In the last few years Arts & Science students have participated in diverse international opportunities, including analyzing Large Hadron Collider data at CERN in Switzerland, interviewing rural farmers about their agricultural practices in Indonesia, examining the biodiversity of complex ecosystems in Ecuador and interviewing political leaders in Uganda to explore biography as a historical methodology. Arts & Science students are the future leaders in a knowledge economy shaped by innovation and globalization. More students are being educated in multiple countries and choosing to work outside their country of origin. To effectively collaborate and compete with their peers from around the world, our students must have the skills to study and work across cultural, social and political spheres. Our goal is to encourage as many of our undergraduates as possible to undertake these kinds of significant international experiences.

Toronto, as the most diverse city in Canada, and the Faculty of Arts & Science as the largest Faculty of Canada’s leading research university, are uniquely situated to provide opportunities for students to build the skills that support global fluency in their academic, research and professional work.

To help develop a coordinated approach to the development of international activities that will support these goals, an International Advisory Committee was struck to undertake the following tasks:

1. Develop a strategic and coordinated approach to international opportunities for undergraduates in Arts & Science.
2. Provide recommendations on how to implement innovative approaches to international activities.
3. Provide recommendations to ensure the quality of international experiences.
4. Provide recommendations on ways to insure access and equity in participation by Arts & Science faculty and undergraduates in international activities.

The committee has met throughout this past year to discuss these tasks and to think about how to expand international opportunities available to Arts & Science students. At its first meeting, the committee agreed on a broad definition of an international experience, acknowledging that a broad definition necessitates the inclusion of experiences that may have differing levels of intensity. This definition encompasses experiences off-campus as well as those on-campus that help to broaden a student’s perspective on the world and develop global fluency.

The committee identified some key challenges and opportunities in international programming in Arts & Science. Outlined below is a brief summary of the committee discussions and recommendations.
CHALLENGES

Communication: Despite the many international programs offered by the Faculty, a good number of students and faculty members remain unaware of these opportunities, particularly those offered through the Faculty such as International Course Modules (ICMs) and 399 Research Excursions.

Diverse objectives: Students in different disciplines have very different goals when participating in international experiences. Many science students are interested in a lab-based research experience, for example, while a humanities student may be in need of language training or archival research opportunities. There are also limits to participation - not every student wants or can afford to go off-campus for an international program.

Funding: International activities are cost-intensive and resources are scarce, both for individual students and for more general programming. Funding for international experiences represents a particular challenge for undergraduates with limited means or non-traditional students, both in terms of the financial costs of participating in these experiences as well as the opportunity costs incurred by time away from employment income or family responsibilities.

Equity: International activities are not reaching students equally, with some students unaware of any opportunities and some students participating in multiple activities. Particularly in the case of Faculty-funded activities, providing opportunities for those who may not otherwise be able to participate or may not yet have had a chance to participate in an international experience is a priority.

Quality: While focusing on expanding international opportunities for our undergraduates, it is especially important to insure that quality is consistently maintained to the rigorous levels established by our existing programs.

CURRENT STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND FUTURE GOALS

International programs have been growing across the University. A wider variety of programs are being offered and more students are participating. Arts & Science students make up a majority of these participants. Within Arts & Science, a larger number of faculty and students are taking part in Faculty-sponsored programs like Summer Abroad, the ICM and 399 Research Excursions. In addition, the number of units engaged in these programs is also increasing across the Faculty. For the past three years we have consistently received proposals for these programs that total twice the funding available. There is a clear demand for more of these types of opportunities.

Current International Opportunities available to Arts & Science students:

International opportunities for undergraduates generally fall into three different categories:
**Course-based:** Course-based international experiences are integrated into a UofT academic course or program. They allow students and instructors to incorporate resources or activities that are not available on campus into a course. These may also include project-based summer courses.

**Current opportunities:** Summer Abroad, International Exchange, ICM, international field courses, service-learning programs

**Research:** International research opportunities allow students to apply concepts, methodologies and skills to international research sites and resources relevant to the students’ program of study. Research opportunities include lab work, field courses and independent or small-group research opportunities.

**Current opportunities:** Science Abroad, International Student Exchange Summer Research Opportunities Program, 399 Research Excursions, international field courses, Undergraduate Research Fund, Unit-level research funds

**Professional:** Some international experiences allow students to apply their academic training in professional settings around the world. Students enhance their academic program by gaining knowledge and experience of work environments outside their own cultural and linguistic context. These opportunities include exposure to industry, government, international organizations and others.

**Current opportunities:** Professional Experience Year, internships

**Building on our strengths:**

In reviewing existing international opportunities, the committee identified some promising areas that may provide the impetus for developing additional international opportunities.

Joint courses, or international courses that include students from a partner university, have been a feature of several international programs. These experiences have received very positive feedback from both students and faculty. There may also be innovative ways to provide similar experiences virtually, through the use of new media and technology. International experiences may not need to take place exclusively off-campus to provide students with exposure to cross-cultural situations by engaging with students from another part of the world.

