedback received in the consultation process, as described above, the task force has identified eight areas of priority for change and the enhancement of existing strengths, which arose commonly in the community advice. These priorities areas are listed below. They are not for the most part listed in a particular order, with the exception of **1. Metrics and benchmarks of success**, which was an overarching theme arising from the consultation process. We heard frequently from the community that there is an urgent need for Arts to embrace change in certain areas, and that it is critical that over the next five years we be able to measure in concrete terms our success in achieving the goals of the strategic plan.

1. **Metrics and benchmarks of success:** It is critical that the Faculty of Arts establish clear metrics and benchmarks of success for all elements of this strategic plan, as well as its various programs and initiatives, to ensure measurable progress. Annual updates communicated to stakeholders will help to document success and build community.
2. **Faculty organizational structure:** The Faculty of Arts' large number of individual departments and schools makes it an outlier within the university and creates certain administrative and financial challenges. We have not historically communicated well across departments. Arts should commit to rethinking its organizational structure and governance.
3. **Equity, diversity, and inclusion:** The Faculty of Arts needs to take steps to improve equity, diversity and inclusion amongst faculty, staff, and students, at all levels. Arts has an opportunity and a responsibility to be a leader in this area within the larger University community. The University is currently undertaking an initiative to improve the collection and use of institutional equity data, which can be used by Arts.
4. **Interdisciplinarity in teaching and research:** The Faculty of Arts has an impressive breadth of research and teaching expertise across the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Creative Arts, which presents challenges but also opportunities for meaningful interdisciplinarity. In connection with rethinking its organizational structure, Arts needs to improve communication across traditional disciplinary boundaries and incentivize interdisciplinary research and teaching within the Faculty of Arts and between Arts and other Faculties in the University. Within this framework, there are significant opportunities for curricular growth.
5. **Identity within a STEM-focused University:** The Faculty of Arts often struggles to define its identity and community role within a STEM-focused university. Arts has an opportunity to be a leader on campus in addressing some of the most pressing social issues of our time and we can do a better job of defining the identity of Arts. There are many opportunities for interdisciplinary work with other Faculties on campus.
6. **Work-integrated learning and Co-op:** Co-op and work-integrated learning are a strength of the University of Waterloo. Arts accordingly has existing assets in this area, on which there is an opportunity to build, especially in creating more diverse and relevant opportunities for Co-op and experiential learning.
7. **Graduate education, agile post-degree, life-long learning:** The Faculty of Arts has large and successful graduate programs, but there are significant funding challenges for attracting and supporting

top graduate students. The inability to fund international students is detrimental to the diversity of the graduate community and inhibits the international reputation of our graduate education. Arts needs to review its graduate programming with a view to strengthening the reputation, agility, and financial stability of our graduate and life-long learning.

8. **Community, space, and wellness:** In part due to the challenges inherent in communicating across diverse and numerous departments, there is not always a strong sense of community across the Faculty of Arts as a whole. Enhancing and promoting a diverse and inclusive community, with an emphasis on the health and wellness of faculty, staff, and students, should be a priority. Physical space, which remains a challenge for Arts, is important for the creation of community and the sharing of ideas.

3. <u>Four Pillars of Change</u>

The priority areas identified above are frequently interconnected and cannot be treated in isolation. With this in mind, the consultation task force recommends, on the basis of the identified priority areas, the following four pillars of change for the Arts Faculty Strategic Plan 2020-25, which align with the University of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2020-2025. Once again, an overarching priority across these four pillars is the need for clear metrics and benchmarks of success. We therefore recommend that the strategic plan working groups think carefully about and articulate appropriate, concrete metrics and benchmarks for each of the four pillars.

1. Faculty Identity: Global Leaders in Research and Teaching with Social Impact

The identity of the Faculty of Arts can be more consistently and effectively articulated, with positive results for the external visibility and impact of Arts, as well as the creation of community and common purpose across Arts and University. This was a consistent theme of the feedback we received from the community. We suggest reviewing and revising the branding of the Faculty of Arts, including possibly its name, with a view to placing more emphasis upon the global impact and societal relevance of our research and teaching in the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Creative Arts. This emphasis on global impact and societal relevance should embrace impact in areas of social justice and ethics. In re-exploring the articulation of our identity, **we recommend**:

- Giving attention to how the branding of the Faculty of Arts positions itself within the University of Waterloo, identifying both unique contributions of Arts and complementarity with the research and teaching in other Waterloo Faculties. Opportunities for interdisciplinarity within Arts, as well as between Arts and other Waterloo Faculties, are relevant.
- Actively promoting the successes of our students, alumni, and faculty to the external community using traditional and social media.
- Placing equity, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of the Faculty's mission and undertaking a study of initiatives to effect positive change in this respect within the Faculty of Arts' community and across its programming.
- Creating structures to communicate more clearly and consistently within Arts our common identity, values, and mission, in order to build a stronger sense of community and shared identity amongst faculty, staff, and students.

