

A&S Priorities Discussion Paper

2018

Introduction

This document is intended to articulate and facilitate discussion of the priorities that will inform the development of a new five-year academic plan for Arts & Science. Since the conclusion of the last academic plan in 2015, the Faculty has focused on two key priorities, one operational and one strategic. Operationally, we have brought the Faculty's finances in order: the budget is now balanced. Our success in this area has allowed us to pursue a strategic priority: faculty renewal and growth. Since 2015, we have added more than 30 new faculty lines to Arts & Science, revitalizing the Faculty. We are now well positioned to adopt a new set of strategic and operational priorities.

It is important to note the larger context in which the discussion of our priorities is taking place. In parallel with the academic planning process, Arts & Science is preparing for an external review, commissioned by the Provost. Reviewers will conduct a site visit in October 2018, and their report will inform the final academic plan. These priorities will provide context for the review, identifying important areas for consideration in the academic planning process. In the past, planning exercises often involved an amalgamation of unit-level complement plans. We will take a different approach in the forthcoming plan: although it is important to consider the needs of each unit, we will take a "broad strokes" approach, focusing on the needs and aspirations of the Faculty as a whole.

As we move into a new academic planning cycle, we are also mindful of broader institutional goals. The President of the University of Toronto has identified three priorities for the institution: leveraging our urban location, strengthening international partnerships, and rethinking undergraduate education. Our Faculty priorities are distinct from, but consistent with, these institutional objectives. We also note the importance of considering the President and Provost's joint response to the report of the University of Toronto's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Steering Committee.

Our academic plan is also being developed in the context of the second Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA2) between the University of Toronto and the Province of Ontario (2017-2020). The SMA2 introduces a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), to be implemented in 2020 (SMA3), which fall into five categories: student experience; innovation in teaching and learning excellence; access and equity; research excellence and impact; and innovation, economic development and community engagement. Although Arts & Science already shines in research excellence, we must nevertheless continue to work on building our top-tier standing in this area, while at the same time turning our attention to those domains where we can build greater success.

The priorities outlined below focus on five areas in which the Faculty can significantly advance its position as an international leader in scholarship and education. We will: capitalize on our strengths as a Faculty of Arts *and* Science; improve the student experience, inside and outside the classroom; push the boundaries of our research success; promote diversity and accessibility; and build new partnerships with our communities. In addition, we will focus on a key operational priority: building the capital and infrastructure needed to pursue our strategic goals.

Strategic Priorities

1. Capitalize on our Strengths as a Faculty of Arts and Science

The Faculty of Arts & Science is unusual in its extraordinary breadth of research and academic programs, comprising 29 departments, 46 Extra-Departmental Units, and over 300 academic programs. The Faculty derives strength from the combined excellence of faculty and students in the Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences. Despite this breadth and divisional unity, our students, researchers, and instructors often

focus their activities in one discipline. Moving forward, we can capitalize on research innovation and pedagogy that cuts across disciplines.

In recent years, student enrolment has, with some exceptions, shifted away from Humanities and Social Science programs. Interest in the quantitative sciences has grown considerably, placing pressure on programs in these areas. The Faculty faces the challenge of supporting areas of growth, while maintaining strength and excellence in all our programs, regardless of discipline.

Key Goals

Address shifts in enrolment patterns: The Faculty will develop longer-term faculty complement planning to better address changes in student enrolments. We will develop a strategy for supporting areas of growth, ensuring that more students across the Faculty have access to courses that meet their interests. We have the opportunity to build academic programming that cuts across disciplines: science students, for example, can benefit from skills that are honed in Humanities or Social Science courses. Humanities and Social Science students, similarly, may benefit from courses in data studies.

Develop new student opportunities: Students in all three sectors develop skills that will be valuable in future careers. The Faculty can better highlight the value of these skills, both within and across disciplines, ensuring that students can take advantage of all that Arts & Science has to offer. Starting in 2018-19, a First-Year Foundations Council will be exploring ways to support students at a time when they are not yet part of a program and can explore the range of courses across the Faculty. We will also examine new opportunities for students to pursue creative combinations of academic programs of study, including the possibility of a new honours Bachelor of Arts and Science degree.

Provide new supports for research that bridges disciplines: Whereas other universities may create boundaries between sectors, A&S researchers are uniquely situated to investigate topics that lie at the nexus of different disciplines. We will create and support research initiatives that build on strengths across as well as within disciplines, taking advantage of the Faculty's multidisciplinary structure.

2. Improve the Student Experience, Inside and Outside the Classroom

Arts & Science is the largest faculty at U of T, and the largest in Canada. While this opens an extraordinary range of opportunities for students, there is also the risk that some students may feel alienated or overlooked in the complicated structure of the Faculty. The urban setting of the University allows for an exciting student experience, but a corollary to this is a student body that is dispersed over a large metropolitan area, with many students commuting a significant distance. Graduate students have access to outstanding supervisors but may not feel part of a close-knit community. International students, some of whom are far from home for the first time, may face additional stresses. Some students may also experience anxieties about how their classroom experience relates to future career prospects.

