UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE

ARTS AND SCIENCE COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCE COUNCIL held on Monday, December 1, 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)                        Kim Luke
Mounir AbouHaidar                         Douglas Macdonald
Claresta Adityani                          Bill Magee
Wajih Ahmed                                Lanor Mallon
Donald Ainslie                             Tamim Mansour
Ben Akrigg                                 Mark McGowan
Alexis Archbold                            Kim McLean
Charly Bank                                Kristen Moore
Dror Bar-Natan                             Theresa Moritz
Dwayne Benjamin                            Teresa Nicoletti
Donald Boere                               Mirella Pasquarelli-Clivio
Ray Carlberg                               Maina Rambali
Hilary Cunningham                          David Roberts
Margaret Ebifegha                          Deborah Robinson
Elaine Gold                                Stephen Rupp
Rodney Haddow                              Ricardo Sternberg
Mike Hager                                  Suzanne Stevenson
Amy Hrdina                                 Franco Taverna
Danièle Issa-Sayegh                        Rinaldo Walcott
Helen Lasthiotakis                         Yvon Wang

Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 3:15 p.m.

1. Approval of the minutes of the November 10, 2014 Arts & Science Council meeting

    Approved

2. Business arising

    There was no business arising.

3. Report from the Dean

    Dean David Cameron informed Council that Exam Jam would be taking place in the lobby of Sidney Smith Hall on December 4. This is a joint initiative between the Arts and Science Students’ Union and the Faculty of Arts and Science. In addition to course review sessions, there will be other events to help students get through exam prep such as sessions by the Academic Success Centre, study tips, healthy snacks, and pet therapy.
Dean Cameron noted that at the next meeting of Council Vice-Dean Stephen Rupp and Professor Mark McGowan would be reporting on the current review of Academic Integrity in the Faculty. In particular the review has been looking at the opportunities students have for learning about academic integrity and associated learning skills.

4. Undergraduate International Student Experience

Professor Mark McGowan, Senior Academic Advisor to the Dean, International, informed Council that his position was created by the former Dean who, with the increasing number of international students in the Faculty, had become aware that there are certain challenges they face. The first phase of Professor McGowan’s work began in July with a series of consultations with Associate Chairs, College Registrars and Principals, Chairs, and Deans of Students. There were also a number of focus groups with international students that helped Professor McGowan get a clearer picture of their lives from both an academic and co-curricular perspective. He stated that what is being presented to Council today is a report of work in progress.

Of the 2015 class coming into the Faculty of Arts and Science, 22.7% are international students. There are many ways that incoming students can be considered international. Some come to Canada by merit of a Canadian passport held by one or two parents but who have lived abroad for a number of years and so experience many of the things international students encounter. The Faculty is also looking at ways in which it is international in its recruitment.

An International Advisory Committee has been formed and will be meeting regularly to discuss what the Faculty is doing, what it needs to do to support students, and how the Faculty is doing in the existing programs for such students. The committee membership includes faculty, staff, and undergraduate students.

Six priority pathways have been established to help ensure the experience of international students is at as high a level as their academic experience. These priorities are:

- Transition: Providing readiness for students coming into the Faculty, transitions within programs, and preparation for the world that lies beyond graduation;
- Building Communities: Creating inclusive and engaging academic and co-curricular communities;
- Academic Skills Building: Assuring student success across the curriculum;
- Academic Integrity: Placing a priority on learning opportunities in a positive manner;
- Mental Health: placing priority on service and awareness;
- Finance: assuring student ability to sustain their registration and ensuring support services.

Looking ahead Professor McGowan indicated that there will be continued discussion with Registrars, Chairs, Directors, Principals, A&S Council, Deans of Students, and students. It is important that all students benefit from these programs, as many of the needs of international students are also reflected among all our students.

A member asked if family pressures cause international students try to overload in order to finish more quickly? Professor McGowan replied yes, that data has shown that international students often try load up and finish more quickly. This leads to stress and they may do poorly because of these pressures.
A member asked that if we continue to increase admissions to international students, what do we do with domestic students? Professor McGowan replied that current data shows that we are in a period of decline in domestic applications. Figures show our current overall international student enrolment in the Faculty is 18%, and based on current trends in coming years it should be at approximately 24-25%. It is quite clear that we have an obligation to our domestic students and they should not be displaced. Dr Loney noted that international students are admitted at the same academic standard as international students.

It was stated that the Faculty and University need to understand how complicated and challenging these issues are and how diverse international student experiences are. Are there any plans to summarize the consultation meetings and focus groups? Professor McGowan replied that they would need to think about that since there are confidentiality issues. The more general observations have been included in today's draft document.

