UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

ARTS AND SCIENCE COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCE COUNCIL held on Thursday, October 16, 2014, at 3:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Simcoe Hall

Present
David Cameron (Dean)               Meng Lim
Glenn Loney (Secretary)             Ben Liu
Derek Allen (Chair)                William Magee
Mounir AbouHaidar                  Lanor Mallon
Wajih Ahmed                        Theresa Moritz
Ben Akrigg                         Mirella Pasquarelli-Clivio
Sharon Bang                        Maina Rambali
Dror Bar-Natan                     Dennis Reid
Dwayne Benjamin                    Deborah Robinson
Donald Boere                       Stephen Rupp
Ray Carlberg                       Jeffrey Schulman
Charles Dalrymple-Fraser          Jane Seto
Uzoma Esonwanne                    Abdullah Shihipar
Elaine Gold                        Suzanne Stevenson
Rodney Haddow                      Mike Thompson
Sara Hegazi                        Emily Tsui
Adrienne Hood                      Rinaldo Walcott
Amy Hrdina                         Yvon Wang
Thuy Huynh                         Julian Weinrib
Danièle Issa-Sayegh                Vicky Zhang
Helen Lasthiotakis                 Bo Yuan Zheng
Elizabeth Legge                    Kai Wen Zhou
Robert Lewis

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m. with Dean David Cameron in the Chair pro tem.

Memorial Resolution respecting:
Professor Emeritus John H.A. Munro, Department of Economics and Centre for Medieval Studies


The floor was opened to nominations for the four Proctor positions. Four nominations were received and acclaimed: Dror Bar-Natan, Charles Fraser-Dalrymple, Emily Tsui, and Wajih Ahmed.
Dr. Glenn Loney, Faculty Secretary, announced that as per the Council’s by-laws the Agenda Committee is responsible for putting forward a slate for the positions of Chair and Vice Chair. The Committee proposed Derek Allen for the position of and Meng Lim for the position of Vice-Chair. No further nominations were received and the positions were acclaimed. Professor Allen took the Chair.

It was explained to Council that in previous years the three positions of voting Council members on the Agenda Committee had been filled by members of each of the three constituencies. Ben Akrigg was nominated and acclaimed to represent teaching staff, Ben Liu was nominated and acclaimed to represent administrative and technical staff, and Jeffrey Schulman was nominated and acclaimed to represent students.

2. Approval of the minutes of the March 5, 2014 Arts & Science Council meeting

Approved

3. Arts & Science Council Elections Update

Glenn Loney, Faculty Secretary, informed Council that the majority of positions had been filled by elections held in the spring. Elections were held again in October to elect first-year student representatives and fill any positions that may have still been open. There was a strong interest by the first-year students with 14 candidates running for three positions.

4. Orientation for Council Members

Dr. Loney gave a brief presentation of orientation on Arts and Science Council and its sub-committees. All documents related to Council and its subcommittees can be found on the Faculty’s Governance website at http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/main/governance.

The University of Toronto Act and the policies of the University divide responsibilities in two directions. The Dean is responsible for the overall direction and management of the Faculty, appointments, promotion, and tenure, and budget and resources. Council is responsible for the certain specific areas of policy such academic and admissions policy, curriculum, courses and programs, and evaluation and standing.

Dr. Loney presented a review of the Council’s sub-committees and the levels of approval for various types of motions, both in the Faculty and in University governance. Some examples of items that have previously come before Council were:

- **For Final Approval**
  - Change in Timing to Assess Academic Standing
  - Major UG & Grad Program Modifications

- **For Approval then Forward for Final Approval (GC)**
  - Dept. of Statistics name change to Dept. of Statistical Sciences
  - UG & Grad Program Closures
Council members can propose items for approval and discussion. These items are brought to the Agenda Committee which determines whether it is within the scope of Council and whether it would benefit from discussion first by one of Council’s sub-committees or another Faculty committee before reaching Council.

A document titled “An Introduction to Faculty Governance in Arts & Science” was available with the meeting agenda. This document gives an overview of such things as Council’s scope and powers, structure, procedures, and debate.

5. **Report from the Dean**

Dean David Cameron welcomed members to the first meeting of the 2014-2015 Council. He stated that he would like to touch on some items that would be coming to Council for discussion in one form or another over the next year.

The first three items fall under the general category of the quality of undergraduate education in Arts and Science. There are ongoing items such as the Step Forward program which is at the core of our efforts to continue the renewal of the Faculty and its support for undergraduate activities.

Also, a working group on students’ access to courses has been struck and will be chaired by Vice-Dean Suzanne Stevenson. This issue has been raised as a concern by the Arts and Science Students’ Union (ASSU) with regards to how students are able to complete their program on time if required courses are oversubscribed. The working group will make recommendations on how to alleviate pressures on oversubscribed courses and how to allocate existing spaces as equitably as possible. The expectation is not that the working group will instantly make the problems disappear, but its work shows the Faculty’s awareness of the issue and the need to make access to courses as broad and fair as we can.