Although our students have access to an outstanding education, their overall experience in Arts & Science can be improved. The Faculty has already achieved considerable success in enhancing student experience with programs such as First-Year Learning Communities (FLC), Writing Instruction for TAs (WIT), and Backpack to Briefcase (b2B) for undergraduates, as well as the Milestones and Pathways programs for graduate students. Engaged and well-supported students have better learning outcomes. We will continue to work with the Colleges and our academic units to build such supports, with the aim of creating a student experience that is ranked as highly as our internationally recognized research profile.

Key Goals:

Enhance support for graduate students: Over the past four years, the Faculty has made significant new investments in financial supports for graduate students. We will continue to address the need for

competitive funding packages that enable graduate students to focus their energy and attention on their research. We will support graduate students' career aspirations, whether they seek employment within or outside academia. We will promote opportunities for building community, with the aim of reducing isolation and improving social supports.

Support international students: International students can face significant challenges, with some studying away from their home country for the first time, and often not in their first language. The Faculty will work to build supports for international students, inside and outside the classroom.

Increase residence capacity: The University guarantees access to a residence space for all first-year students. Because students have difficulty accessing residence beyond their first year, few senior students are available to mentor those new to Arts & Science. This also impacts the well-being of students beyond their first year who must find accommodation off-campus. A College Community Working Group is examining options for increasing residence capacity.

Improve the experience of commuter students: Students who commute significant distances may find it difficult to engage with the Arts & Science community beyond their class attendance. We will work with the Colleges and our academic units to find on-campus space and activities aimed at improving the experience of commuter students. The Faculty is developing new student space in Sidney Smith Hall for informal learning, networking, and social interaction.

Develop user-friendly procedures and policies: We will consider the student perspective when redesigning our policies and academic offerings, with the aim of improving transparency, reducing complexity, and enhancing students' relationship with the Faculty. Arts & Science has recently taken important steps in this direction: a Business Process Re-Engineering committee has reviewed the admissions process and produced a set of recommendations, now being implemented by eight working groups. In addition, a First Year Academic Offerings Working Group has examined the current experience of first-year students as they start university and find their way to their program of choice.

Build opportunities for experiential learning and career preparation: We will promote and expand students' options for education outside the classroom, through experiential learning programs for students to learn on campus, in labs, archives, and libraries, as well as in the larger community and internationally, in business, government, and community organizations. We will also draw on our remarkable alumni base as a resource for students seeking information, guidance, and mentorship regarding career paths and future opportunities.

3. Push the Boundaries of our Research Success

The University of Toronto is the top research institution in Canada and among the best in the world, and Arts & Science plays a central role in this success. We will pursue strategies aimed not only at consolidating our position as a centre for cutting-edge research, but also at seeking new ways to push beyond the curve.

Key Goals:

Build support for innovative research: Our faculty are recognized internationally for conducting research at the forefront of their respective fields. We will continue to support research that is grounded in the key tenets of our disciplines, while at the same time exploring opportunities for new directions and synergies that would promote transformational change in a field.

Seek new funding opportunities: Arts & Science faculty are successful in garnering tri-council funding. Success rates among SSHRC and NSERC applicants, for example, are typically 10% or more above the national averages, and it is not uncommon for success in NSERC Discovery grants to exceed 80%. In recent years, however, a re-distribution in tri-council funding opportunities has resulted in a leveling-off of open operating grants, and an increase in more directed opportunities (e.g., partnership grants, training grants); we should ensure we are taking advantage of these emerging opportunities by building supports to facilitate the grant application process. We will also work to identify new sources of funding beyond traditional tri-council grants. In particular, we will seek ways to support the development of large, multi-

researcher grants. In addition, we can do more to provide mentoring for graduate students applying for doctoral and postdoctoral scholarships and fellowships.

Promote faculty recognition: Awards and honours are an important metric for evaluating researchers' success. We will work to ensure that our stellar faculty are recognized locally and internationally. The nomination and application processes, however, can be onerous and complicated, and while some units have well-developed procedures for nominating faculty, others have had limited success. We will develop effective supports for Chairs and Directors seeking to nominate their colleagues. We will work to identify new awards opportunities within Canada and beyond. We will develop better communications strategies to acknowledge and publicize the successes of our faculty and students, within and beyond the university.

Attract agents of transformational change: Finally, we will look for new opportunities to attract individuals with the potential to raise our research excellence to new heights. We will promote opportunities to bring the best of our undergraduate students into our research and seek ways to increase our complement of highly qualified international graduate students. We will continue to grow our thriving community of postdoctoral fellows. In recent years, we have been able to replenish our faculty complement following a period of budgetary restraint. Moving forward, we will seek to hire additional faculty who have the potential to promote transformational change within the Faculty.

4. Promote Diversity and Accessibility

Arts & Science brings together over 25,000 undergraduates, 4,000 graduate students, 250 postdoctoral fellows, some 800 administrative staff, and close to 1,000 faculty, who work and learn in the largest, most multicultural city in Canada. A&S encompasses a remarkable array of perspectives, ideas, and expertise. Diversity – intellectual, ideological, political – is central to academic freedom.