A member asked whether something could be developed for instructors of first-year courses to address academic integrity issues. Many first-year students, particularly international students, do not realise they are committing plagiarism offences. Professor McGowan stated that his working group recognized that academic integrity education is an ongoing process that starts with orientation and needs to continue in all years. The data the working group examined indicated that issues were spread across all years and not focussed only in the first year.

A member stated, from the papers they see handed in by first-year students in their department, it is clear some international students are functionally illiterate. Are we relying on TOEFL as a fair metric in terms of the writing students will need to do? What are other universities doing? Dr Loney stated that TOEFL tests the language skills of students who learned English as a second language and these students are very adept. The challenge for most students when they get here is the speed that is necessary and the volume of material coming at them. The idea should not be to keep international students out but to address their needs while they are here. Deborah Robinson, Faculty Registrar, stated that the University of Toronto requires certain scores in certain parts of the TOEFL test. There are opportunities to review the scores we require in order to get more equal abilities across reading, writing, and speaking.

5. Course Information System

Suzanne Stevenson, Vice-Dean, Teaching & Learning, stated that this proposal had been introduced to Council in a general way at the October meeting. Since then there have been some further developments. Currently the information for the course marking scheme, final exam details, and a paper copy of the exam are being collected through three separate processes. The proposed course information system would allow everything to happen using one online tool accessible through UTORid login.

The benefits of this system are:

- The system will replace the process for submission and approval of the marking scheme by the Chair or Chair’s designate.
- The system will replace the process for submission of final exam details and the actual final exam paper to the Office of the Faculty Registrar.
- The system will produce the front page of the final exam that includes course and exam details.
- The online system will allow the Faculty to change the final exam submission deadline from four weeks before the exam period to two weeks before the exam period.
• The system will provide information for instructors about what elements are required and recommended for their course syllabus, and allow them to enter information using both text and images, and allow them to include template statements, such as those that address accessibility and academic integrity.

• Course information and uploaded syllabus documents collected through the system can be made available to students online before the term begins, preferably during course selection.

• The information will reside behind the UTORid login process, which protects it from those outside the UofT and is convenient for students.

When the proposal was brought to the October Council meeting it was generally well received, however the advice was to keep it light. Everyone agreed the final exam function was something that was needed right away. The response from the Communication & Consultation group was extremely positive and the Council of Chairs, Principal, and Academic Directors gave it the green light.

A member asked if this would be ready for September 2015? Professor Stevenson replied that it was her hope that it would but this depends on whether we can use the software currently in use at UTM and tailor it to our needs.

A member asked why we couldn’t use Black Board for this purpose. Professor Stevenson replied that not everyone uses Black Board. The proposed system allows for things to be routed for approval. We will consider how it can be integrated into what we already use.

A member stated that many instructors use the last week of classes for final exams. Could we use this system as an opportunity to tighten the rules around this? Professor Stevenson replied that they are aware that many instructors are violating this rule and with this system, those exams will not be approved.

A member asked that the system allow for as much flexibility as possible and not be rigid.

A member asked if this is part of a larger to centralized plan a number of functions. Vice-Dean Stevenson replied that there is not a centralized plan.

A member asked if administrators would have access as it would be a helpful tool when advising students. Vice-Dean Stevenson replied that it would be open to anyone with a UTORid and that she welcomed its use as an advising tool.

A member asked if the syllabus would only become public after it has been approved? The member has some courses where the breakdown is negotiated with students. Vice-Dean Stevenson was unsure and would look into this.

6. Minor graduate course modifications

Council was provided with a list of minor graduate course modifications that were approved at the April 9, 2014 Graduate Curriculum Committee (GCC) meeting. The Arts & Science Council delegates authority to approve minor modifications to the GCC which are then reported to Council for information.
7. Graduate Admission and Enrolment Update

This item was postponed.

8. Other business

Dr Loney informed Council that the Office of Governing Council has created a set of templates for the constitutions and by-laws of divisional councils, and that we have been asked to move our Constitution and By-Laws to these approved templates. This process will not be a review of the constitutions but a translation, the results of which will be brought to Council for approval.

A member asked if a specific majority is required for approving amendments to the constitution. Council Chair Derek Allen referred to a section in the constitution that states, “The constitution of the Council may only be amended with the approval of the Council and the Governing Council of the University of Toronto. Voting shall take place at a regularly constituted meeting to which there has been 10 clear working days’ notice of the proposed amendment. An affirmative vote to amend the Constitution is required by two-thirds of the members of the Council present. Following approval of the amendment by Council, the amendment is forwarded to Governing Council for approval.”

A member asked specific questions regarding degree and program requirements. Dr Loney recommended that this be discussed off line.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.