First-Year Academic Offerings Working Group Recommendations:
Arts & Science First-Year Foundations

Summary

The Arts & Science Working Group on First-Year Academic Offerings was established in March 2017 with a threefold mandate: 1) review the current state of first-year academic, curricular offerings across Arts & Science; 2) re-examine first-year opportunities and initiatives in terms of their effects on the academic lives of students and the number of students reached; 3) develop recommendations for consultation and further planning. (See Appendix A for group members).

First-year students in Arts & Science (A&S) are faced with a plethora of course options when they come to U of T (e.g. 100-level courses, College Ones, 199s), but navigating this diversity can be confusing and overwhelming. They arrive on campus with varying certainty about their academic interests, but in first year they have yet to enter programs of study. They are A&S students with College affiliations who deserve a legible, coherent, and accessible set of academic offerings to choose from that will prepare them for majors, minors, and specialists. At a time when the A&S undergraduate student population is becoming intentionally smaller, we have the chance to rethink what is possible regarding the scale and coordination of our first-year academic offerings and the academic advising that we provide to students before and during their first year.

The Working Group agreed that ensuring coordinated and accessible first-year academic offerings must be a Faculty-level responsibility, working with the Departments and Colleges that provide approximately 500 first-year courses for our students. To empower students to follow their interests and to find new interests in classes large and small, we recommend establishing a coordinated first-year framework of Arts & Science First-Year Foundations.

Put briefly, A&S First-Year Foundations will:

1. Establish a First-Year Foundations Council of oversight and coordination of first-year academic offerings and policies supported by a new First-Year Foundations Office;
2. Require every first-year student to take one .5 FCE A&S Foundations First-Year Seminar of 30 students or fewer and provide additional coordination and resources to help meet this requirement through working with the College Ones, transforming the 199 seminars, and establishing the A&S Foundations Teaching Fellows circle;
3. Better coordinate support for large first-year classes and tutorials, providing students access to introductory courses that focus on preparing them for further study;
4. Provide a more coordinated approach to face-to-face and online student advising and communication through the First Year Foundations Office working in close conjunction with College registrarial offices and academic units.

With reference to the President’s Three Priorities, our recommendations seek to reimagine undergraduate education in first-year classrooms across A&S cognizant of the challenges and possibilities that come with being a first-year student in an internationalizing research university at the heart of the city of Toronto.

Report Finalized March 28, 2018
Our report is undergirded by four core principles:

- **The classroom is the primary site** for first-year students to develop strong foundations for academic success.
- **Arts & Science**, working with Colleges, Departments, and academic units, has the overarching responsibility for communicating clear guidance to students about first-year academic offerings and policies and for coordinating appropriate resources to support first-year classrooms. This responsibility stems from the reality that first-year students are Arts & Science students who yet to select specific programs of study.
- **Excellence and equity** must shape any large scale changes to first-year academic offerings, with a particular focus on developing sustainable teaching resources and fostering collegiality among the diverse departments, centres, and College One Foundational Year seminars which teach first-year students in A&S.
- Designing and implementing meaningful changes to first-year academic offerings must be based on ongoing collective and collaborative work of faculty, staff, and students.
throughout A&S and the Colleges. The shape of what we achieve depends on the insights and input of all these people.

**The First Year at A&S: A Brief Retrospective**

The work of this committee takes place in a much longer collegial effort to think creatively about how best to welcome and engage first-year A&S students as they encounter the diversity of our academic offerings. Working together, Departments, Colleges, the Dean’s Office, and the Provost’s Office have implemented several initiatives over the last few decades that were meant to provide greater opportunities for building research skills and small-scale community in first-year settings. These have included: 199 First-Year Seminars, College One Foundational Year Seminars, First-Year Learning Communities, Big Ideas Courses, and new introductory courses in departments that include tutorials and labs featuring peer-mentoring and specialized English language reading and writing training, with the help of two A&S-sponsored initiatives, Writing Instruction for T.A.s (WIT) and English Language Learning (ELL).