The next item came out of the Faculty’s recent external review. Paul Gries, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science, has been appointed decanal liaison for online learning. He will be working with faculty, staff, and students to look at the potential and the various challenges for online learning. Paul will advise the Faculty on instructional needs, set priorities, coordinate activities within the Faculty, and be the representative for Arts and Science on University committees looking at these issues. Paul has had extensive experience in this area; for example, he has been involved in...
developing automated tools for marking computer programs, was the first teacher of the first University of Toronto M.O.O.C., and he has recently been managing his class in an “inverted” manner utilizing online resources.

The Faculty is also reviewing the learning opportunities and skills we provide to students in matters of academic integrity. Vice-Dean Stephen Rupp is leading a consultation on the review of academic integrity as it relates to the support for students generally. Professor Mark McGowan has created a working group to look at preventative strategies that can be developed in relation to the specific needs of international students.

The Faculty continues to be pushed to expand its graduate enrolment of domestic students. Vice-Dean Sandy Welsh will be reporting on this area as well as the issue of time to completion for doctoral student. Vice-Dean Welsh is also looking at the question of career preparation as it relates to graduate students.

The Faculty continues to look at recruitment of international undergraduate students and their experience of these students once they arrive. Professor Mark McGowan is the Senior Academic Advisor to the Dean, International and will be looking closely at these areas. He has been consulting across the University on the problems international students face and how we can provide support and ensure their experience is a positive one. Professor McGowan will be working with students, colleges, academic units, offices at Simcoe Hall, staff and others to develop initiatives. He will be reporting to Council on this topic.

Dean Cameron introduced Deborah Robinson, the new Faculty Registrar and Director of Undergraduate Academic Services. Ms. Robinson has more than 15 years of experience in senior administrative student affairs positions at the University of British Columbia including Associate Registrar and Director of Student Recruitment and Advising, Admissions, Financial Assistance and Awards; Executive Coordinator of Enrolment Management Strategy; and Assistant Dean, Students, in the Faculty of Applied Science. She was responsible for leading a process designed to improve the student experience and ensure the achievement of UBC’s enrolment goals through coordinated academic and enrolment planning. In 2010, Ms. Robinson received the American Association of College Registrars and Admission Officers Award of Excellence in Strategic Enrolment Management and, in 2013, she was awarded the Just Desserts Award for exceptional service to students at UBC. Ms. Robinson has a BA and an MA in English Language and Literature from the University of British Columbia. She has published and presented widely on strategic enrolment planning and management.

Dean Cameron noted that President Meric Gertler will be attending the November 10 Arts & Science Council meeting. President Gertler outlined three priorities in his installation address and has since been asked to expand on these. He has developed these priorities more fully and has been presenting them at a variety of forums.
6. **Online Syllabus Tool**

Vice-Dean Suzanne Stevenson gave some background on this discussion item. She noted that the course syllabus is an important tool that instructors use to communicate information about their course. As course material is subject to the discretion of the instructor, largely what appears in the syllabus is also at their discretion. There are some aspects of a syllabus that are mandated by policy and ones that are encouraged by best practices. For example, a syllabus must delineate the marking scheme, contact and office hours, and a statement about turnitin.com. Best practices in the Arts & Science Academic Handbook recommends that instructors inform students about Accessibility Services, where to find information on re-marking policies, and how the instructor expects to be contacted by email and the expected response time, as well as a number of other things.

There has been a confluence of factors that led to this proposal. ASSU conducted a sampling of syllabi last term and discovered that many were not in compliance with University policy. In addition, the Faculty has been reviewing the onerous process for units to collect and approve marking schemes and for the Office of the Faculty Registrar to gather final exam information for instructors.

In response to these issues, the Faculty is considering developing an online syllabus tool for instructors. This would collect the required syllabus information and could provide a prompt for the recommended information that would be optionally included by the instructor. The information would be contained in a database that could be easily accessed by the Chair or the Chair’s designate to review and approve the required elements. The information could be posted online for students earlier in the term.

The online tool would help to streamline what is currently a manual process. It would assist instructors to ensure they have the required information on their syllabus as well as make them aware of the recommended information. This would also be very beneficial to new instructors who might not be aware of what is required on a syllabus.

Vice-Dean Stevenson stated that this proposal is at a very early stage and would like to provide feedback from Council to the Committee on Teaching and Learning.

A member stated he was wary of any proposal that might be rigid and reduce the instructor’s ability to be creative. Instructors would like to create their syllabi in their own style rather than in a style that would be dictated by a computer. It seems it would be additional work for instructors and does not seem to be something that is necessary. Vice-Dean Stevenson clarified that the data envisioned was the basic course date, which might then be exported and formatted however the instructors would like to create an individualized syllabus. The information required by the University would be filled in and the only additional information needing to be added by the instructor for the Faculty would be their contact information, office hours, and statement on Turn it In. Details on the final exam are already something instructors need to provide and would not be additional.
A member asked if all instructors would be required to use the online tool. Vice-Dean Stevenson replied that they would be required to use it for the required information and they could skip or utilize the remaining parts as they choose.