2. Governance and Organizational Change

Revision of the administrative structures of the Faculty of Arts, with the aim of ensuring sustainability and enhancing integration of units across Arts, was an objective of Priority 6 of the 2014-19 Arts Faculty Strategic Plan. This remains a pressing need, which was raised repeatedly in the current consultation process. A full review of the Faculty's organizational structure and governance is required, and **we recommend** a full review of the Faculty's organizational structure and governance, noting that:

- The large number of individual departments and schools within Arts (in which respect the Faculty of Arts is an outlier in the University of Waterloo) creates administrative inefficiencies and has negative impacts on financial sustainability.
- Just as important, the reimagining of the organizational structure of the Faculty of Arts provides a positive opportunity to reconceive the way we communicate and interact across Arts in our teaching and research. In this respect, our organizational structure is closely related to our identity as the Faculty of Arts and our commitment to interdisciplinary teaching and learning.
- Review and revision of our governance structure should itself include an extensive consultation process. The reorganization of existing departments and units is a sensitive issue within the community and will require a delicate balance of opportunity and respect for traditional boundaries and structures.

3. Student Experience and Success

From the perspective of the Arts community there is a need for Arts to pursue change focused on student experience and futures. We have clear existing strengths at the University of Waterloo in co-op education, which need to be fostered and expanded to include more relevant co-op placements for Arts students. Our major and current challenges are 1) demonstrating the value and relevance of our undergraduate and graduate education, 2) a lack of financial support and flexible post-degree options for graduate students, 3) promoting and publicizing undergraduate and graduate student work that confronts the challenges of our society, and 4) explicitly valuing diversity in our programming and student experiences. To overcome these challenges that the Faculty faces, **we recommend**:

- Developing graduate student funding models that allow us to attract and support a diverse community of top graduate students, including international students. This will be essential to Arts remaining a research-intensive faculty, continuing our strength in attracting external grants, and developing our international reputation.
- Undertaking a comprehensive review of Arts programming focused upon ensuring a diverse and flexible curriculum, with a focus on digital and analytical skills, which promotes interdisciplinary learning capable of confronting global challenges. This review of programming should take place alongside the reevaluation of Arts organizational structure, which is also critical to our programming and communication across the faculty.
- Positioning itself as the first faculty where every student can have a work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunity as part of their degree. .Every student achieves a certain number of academic credentials, a certain number of experiential credentials, whether they be co-op or research, partnership or community service activity.

- Offering strong online learning options in extended learning and blended learning models that engage students and foster life-long learning.
- Continuing to work with Co-op to develop more Arts-orientated co-op placements and recognizing our alumni more explicitly within the Faculty of Arts.
- Promoting Arts within the University of Waterloo's focus on STEM and technology by explicitly identifying and advertising the ways the Faculty of Arts contributes to that discourse.
- Leveraging our strengths in developing leaders that understand the impact of their actions.

The transition from our current Arts environment to the environment envisioned by the Arts community will require cultural changes by administration, professors, and students themselves.

4. Connection, Community & Collaboration through Interdisciplinarity

Consistent with the feedback from the community, we recommend adopting an interdisciplinary approach with research clusters consistent with the organizational restructuring suggested in the second pillar. This approach would move away from our current siloed approach and would facilitate research that spans disciplines within and across Faculties, is data-driven, and integrates insights to help inform public policy. It would provide critical mass for broad interdisciplinary research on pressing societal, economic, and environmental sustainability issues. It would encourage interdisciplinary programming and learning, and **we recommend**:

- Identifying viable established and emerging areas of research that could support research clusters within the Faculty of Arts and across Waterloo's Faculties by providing critical mass for interdisciplinary engagement.
- Identifying and removing systemic barriers to interdisciplinary work.
- Creating incentives and providing resources to encourage and reward academic partnerships and collaborations within the Faculty, the University, and internationally.
- Supporting outreach activities to share the relevance of ongoing research with the community.

The recommendation is along the lines of the approach proposed by the British Academy's initiative: "**SHAPE the Future** that will bring insights from the social sciences, humanities and the arts together to shape a positive future for people, the economy and the environment."