As we all know, the Faculty of Arts & Science—including our students, our teachers, and our classrooms—has changed in many ways since these initiatives were first developed, including:

- higher financial costs of tuition and living in Toronto
- a rise in the number of undergraduate students, including a proportional rise in students from outside Ontario and outside Canada
- an increasing number of students who are English language learners
- an increasing number of students seeking first-year transfer credits for AP or IB courses, which means they miss out on introductory courses at the university level
- complex non-academic demands on student time, including work, family care, and increased commuting time, along with the pressure of prioritizing these demands in relation to academic work
- the expansion of digital media in all aspects of academic communication, including new online tools for navigating course and program offerings and a new learning management system
- the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for universities to respond to the ongoing legacies of residential schools and Canadian colonialism within higher education through means such as curricular reform and support of Indigenous students and faculty
- new policies surrounding accommodation and accessibility
- an increase in reporting of mental health challenges for students
- changing disciplinary patterns of enrolment including more double-major degrees
- the existence of large first-year classes that meet only once per week and hold limited or no tutorials
- curricular changes resulting from the ending of Grade 13 in Ontario, as well as phasing out the three-year degree at U of T
• growing expectations to bring employment-focused and community-engaged learning into the curriculum

• changes to residence allocations such that many residences are now overwhelmingly communities of first-year students

As the Working Group discussed these shifts, we came to agree that any successful changes to first-year academic offerings had to be oriented by the reality that all first-year students enrol in courses and by the premise (at the very least) that they all attend classes. We consider the classroom—whether a seminar, a large lecture course, a smaller language course, a tutorial, or a lab—to be the primary site for first-year students to develop their academic interests and skills, especially those 45% who do not live in residence. More specifically, though many aspects of course-related communication may be digitally mediated, we consider the physical classroom, in which students meet face-to-face and build collegial relationships with each other, their professors, and their teaching assistants, to be a vital and necessary site of first-year experience. Our core recommendation starts in the classroom.

**CORE RECOMMENDATION: ESTABLISH ARTS & SCIENCE FIRST-YEAR FOUNDATIONS**

**Arts & Science First-Year Foundations:** We recommend that A&S establish “Arts & Science First-Year Foundations” as a coherent framework of requirements and academic offerings that enables all students to develop strong academic skills, to join at least one small, face-to-face, academic classroom community, and to better navigate their academic options in their first year. We recognize that the departments and Colleges which teach first-year students differ in size, focus, and pedagogical approach, and recommend four interrelated infrastructural changes to build Arts & Science First-Year Foundations in a collaborative and sustainable manner:

1. Establish a new Arts & Science First-Year Foundations Council that will guide the development of Arts & Science First-Year Foundations. The Council will include faculty, College, Dean’s office, library, and student representation, and will be supported by a new A&S First-Year Foundations Office within the Office of the Faculty Registrar. Improving compatibility and communication among the varied first-year A&S academic offerings within departments and Colleges will better ensure that all first-year students develop the ability to make good decisions as they work towards choosing their academic programs. (See Appendix C for proposed Council membership).

2. A&S Foundations First-Year Seminars: We recommend that every A&S first-year student be required to take .5 FCE of a seminar of 30 students or fewer, as a complement to the larger classes that will characterize most of their class time. A small class setting of this size will feel familiar to students coming directly from high school, while introducing them to advanced skills of critical reading, academic writing, and oral communication in the context of a specific discipline. College Ones and 199 First-Year Seminars currently offer small-class experiences to approximately 48% of first-year students (see Appendix B). Building on ongoing initiatives, such as Victoria College’s efforts to provide a small-class experience for every first-year student, we can reach 100% of first-year students,
giving every student the opportunity to engage more directly with their instructors and peers and to assess and improve their competencies in reading, writing, and speaking in academic contexts. The Foundations First-Year Seminars will replace the 199 seminars with significant differences: departments and interdisciplinary units can allow these seminars to count towards program requirements if they choose and these seminars can be taught by continuing faculty as well as by advanced Ph.D. candidates and post-doctoral fellows who participate in the A&S Foundations Teaching Fellows circle. The relationship between College One seminars and First-Year Foundations seminars will be developed in consultation with Colleges (see more below).