In addition, demographic diversity in our faculty complement and student body enriches our research and teaching endeavours. Already, over half of our students self-identify as visible minorities; one in five are the first in their families to attend university. Nevertheless, some groups are significantly underrepresented in our student body or faculty ranks, or in specific disciplines.

Key Goals:

Provide support for diverse perspectives: We will continue to encourage a discussion of multiple viewpoints within an environment that is open, thoughtful, and respectful of the many groups that make up the Faculty. We will support research that cuts across traditional disciplinary lines and encourages the bringing together of diverse academic fields and perspectives. This may be achieved through additional support for the development of new collaborative grants, an A&S speaker series that highlights both the fundamental and interdisciplinary research achievements of our faculty, and conferences or other events that bring together researchers from traditionally distinct intellectual spheres and highlight the value of diverse perspectives and research areas.

Promote demographic diversity in our Faculty community: In addition to promoting intellectual diversity, the Faculty will promote demographic diversity more generally. We will engage in outreach to high school and community groups to help overcome barriers for students seeking an Arts & Science education. We will broaden our international recruitment efforts to include students from groups underrepresented at the University of Toronto. We will continue to develop and promote opportunities for women to engage in STEM fields, at the undergraduate and graduate level, and among faculty. We will engage in broad consultations regarding the recommendations of the Indigenous Working Group on Teaching and Learning and implement these recommendations as appropriate. We will support hiring practices that address imbalances in the current faculty complement, and in promotion through the ranks. We will support initiatives that increase accessibility across the Faculty. We will be attentive to underrepresented groups among faculty, staff, and students, and promote inclusiveness, equity, and diversity.

5. Build Partnerships with our Communities

Arts & Science will derive new strengths through building community partnerships. We will raise our social profile by supporting research and teaching initiatives that deal with issues facing our local and broader communities, ranging from supporting refugees in the city to addressing climate change. These are issues that our faculty, staff, and students care about, and that make the Faculty more relevant and prominent within our immediate and larger communities. New partnerships will enrich opportunities for faculty and students and open new and creative areas of research and scholarship.

Key Goals:

Engage with our local and broader communities: We will engage with our urban community through new partnerships between the Faculty and organizations within the Greater Toronto Area. We will provide new supports for refugee outreach initiatives, develop closer ties with local school boards and with Indigenous communities, and promote projects that encourage the community to engage with our academic mission. We will also engage more effectively with groups beyond our southern Ontario base. We will develop integrated learning initiatives in which students learn and use key skills while helping to solve problems or develop projects within local groups, NGOs, businesses, or government organizations.

Create new international partnerships: We will promote faculty research initiatives that explore questions of global significance, and that bring together scholars from around the world. We will also develop new pedagogical partnerships. Arts & Science currently supports a range of international learning experiences via the International Course Modules and our many international exchanges. We will work to increase the availability of, access to, and ease of pursuing these international options.

Promote partnerships with alumni: We will better leverage our considerable alumni base, which is close to 250,000 strong. Many of our graduates are leaders in business, government, and education, in Canada and around the world. These alumni make an extraordinary contribution to advancement activities in the Faculty, providing support that enhances research opportunities and student experiences. Our Advancement team is preparing for the next capital campaign to celebrate the University's bicentennial in 2027. We can better recognize the role played by alumni and by donors in our mission and promote new alumni engagement opportunities in the future.

Operational Priority

6. Expand and Improve Faculty Capital and Infrastructure

The success of the Faculty rests on our continued attention to operational goals. Indeed, without new infrastructure and capital development, our ability to pursue these strategic priorities will be severely constrained. The Faculty's most pressing needs centre around space. Our units need space for faculty offices and academic workspaces. Students need space for studying, group work, and hubs for the social and extracurricular activities that enhance their overall experience. Faculty need state-of-the-art facilities for their innovative research programs. Our classrooms and meeting spaces need to be updated and equipped with technological enhancements. In some cases, administrative and office space for a department is spread across multiple buildings, with detrimental effects on faculty and student experiences. We need new space and enhancement of existing space to provide the best possible research, teaching, and work environments for faculty, students, and staff.

We must also provide the most innovative equipment and IT resources for our researchers and students. The Faculty has supported a number of significant equipment projects. For example, a new MRI scanner is enabling researchers in Psychology to do cutting-edge research in neuroscience. There are new custom-built teaching labs in Physics and fully renovated teaching labs in our biology units which serve thousands

of students each year. We must continue to invest in new equipment and technology to ensure that our faculty and students have the tools necessary to conduct their ground-breaking work.

Key Goals:

Develop our space and infrastructure: Over the past five years, the Faculty has been highly successful in managing its finances and balancing the budget; we will continue to foster fiscal well-being to ensure that we have the resources available to make the significant investments needed to achieve our goals. Moving forward, we will develop new building projects to support growth across the Faculty. We will continue to renovate and upgrade departmental, teaching, and research spaces. We will ensure access to high quality, cutting-edge equipment. We will also develop the enhanced IT capabilities needed to support our research and teaching throughout the Faculty.