Faculty of Arts & Science Working Group on Indigenous Teaching & Learning

Background/Context:

I (we) wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land. ¹

Students within the Faculty and across the University have been increasingly calling for greater recognition and incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and its research (e.g. courses taught from an Indigenous perspective and/or containing Indigenous content) within their programs. In the fall of 2015, the Native Students Association launched a petition requesting exactly this, in part also responding to President Gertler’s Three Priorities: A Discussion Paper, which included as Priority 3 the call to reimagine and reinvent undergraduate education in the context of a research-intensive University.

Student-focused requests are also supported by the December 2015 Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It contains Calls to Action that directly relate to improving recognition and inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and its research at Canadian Universities, creating University degree programs in Indigenous languages, and as part of the crucial work of reconciliation, developing programs that educate non-Indigenous students about Indigenous knowledges and its research, Indigenous histories and the legacy of residential schools. In response to this important report, the University of Toronto has struck an institution-wide TRC committee to address these calls. This university-wide Working Group will inform the conversations of the more specific Faculty of Arts and Science working group where appropriate.

The Faculty’s Centre for Indigenous (formerly Aboriginal) Studies is home to an interdisciplinary undergraduate program offering specialist, major and minor programs in Indigenous Studies. It is dedicated to the scholarly study and research of the priorities and aspirations of Indigenous peoples in Canada and throughout the world. (See http://indigenousstudies.utoronto.ca/) The Unit has been recently strengthened by two new appointments in Haudenosaunee Languages and Culture. Although it does not yet have the capacity to offer a graduate program, further strengthening of this unit will permit it to do so and then to seek a change in status to an EDU-A (Extra-Departmental Unit).

As exciting as these developments are for both FAS and the Centre itself, FAS recognizes that Indigenous Studies alone cannot meet student need for recognition and inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and its research across the Faculty. Many Indigenous students on campus are in programs where there is no or

¹ Governing Council, University of Toronto, Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land (PDAD&C #72): http://memos.provost.utoronto.ca/statement-of-acknowledgement-of-traditional-land-pdadc-72/
limited teaching from an Indigenous perspective, or even Indigenous content. This issue was identified in the December 2015 Report of the Special Rapporteur on Aboriginal Initiatives prepared by Professor Melissa Williams. The FAS working group will build on those findings by investigating faculty-wide initiatives that could be implemented outside of the Centre for Indigenous Studies.

**Purpose of this Working Group:**

To produce a public report for Dean, with recommendations on Indigenous Teaching and Learning for actions to be taken by the Faculty of Arts and Science:

I. For greater recognition and incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and its research across Arts and Science;

II. On ways for the Faculty to build or strengthen partnerships across the University with respect to curriculum, student research opportunities, and co-curricular opportunities taught from Indigenous perspectives or that incorporate Indigenous content;

III. On recommendations for the Faculty’s submission to the institutional TRC committee.

**Proposed terms of reference:**

The A&S ITL Working Group will advise the Dean, Vice Deans, and other offices as appropriate through a public report on:

1. Existing and potential opportunities for students to explore courses, undergraduate research opportunities, and co-curricular opportunities taught from Indigenous perspectives or that incorporate Indigenous content.

2. Ways that the Faculty, in conversation with First Nations House and other Student Support Services on campus, can enhance support and services to Indigenous students to ensure that their academic, spiritual, mental and physical needs are being met effectively. This includes recognition of Indigenous spiritual practices and protocols, and the need to provide students with the opportunity and freedom to practice. This is inherent and necessary as part of teaching. These supports have a direct impact on their success and ability to participate fully in their programs.

3. Potential approaches to faculty and course development to support enhanced or expanded opportunities for engagement with Indigenous perspectives or the recognition and incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and its research, as well as practices and protocols.

4. Potential approaches for A&S faculty and staff training to improve their awareness of

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2 Note that this same issue is being addressed by the institutional TRC Committee.
Indigenous perspectives and issues, and to better prepare them to meet the needs of Indigenous students.
5. Opportunities to liaise and partner with other university divisions with respect to curriculum, student research opportunities, and co-curricular opportunities taught from Indigenous perspectives or that recognize or incorporate Indigenous content.
6. Clarification and careful consideration of the present capacity of the existing Indigenous (formerly Aboriginal) Studies program (ISP) to support recognition and incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and its research across the Faculty, and recommendations on ways to strengthen this capacity if appropriate.
7. Recommended or potential responses to relevant TRC Calls to Action.
8. Responses to calls for information or recommendations emerging from the institutional TRC steering committee.

Membership:

1. Co-chairs: The A&S ITL Working Group is a committee established by the Dean. It will be co-chaired by a faculty member (Heidi Bohaker) and a student (Audrey Rochette) appointed by the Dean.
2. Administrative Support: The Research Officer, Teaching & Learning in the Office of the Dean will provide research support and serve as the administrative coordinator for the Working Group.
3. Principles of Membership:
   a) Recognizing that the work of this committee is a shared responsibility, the A&S ITL will be composed of faculty, students (both graduate and undergraduate) and staff, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.
   b) The working group shall have two Elders to guide the discussions.
4. Membership Composition:
   a) The working group will consist of approximately 16-20 members. b) Two co-chairs will be appointed by the Dean.
   c) The co-chairs will call for nominations in each of the following categories. The call will elicit members and promote the working group at the same time.
      i. 6-8 tenure and teaching-stream faculty, including 2-3 from the ISP program, at least one from each sector within A&S (humanities, social sciences, sciences).
      ii. 2 Elders
      iii. 3-5 Student Support
      iv. 2-3 graduate students
      v. 3-5 undergraduate student members
d) The co-chairs in consultation with the Elders will review nominations and make recommendations to the Dean for appointment of the working group membership.
Timeline:

1. A call for nominations will be circulated in July of 2016.
2. The working group will meet every two weeks from September to the end of term in December. The report will be submitted by the end of January.
3. As details from the institutional steering committee are made available, the ITL Working Group will work to anticipate or respond to their recommendations or requests for information.

Governance:

1. Members agree that the Seven Grandfather Teachings will inform our discussions: Courage, Truth, Respect, Wisdom, Love, Humility and Honesty, in addition to the University’s spirit of collegiality.
2. The co-chairs will create the agenda in consultation with the Elders. Members of the working group are encouraged to submit agenda items up to 2 days before the meeting times.
3. Recommendations for the report will ideally be reached by consensus. If consensus is not reached, a recommendation can be approved for inclusion in the report if it has the support of two-thirds of the total working group membership. In such cases the number of votes in support of the recommendation will be recorded in the report, and alternative perspectives captured in an appendix to the report if necessary or desired by members.
4. The co-chairs will draft the final report. Members of the working group will be asked to review, comment upon, and sign the final version before submission to the Dean.