3. **A&S Foundations Teaching Fellows:** In order to meet and sustain the expanded need for excellent teaching that will come with the A&S Foundations First-Year Seminars, we recommend the establishment of an A&S Foundations Teaching Fellows circle which will provide teaching opportunities, training, and collegiality for advanced Ph.D. candidates and post-doctoral fellows affiliated with A&S units and Colleges. Drawing inspiration from similar initiatives at top research universities across North America, the A&S Foundations Teaching Fellows circle will give emerging scholars valuable small-class teaching experience while exposing first-year students to cutting-edge researchers.

4. **Investing in Large Classes:** Large first-year courses can be an exciting introduction to university for students and are often very satisfying for instructors to teach. They are also a necessary and vital part of A&S First-Year Foundations. We recommend a two-part investment in large classes, to build on and foster the innovative work already undertaken by many instructors:

   a. Mandate the A&S First-Year Foundations Council, with the support of the First-Year Foundations Office, to conduct an analysis of first-year lecture-based courses with goals including the following: 1) assessing student access to courses that are oversubscribed, and how admission streams shape this access; 2) examining how first-year courses interrelate as access points to programs; 3) supporting improved TA training, and, wherever possible, the inclusion of discipline-specific academic skills tutorials/labs of 30 or fewer students.

   b. The establishment of regular meetings of First-Year Course Instructors that allows them to share their syllabus design, test and exam scheduling, and strategies for engaging students and helping them make program choices.

The detailed design and implementation of these recommendations will require a broad-based consultative and governance process across A&S, Colleges, the School of Graduate Studies, the Provost’s Office, and student organizations. We recommend that the A&S First-Year Foundations Council be convened in June 2018 and that an Implementation Subcommittee be struck in order to work to a staged implementation beginning in September 2019 and concluding in September 2022.
A&S First-Year Foundations: Detailed Infrastructural and Policy Recommendations

Committee Representation & Process

Co-chaired by Vice-Dean Pamela Klassen, Undergraduate & International and Acting Vice-Dean Mary Pugh, Undergraduate & International (July 2017-June 2018), the Working Group was comprised of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty from across Arts & Science, registrarial and library staff, and included representatives from all seven colleges (see Appendix A). From March 30, 2017 to January 25, 2018, the Working Group met on nine occasions, with our conversations oriented as much as possible from the perspective of a student entering Arts & Science for the first time. Informed by both quantitative data and qualitative consultation, we considered the cycle of first-year experience from the “summer of choice” when students first select their courses to their springtime decisions regarding programs as they near the end of first year. We have deliberated on what we can do collectively—as faculty, staff, and experienced students—to ensure that our newest members are able to pursue with curiosity and clarity the range of intellectual pathways open to them. Our goal has been to work toward infrastructural and classroom-based changes that enable all first-year students to build the foundations for academic success during the rest of their university education.

In light of both the possibilities and the difficulties facing students entering Arts & Science for the very first time, 55% of whom are eighteen years old or younger, how can we better support, while also challenging, first-year students? Entering university is a significant milestone for any student. Doing so while transitioning from high school or working lives to the rhythms and high expectations of students studying at a great university in the middle of Canada’s biggest city is both exciting and, often, overwhelming. It is the responsibility of Arts & Science to provide the best possible conditions for students to make a successful transition in their first year.