More programs are encouraging internships in recognition of the value of applying theory to practice. Similarly, service-learning courses offer the opportunity for observation and reflection on how academic content may be manifested in real-world situations. There are also many areas of the world where field research is the only way to access natural and cultural resources or scientific instruments that do not (and cannot) exist in Canada. International experiences provide many of the benefits described above. They also provide structured opportunities for mentoring by faculty, graduate students and others working in a student’s area of interest. In addition, these opportunities provide students with contacts and skills and experiences, including increased knowledge of global affairs, which can help with future careers.
In this era of globalization there are many opportunities for developing international experiences for Arts and Science undergraduates. While the examples outlined above build on our current strengths, there are most certainly other possibilities that have not yet been explored. As the largest Faculty at a world-class university in a multicultural city, Arts and Science is in a unique position to leverage our resources to provide innovative and unique international opportunities for our undergraduates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) **Strengthen the alignment of faculty research with undergraduate international opportunities**, including closer integration of international opportunities into academic programs, faculty research and graduate student training.

2) **Identify and articulate a clear message** around the goal of encouraging global fluency in our students. Situate Arts & Science international experiences in the larger context of students’ intellectual communities and potential career fields. Providing a wide range of international opportunities for students and faculty can support an academic experience that encourages global exposure and engagement.

3) **Coordinate the flow of information among units within the Faculty as well as University-wide programs**. The Faculty’s role is to work in partnership with units to support development of a diverse range of international opportunities that address the needs and interests of students and faculty across Arts & Science. In particular, coordinating information flows to insure that all students have access to international opportunities, and that funding is equitably distributed among individual students and units may be a key Faculty role.

4) **Conduct further research on the role of international opportunities in the undergraduate student experience**. In particular, the Committee recommends that further research be conducted to systematically examine additional dimensions of international programming within the Faculty, including such questions as:

   - What factors contribute to high attrition rates between student interest and their participation in international activities?
   - Who are the students who are not interested in an international experience?
   - How can we support students with limited resources or non-traditional students to participate in international experiences?
   - Who are the faculty willing to participate in international programs, and why?

5) **Establish a Dean’s International Initiatives Fund to support creative and innovative international activities** in areas of need not already addressed by existing programming. The goal of this fund will be to leverage Faculty resources to provide a broad range of international opportunities for undergraduate students. Preliminary criteria for this fund include:

   - An open call for proposals with specific requirements
   - Proposed activities would be distinct from current international programs
   - Proposed activities should be for undergraduates only
• Proposed activities could be either curricular or co-curricular
• Projects are encouraged from both faculty and students, but faculty supervision must always be provided
• Designed to encourage creative and original projects, including interdisciplinary activities
• Proposed projects must have a measurable impact beyond those who receive the funding.
• First preference will be given to students who have not already received Faculty funding.

MEASURING PROGRESS:

The committee felt that it is very important to have on-going measures of progress. These measures include not only descriptive statistics of who is participating in what programs at the individual student level, but also measures of the range and scope of opportunities in terms of the quality and accessibility of programs available to Arts & Science students. In addition, information should be collected that will provide some measure of the quality of the opportunities our students participate in and how closely they meet their stated learning objectives and support the goals and objectives of the Faculty. Access and equity of opportunity are also important measures, particularly in a time of scarce resources, to insure that programs and funding opportunities are achieving a broad reach and all students are able to participate. At a minimum a data bank should be established and indicators of success identified and consistent monitoring should take place.

Ensuring the academic rigor of a program starts with identifying clear learning outcomes for each international activity. International experiences provide students with opportunities for academic, personal, and professional development. They also provide opportunities for units to support their curricular and learning goals. To help guide the integration of these opportunities with new and existing international programs, the committee proposes the following learning outcomes for international opportunities supported by Arts & Science:

**Academic:** Students will be able to situate their academic program in global and culturally varied perspectives, gain new insights and participate in different styles of academic inquiry within their field of study.

**Personal development:** Participating in an international experience through Arts & Science will help students to develop independence, confidence, leadership and other social skills that support their navigation of unfamiliar cultural situations.

**Global fluency:** By the time they graduate, Arts & Science students will have had opportunities to develop language, cultural awareness and other skills that allow them to work comfortably and effectively across language and cultural boundaries, outside Canada and their culture of heritage.
NEXT STEPS

In its deliberations, the committee also discussed how some of these recommendations might be most effectively implemented. Some preliminary suggestions include:

1. As participation in longer term international programs like Summer Abroad and student exchange take planning, target publicity and awareness of international opportunities at first year students (and perhaps their parents).
2. Include information on international programs in student and new faculty orientations.
3. Foster an expectation that most students will participate in an international experience while they are at UofT.
4. Develop faculty and student information networks for those interested in international programs.

Some of these preliminary suggestions have already been implemented. A few examples are:

- The Faculty has begun to sponsor an annual International Opportunities Fair in the fall. Many first and second year students attended this year’s fair.
- Information on faculty-initiated international opportunities was included for the first time in this year’s new faculty orientation.
- A small amount of money has been approved on a one-time-only basis to encourage the development of international opportunities for Arts & Science undergraduates. This will be offered on a pilot basis next fall.

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