A member stated that the proposal was a great idea as it was a very student-centered approach to syllabus design. There is a missed opportunity here to make connections to learning outcomes for the course, to ask instructors to articulate how a course contributes to the graduate attributes. This would be a great way introduce this habit.

A member asked who could access this information and would it be archived? Vice-Dean Stevenson replied that the Chair or their designate would see the information for the purpose of approval, and that it would be available to students but not open to the public. Vice-Dean Stevenson asked how long the recommended items be archived? It was recommended that long-term would be better than short-term, since requests for the information often come in long after the course is finished.

A member stated this would be a very good proposal if handled well and that he did have some concerns. Often syllabi are provisional and do change – what would happen if there was the online version and instructors had their own version? The member also noted that one of the Faculty’s recommendation items for the syllabus pertains to Accessibility Services. The member had concern that Accessibility Services felt they are able to make recommendations about the course content and that it should be made clear that they do not have control over that.

A member stated that as a student she liked the proposal but was surprised that tutorial and TA information was not included. Quite often students are notified of tutorial times after classes have started and there can be conflicts with other courses. It would be helpful if this information could be available when students are selecting their courses.

A member stated this was a great idea. In terms of archiving the syllabi, what students want to know many years later is the more detailed content of the course. If the content is not included, it will not be helpful to students therefore it should be required. It would also be helpful to students in choosing their courses.

A member stated this would be extremely valuable to students if instructors could give syllabi in advance. Although it is great when instructors are creative with their syllabi, there is also the question of accessibility and ensuring it is legible to everyone.

A member had concerns regarding intellectual property. He thought a mandatory syllabus represented a slippery slope, and that more and more might be required over time. Instructors, especially the most vulnerable like sessionals, might find that their syllabus material available and possibly used by others in future. He thought that the possible consequences should be considered before any project was begun. [corrected 5/11].
7. **STEP Forward Initiative**

Julian Weinrib, Research Officer, Teaching and Learning, provided Council with an update on STEP Forward Initiatives. STEP Forward was conceived a couple of years ago with last year seeing its soft launch. STEP Forward looks to provide an overarching framework for curricular and co-curricular activities that aims to help students at every stage of their studies to integrate their academic learning with their personal and professional development in order to engage effectively in meaningful planning and decision-making for the future.

Last year’s call for STEP Forward proposal resulted in over 50 applications. Approximately 35 activities were approved by the STEP Forward committee and they began grouping them according to themes, i.e. mentorship, research skills, internship and placements, academic preparation, and careers and skills. What the STEP Forward committee has found is that students are looking for more support as they transition to different stages of their degree and support in relation to the mentioned themes.

As the deadline for new proposals approaches, the STEP Forward committee has been looking at three ways to participate:

1. Apply for funding and support for your unit to adapt an existing STEP Forward activity template.
2. Apply for funding and support for your unit to offer a new or enhanced activity that integrates the STEP Forward Connect-Reflect-Project rubric.
3. Apply to add your unit’s eligible activity to the STEP Forward framework and for listing on the STEP website.

What the STEP Forward committee is looking to do this year is to provide existing templates to units interested in participating in STEP Forward. This means units will not need to develop new STEP Forward activities. Some of these activities are Backpack to Briefcase (b2B); Explore It; Alumni Mentoring; Alumni & Professional Pathways Profile Videos; Welcome to the Program Re-Orientations; Identifying Transferable and Disciplinary Skills; Developing Professional Writing Genres; Considering Graduate and Professional Pathways.

Today, the committee is looking for feedback on whether there are more generic frameworks we can offer on scale.

A member asked for clarification – is STEP Forward an umbrella under which there are a number of different support programs. Mr. Weinrib stated that STEP Forward is a coordinating body to help academic units coordinate amongst themselves and to provide best practices.

Vice-Dean Stevenson stated that STEP Forward is a way of thinking about undergraduate education in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Everything we do for students is part of STEP Forward if we are helping students learn reflective and planning skills that help them determine the path they want to take. Scale is an issue but this is an issue for
everything we do in the Faculty; therefore we need to start by prioritizing. What we
want to hear from Council is what members see as the priorities.

8. Any other business

Acting Associate Dean Adrienne Hood brought to Council’s attention some activities that
are coming up in the next few weeks that are of interest to faculty and students. Next
week there will be a panel of faculty who have participated in international activities
with their students and their experiences. On October 30 there will be an International
and Research Information Fair for students thinking about incorporating an international
experience into the education. The Centre for International Experience will be
presenting information on student exchange and Summer Abroad opportunities on
November 6. Finally, from November 11 to 13, the Global Perspectives Symposium will
be taking place where students and faculty share their international experiences.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.