Our core recommendation is the establishment of A&S First-Year Foundations as the base for coordination and communication regarding first-year academic offerings. In addition we have several policy recommendations directly related to first-year academic experience. We have grouped our recommendations within three scales of action: 1) Faculty-wide infrastructural changes to facilitate clearer communication across units, sustainable plans for staffing first-year courses, and better first-year student experience and academic advising; 2) Relationship building among Departments, Colleges, including the College Ones, registrarial offices and libraries to ensure that first-year students are supported in developing foundational academic skills and in exploring the breadth of possibilities of an Arts & Science education; 3) Departmental and College initiatives geared to helping first-year students engage with faculty, teaching assistants, other students, and librarians to develop the necessary learning and communication skills required for their academic success.
**Detailed Recommendations**

1. **Faculty-wideInfrastructural Changes**

**Arts & Science First-Year Foundations**

1.1 **A&S First-Year Foundations:** We recommend that Arts & Science establish A&S First-Year Foundations as a coherent framework of academic offerings and policies that enables first-year students to fully participate in both small and large classes and to better navigate their academic options. First-year students are all Arts & Science students finding their way to programs with the support of their professors and teaching assistants, their Colleges, their peers, and a range of communication platforms. Guided by a new **First-Year Foundations Council**, co-chaired by the Vice-Dean Undergraduate & International (or designate) and the Principal of Principals (or designate) and including departmental, College, registrarial, library, and student representation, A&S First-Year Foundations will facilitate coordination among first-year academic offerings across A&S to better ensure that all first-year students develop strong academic skills and the ability to make good decisions about second-year program selections. To facilitate the work of the Council, we recommend the creation of an **A&S First-Year Foundations Office** within the OFR which will support the implementation of A&S First-Year Foundations.

1.2 **A&S First-Year Foundations Seminars:** We recommend that Arts & Science implement a new requirement that every first-year student complete .5 FCE of an A&S First-Year Foundations Seminar. This seminar need not be in their ‘stream of entry’—but could be. Students will be encouraged to use this as an opportunity to explore the intellectual breadth of A&S offerings. A First-Year Foundations Seminar is defined as a class of 30 or fewer students that meets (at least) on a weekly basis, that introduces students to a field of study through a theme determined by the instructor, and that incorporates elements of academic skills development, such as writing and oral communication, in the course design. These seminars will be comprised of a range of existing and new courses that meet the Foundation Seminar guidelines as established by the First-Year Foundations Council. Foundations Seminars will replace the current 199 seminars and may include small courses that are currently part of the College Ones. Seminar proposals will go through governance in Curriculum Committees, and seminars will be reviewed regularly. Units may count A&S First-Year Foundation Seminars toward their program requirements, should they choose. This may provide onramps to minors or majors in disciplines to which first-year students might otherwise not be exposed. To implement the A&S Foundation Seminar requirement for every incoming first-year student, the Faculty will need to establish a sustainable means of providing teaching resources and undertake an inventory of appropriate classroom spaces.

1.3 **Working with the Ones:** We recognize that the College Ones, plus Munk One and Commerce, are each structured differently and reach different numbers of students. We also recognize that the earliest College Ones, namely Vic One and Trin One, have been leaders in reimagining the first-year academic experience. We recommend that the Dean’s Office begins a consultation process, in partnership with the Colleges and the Provost’s Office, in which Colleges can consider harmonizing and/or restructuring their College Ones with goals of 1) counting College One seminars as First-Year Foundations seminars, 2) reaching more
students, and 3) developing more robust partnerships with departments and interdisciplinary units. For example, more departments could work with College Ones to designate their first-year courses as College One co-requisites, providing students with more pathways to programs. In a related vein, we encourage departments to consider developing their First-Year Foundation Seminars in partnership with Colleges as site-specific student communities.

1.4 Transforming the 199 Seminars: We recognize that the long-running First-Year Seminars initiative (199 Seminars), which requires every Department to offer 2.0 FCE of a small-class seminar taught by continuing faculty, has become human resource challenge for some departments. This is especially the case for smaller departments with fewer faculty. 199s are also problematic in that they are not connected to programs; these classes count towards the degree and are used by some students to meet breadth requirements, but they do not count towards programs of study. A further challenge is that 199s are often undersubscribed. At the same time, many faculty and first-year students highly value the chance to interact in a small class setting. We recommend that 1) the 199 seminars be redesigned as A&S First-Year Foundations Seminars through a consultation process led by the A&S Foundations Council; 2) departments be given the option of including their First-Year Foundations Seminars in their program requirements; 3) to meet staffing challenges, First-Year Foundations Seminars may be taught by continuing faculty, as well as by advanced Ph.D. candidates and post-doctoral fellows who participate in the A&S Foundations Teaching Fellows circle; 4) A&S develops a sustainable implementation plan that includes discussion of the appropriate model and number of seminars each department must offer; 5) that units with undergraduate programs of study which do not currently teach 199s be encouraged and enabled to participate in the A&S First-Year Foundations Seminars.