Appendix A

Arts strategic task force members

Faculty

Co-Chair -Andrew Faulkner	Classical Studies
Co-Chair -Ranjini Jha	School of Accounting & Finance
Veronica Austen	St. Jerome's University
Ramona Bobocel	Psychology
Mikal Skuterud	Economics
Elise Lepage	French Studies
Lennart Nacke	Communication Arts

Staff

Co-Chair -Greg Campbell	Arts Undergraduate Office
Caroline Brookes	Dean of Arts Office
Shelby Davies	Political Science
Angela Roorda	Dean of Arts Office

36 Consultation virtual meetings were held :

- Faculty/staff in each Department/Schools in Arts (17)
- Arts staff (1)
- Arts Undergraduate Office (1)
- One meeting with faculty/staff in each of the Affiliated and Federated Institutions of Waterloo (AFIW) (4)
- Graduate students (1)
- Executive from the ASU- undergraduate students (1)
- Associate Dean Research (1)
- Groups external to Arts (2)
- One with the UWaterloo-Laurier Global Governance PhD program
- One with Director of the Balsillie School of International Affairs
- Groups external to Arts (4)
- The Arts-affiliated academic librarians
- The Centre for Teaching Excellence
- The Centre for Extended Learning
- Cooperative Education and Career Services
- Alumni-via Roundtables (4)

Appendix C

Arts Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Consultation Questions

1. What do you consider to be the biggest strength of the Faculty of Arts that sets us apart? Why?

2. What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the Faculty of Arts today?

3. If you could propose one "big idea" for the Faculty of Arts going forward, what would it be, and why do you think it's important?

4. What are the key measures (qualitative and/or quantitative) we should focus on to evaluate our success over the next five years?

5. How do you think the Faculty of Arts can best align itself with the University's Strategic Plan to advance both Arts' and the University's aims and ambitions?

6. If you could propose one opportunity for the Faculty of Arts as we emerge from the current health crisis, what would it be?

7. How can we as a community make Arts a more inclusive and safe environment for all students, staff and faculty?

Response rates from the on-line survey

1	Undergraduate	9.65%	39
2	Faculty member	19.55%	79
3	Staff	13.12%	53
4	Alumni	37.87%	153
5	Other	1.49%	6
6	Graduate student	18.32%	74
7	Post-doc	0.00%	0
			404

Appendix D

Challenges and Opportunities

As part of its analysis of the community feedback, the Strategic Plan Task Force identified the following challenges and opportunities for future growth, which we include separately here for reference: ***A more detailed summary, in point form, is available for consultation by the working groups***

Challenges:
1. We are struggling to make our relevance known/visible within a university and world in which STEM skills are commonly seen as the drivers of progress and economic growth.
2. The organizational structure of academic units is too siloed and fragmented. This creates administrative inefficiencies and discourages interdisciplinary programs and research.
3. We are no longer able to compete with Canadian Universities for top quality domestic and international MA and PhD students because of our funding structures. In fact, we are largely unable to accept international graduate students.
4. Our branding does not reflect the richness of what we do and study to the broader community. The broad impact of research in the 'Arts' is not widely understood, even elsewhere within the University of Waterloo.

Opportunities:
1. Education in the creative arts, humanities, and social sciences is key in creating literate social citizens. Arts has an opportunity to take on a role of leadership in the area of social justice initiatives. This could in part be achieved through the creation of interdisciplinary institutes or hubs for scholarly exchange.
2. The diversity of programs within Arts can present a challenge (as identified above), but it also provides a real opportunity for meaningful interdisciplinary programs and research, if these are properly incentivized.
3. There are many opportunities in Arts for curricular growth and program change at the undergraduate and graduate level, which will promote interdisciplinary learning, growth in our graduate programs, and opportunities for life-long post-degree learning.
4. Given the STEM focus of the University of Waterloo, there is an opportunity for Arts to build more connections with the rest of the University, emphasizing the integrated role of humanities and social science research in impactful education and research (e.g. STEAM instead of STEM).

Strategic Planning Process Data for Working Groups

a. Update on the 2012 Strategic Planning Task Force data to 2019
(https://uwaterloo.ca/arts/sites/ca.arts/files/uploads/files/artsstrategicplandata_march14_2012.pdf)

b. Additional data since 2012
- student applications information available from IAP (showing time trends with numbers broken down by factors such as academic program, geographic location, application preference ordering, international/domestic, high-school GPA and subject of major interest);

- exit survey data from undergraduate and graduate students at the time of offer and graduation;

- data on faculty complement and teaching ratios including information on full-time and contract faculty;

- research achievements, such as external grant applications/success and funds secured, awards/honours granted.

- information on collaboration with other faculty/research centres

- productivity - comparison to other arts faculties;

- community engagement beyond campus, or community building on campus

- relationships with alumni, donors, various initiatives to assist students

- fundraising information