1.5 A&S First-Year Foundations Teaching Fellows: In order to meet the need for excellent and sustainable teaching of the A&S Foundation seminars, we recommend the establishment of a Teaching Fellows circle, working in conjunction with the School of Graduate Studies. The Fellows could include advanced Ph.D. candidates and post-doctoral fellows affiliated with A&S units, including the A&S Post-Doctoral Fellows and other graduate fellowships in Colleges, departments, institutes, and centres. This recommendation will require considerable imagination, consultation, good will, and resources to implement, but we think it could be a positive re-imagining of undergraduate education that also offers foundational opportunities for graduate and post-doctoral fellows.

1.6 Investing in Large Classes: A&S First-Year Foundations includes the many excellent large classes taught by dedicated teams of instructors and teaching assistants. We recommend that A&S embark on an analysis of all first-year courses which includes the following points: 1) assessing the variability of student access to courses that are oversubscribed, and how admission streams shape this access; 2) examining how first-year courses interrelate to each other as access points to programs; 3) supporting improved TA training, and, wherever possible, the inclusion of discipline-specific academic skills tutorials/labs of 30 or fewer students. Drawing from traditional and innovative approaches of instructors and teaching assistants and working in conjunction with the WIT and ELL initiatives, these tutorial/labs will help students to develop critical discipline-specific skills including reading, writing, and oral communication in academic contexts, and awareness of research and dissemination
methods shaped by academic integrity. We also recommend the establishment of regular meetings of First-Year Course Instructors to encourage knowledge sharing and to discuss new concerns and challenges as they arise.

**Honours Bachelor of Arts & Science**

1.7 **H.B.A.Sc. degree**: For greater legibility of the possibilities of mixing disciplines within A&S, we recommend the development of a third degree, an Honours Bachelor of Arts & Science, that encourages and enables students to consider the breadth of program combinations possible to them. Marking and naming such a possibility in a degree stream will alert first-year students to the possibilities of combining programs across the humanities, social science, and sciences from the beginning of their degree, in addition to being a strong recruitment tool. In a related recommendation, the “streams of entry” to which prospective students now apply should be reconsidered, or at the very least their significance must be made clearer to students to avoid their confusion about the process of being admitted to a program of study only in their second year. See also the Admissions Business Process Reengineering Final Report (BPR).

**A&S Policy Changes & Considerations**

1.8 **Course load limits**: Promote a more balanced, positive experience for first-year students as they transition from high school or working life to university by limiting course enrollment to a maximum of 5.0 FCEs. Students wishing to enroll in more than 5.0 FCE must consult in person with their College Registrar’s office to be granted permission to do so.

1.9 **H-courses**: Reaffirm the importance of offering a wide variety of half-credit (H) first-year courses in order to offer students more breadth and flexibility as well as an increase in opportunities to explore potential program pathways. We reiterate the policy that students in Y courses must receive at least one graded assignment before December so that they are aware of where they stand. We recommend that curriculum committees discuss two potential approaches to Y-courses: 1) a ‘drop-down’ system so students could break away from a Y after the fall semester but still earn an H credit, and 2) linked first-year H courses that can provide a two-semester first-year experience.

1.10 **Accessible Pathways**: We recommend that A&S continue to build pathways to university education for students from less well-represented communities, through outreach activities and continued engagement with Academic Bridging, TYP, and refugee sponsorship initiatives. In particular, we note the recommendations about recruitment and accessibility in relation to Indigenous students found in the report of the A&S Indigenous Teaching and Learning Working Group.

1.11 **WIT & ELL**: Encourage and support greater integration of the Writing Instruction for TAs and the English Language Learning initiatives in first-year courses, especially in tutorials.

1.12 **Language requirements**: Strike a new working group to assess the role of English language proficiency requirements in A&S, and to address the question of how to ensure that all students further develop English language skills during the course of their degrees.
1.13 **First-year transfer credits**: Review the policies regarding credit transfer of IB/AP classes to assess their impact on students’ academic success.

1.14 **100-level courses**: Review the effects on students’ program options of limits placed on the number of 100-level courses each student can take.

**Communication and Advising**

1.15 **First-Year Foundations Guide**: Develop a First-Year Foundations Guide for all A&S students, coordinated by the A&S Foundations Office working in collaboration with Colleges and Departments.

1.16 **Modified, Focused Communication Plan**: Students are overwhelmed with too much email coming from a wide range of campus sources (e.g. Faculty, Department, College, Student Services), such that vital elements are lost in the noise. We recommend the further development of a coordinated approach to email and letter-mail communication with first-year students, especially in July, August and September, and a centralized A&S communications strategy with Arts & Science students overall.

1.17 **Office hours**: In addition to encouraging first-year students to visit their College Registrar’s office for academic planning, also encourage them to visit instructors during office hours to ask questions not only about their coursework, but also about their academic pathways.

1.18 **Personal librarian**: Enhance A&S links with the personal librarian service with the goal of increasing student engagement with this opportunity for academic skills advising. Tying the personal librarian service to the First-Year Foundations Seminars is one possible approach.

1.19 **Advising**: Create a First-Year Mobile Academic Advising Centre during critical advising times with advising that includes faculty, departmental advisors, and registrarial staff. For example, these centres could set up close to large classrooms, or in departments, libraries, and student-focused spaces. Consider the possible role of peer mentors in advising.

2. **Relationships across Arts & Science**

2.1 **Collaboration**: Promote more robust relationships among Colleges, Departments, and other units with undergraduate programs to build more collaborative approaches to enhancing and clarifying first-year academic opportunities within College cohorts. One pathway would be to develop tutorials within some first-year courses that were arranged by college membership and would meet at the respective college location. Making use of Curriculum Committee meetings to consider new possibilities of collaboration would be a good place to start.

2.2 **Co-requisites**: Expand College One co-requisite opportunities in conjunction with departments to best connect students with broad range of relevant programs of study.

2.3 **Communication**: Develop a collaborative model between College Registrarial Offices and Departments to invigorate the existing landscape of program-level advising. Committees
such as Communication & Consultation are an excellent place to foster such relationships. Sharing best practices for student-centered perspectives in working with online tools such as Degree Explorer, the online Calendar, and Quercus, the new portal, will be critical.

2.4 **First-Year Instructors Meetings**: Establish a regular set of meetings of first-year instructors twice per semester that would enable the sharing of pedagogical practices and challenges, discuss infrastructural challenges, and have student representation when appropriate. These meetings could be organized to gather instructors from cognate departments. Especially for instructors of large lecture courses, such as those held in Convocation Hall, we recommend that the A&S Foundations Office foster communication among instructors that allows them to share their syllabus design, test and exam scheduling, and strategies for engaging students.

2.5 **Orientation**: Develop a more integrated approach to the academic aspects of Orientation Week by working with Colleges (and student associations) to ensure students can absorb vital information about academic success. The First-Year Foundations Office could help Colleges to streamline information about student supports by coordinating with such groups as Undergraduate Chairs, the Office of Student Academic Integrity, the Centre for International Experience, and Accessibility Services.

2.6 **First-Year Learning Communities**: Undertake a review of the First-Year Learning Communities to determine their role in light of the goals of A&S First-Year Foundations.

### 3. UNIT-CENTERED INITIATIVES (IN ADDITION TO THOSE MENTIONED ABOVE)

#### 3.1 **Communication protocols**: Develop a set of recommended practices to support units in using departmental or College websites to link with A&S digital tools for program exploration and selection. For example, departments might create ‘landing pages’ for first-year students in their own websites, in coordination with the OFR, to assist students to learn about a department. First-year course calendar descriptions could link to these landing pages, to offer first-year students information on fields of study, advice on course sequencing, etc.

#### 3.2 **Online syllabus project**: Encourage faculty, especially those who teach first-year courses, to use the new online syllabus tool to publish syllabi in the weeks before classes start. In addition to helping students think ahead for course readings and planning, publishing syllabi ahead of time helps curb the syllabus speculators—private enterprises that sell old course syllabi online thus profiting from the hard work of faculty and anxiety of students.

#### 3.3 **Program selection**: Develop resources, or support units in developing resources, to build program-selection modules into first-year courses and events.
APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

Co-Chairs:
Pamela Klassen, Vice-Dean, Undergraduate and International
Mary Pugh, Acting Vice-Dean, Undergraduate and International (July 2017 – June 2018)

Members:
Donald Ainslie, Principal, University College
Donald Boere, College Registrar, Innis College
Paola Bohorquez, New College and Acting Coordinator, English Language Learning Program
(July 2017 – June 2018)
Alana Boland, Associate Professor, Geography & Planning
Randy Boyagoda, Principal, St. Michael’s College
Christian Caron, Associate Chair, Sociology
Denise Cruz, Associate Professor, English
Susanne Ferber, Chair, Psychology
Leora Freedman, New College and Coordinator, English Language Learning Program
Keith Garrett, Undergraduate Student
Alison Gibbs, Associate Chair, Statistics
David Goldreich, Director, Rotman Commerce
Tony Harris, Associate Chair, Cell & Systems Biology
Melissa Hill, Director, Student Communications
Yurie Kaku, Undergraduate Student
Leanne Kim, Undergraduate Student
Nelson De Melo, College Registrar, Trinity College
Helen Mo, Graduate Student, Religion
Jennifer Mori, Associate Chair, History
Joan Ngo, Graduate Student, Psychology
Deborah Robinson, Arts & Science Faculty Registrar
Joel Rodgers, Graduate Student, English
Nick Rule, Acting Chair, Psychology (July 2017 – June 2018)
Andre Schmid, Chair, East Asian Studies
Lisa Sherlock, Chief Librarian, E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria College
Cheryl Shook, College Registrar, Woodsworth College
Gaia Simoneschi, Undergraduate Student

Administrative Coordinators:
Emily Greenleaf, Research Officer, Teaching & Learning
Alexandra Varela, Special Projects, Undergraduate & International

TERMS OF REFERENCE
Over many years, A&S, in conjunction with Departments and Colleges, and with the support of the Provost’s Office, has developed several new first-year offerings designed to make the first-year experience more engaging and supportive for students and to provide them with more opportunities for building research skills and small-scale community in academic settings. A&S
has changed in many ways since these initiatives were first developed, including: 1) a rise in international students and multi-lingual students, 2) an increase in non-academic demands on student time, including work, commuting, and family care, 3) new online tools of navigation for students, 4) new policies surrounding accommodation and accessibility, 5) changing disciplinary patterns of enrolment, and 6) an increase in reporting of mental health challenges for students. In light of these changes, it is time for A&S to reconsider what is working and what is wanting in the diverse range of our first-year offerings.

To that end, the A&S Working Group on First-Year Academic Offerings will begin meeting in March 2017, co-chaired by Pamela Klassen, Vice-Dean Undergraduate and International and Mary Pugh, Acting Vice-Dean Undergraduate and International (July 2017 – June 2018).

The Working Group will be oriented as much as possible from the perspective of students entering Arts & Science for the first time. We will focus on the question of how Departments, Colleges, the Office of the Faculty Registrar, and the Dean’s Office can best meet our collective goals of engaging and supporting students as they make the difficult transition from high school—or working lives—to the rhythms and high expectations of university students studying in the middle of Canada’s biggest city.

Group will think across questions of curricular pathways, classroom-based communities, and effective communication with students and among A&S units. To begin with, the Working Group will focus on academic offerings for students admitted to first year and will not include within its mandate the Transitional Year Program, the Academic Bridging Program, or the International Foundation Program at New College.

First-year academic offerings at A&S are housed across Colleges and within Departments and Centres. These offerings include: 199Y First Year Seminars, College Ones, First Year Learning Communities, and introductory courses in Departments and Centres. Varying resources are available to support these diverse initiatives, which, in turn, reach a varying number of students. To best serve the needs of our students, especially in terms of providing them with clear academic advising and preparing them with necessary skills to support their academic progress, we need to collectively re-examine first-year opportunities, especially in their interrelation within the academic lives of students and in terms of the varying numbers of students reached by these offerings. As A&S works to deliberate upon and implement the recommendations of the Admissions Business Process Review, which included a recommendation to “align first-year opportunities,” we are at a pivotal moment for re-evaluating and revising our first-year offerings.

Possible orienting questions and tasks:

- What should Arts & Science students achieve in their first year, and how are these expectations communicated to them?
- How do we understand the role of choice in the first year – both celebrating the opportunity it offers and recognizing the anxieties it can foster in students? How do we balance the importance of choice and exploration, and the need for students to feel a sense of community and belonging in first year?
- How can Arts & Science better support students’ transition from high school to university?
• How can we better understand the link between first year academic experience and mental health challenges of students?
• How can we better provide academic advising to students:
  o as they transition into first year, about the curricular pathways open to them, in light of the plethora of first year options?
  o towards the end of their first year, as they explore and select programs of study?
• The role of the College Ones, first year seminars (199s), and other small class experiences, and their connection to POSs.
• The role of TAs and tutorials.
• How can we improve the communication between Departments and Colleges in terms of our shared responsibilities to first-year students?
• How can the Dean’s Office provide more helpful data to support evidence-based decision-making about first year opportunities?
• What are the particular academic challenges faced by international students in first year?
• How can Arts & Science better support students who have recently arrived in Canada?
• What are the benefits and drawbacks of the current system of English language diagnostics for international students?
# Appendix B: Overall A&S First-Year Student Enrollment in at Least One Course of 30 Students or Less

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Students</th>
<th>Total Number of Students in a Small Course</th>
<th>Percentage of Domestic Students in a Small Course</th>
<th>Percentage of International Students in a Small Course</th>
<th>Total Percentage of Students Enrolled in a Small Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>6420</td>
<td>3301</td>
<td>53.08%</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
<td>51.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>6468</td>
<td>3086</td>
<td>50.51%</td>
<td>35.94%</td>
<td>47.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>6407</td>
<td>3103</td>
<td>52.16%</td>
<td>36.24%</td>
<td>48.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>7288</td>
<td>3415</td>
<td>51.58%</td>
<td>33.73%</td>
<td>46.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-17</td>
<td>6559</td>
<td>3117</td>
<td>52.55%</td>
<td>35.47%</td>
<td>47.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C: PROPOSED MEMBERSHIP FOR THE A&S FIRST-YEAR FOUNDATIONS COUNCIL

The Arts & Science First-Year Foundations Council will guide the development of Arts & Science First-Year Foundations, and once it is established, continue to ensure communication and compatibility among the varied first-year A&S academic offerings. The Council will include departmental, College, Dean’s office, library, and student representation, and will be supported by a new A&S First-Year Foundations Office within the Office of the Faculty Registrar. The Working Group on First-Year Academic Offerings recommends the following membership structure, keeping in mind diversity in terms of disciplines and experience:

Co-Chairs:

Vice-Dean, Undergraduate and International (or designate)
Principal of Principals (or designate)

Membership:

- 4 Undergraduate students, including at least one international student
- 2 Graduate students (with TA experience and perhaps Residence Dons)
- 4 Faculty with experience teaching first-year courses
- 3 Associate Chairs
- 2 Chairs
- 1 College Principal
- Associate Dean Teaching & Learning
- ELL Director
- WIT Director
- 1 Librarian
- A&S Faculty Registrar (or designate)
- 2 College Registrars
- 1 representative from Curriculum & Governance (OFR)
- 1 Coordinator