

Response to the External Review of the Faculty of Arts

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With input from the Faculty of Arts Executive Team and from Heads and Directors

November 10, 2015

We are grateful for the insightful work of members of the External Review Committee (ERC), and are especially heartened that they find the Faculty to be “an outstanding Faculty, and one that richly merits the confidence and support of the UBC administration.” Members of my Executive and I are in agreement with most of the major findings and recommendations in the Report. As a result, our responses are fairly succinct.

Many of the recommendations of the ERC correspond to work already underway in the Faculty, and for each of these, we have used “in progress” or “well underway” to capture that it is not a new recommendation but rather an encouragement to pursue our current course of action. In this response, we have numbered the recommendations and indicated the page on which each recommendation appears in the original Report.

[p.2] Recommendation 1: *While we applaud the willingness of the Faculty to critically consider the current utility of longstanding requirements, we urge them to also be mindful of the ways that changes might create inflexibility and delayed time to degree for Arts students who are accustomed and even encouraged to explore different options before settling on a major. Further tailoring the majors could also introduce challenges to advisors, who must be familiar with all the requirements, as well as registrars’ software systems, which may not be agile enough to easily record the new pathways to the degree. For these reasons, any dramatic changes to the curriculum should be made with extended consultation with all the stakeholders.*

Agreed. Following up on our Program Outcomes, we have embarked on a process—but are in the early stages—of reconsidering degree requirements. We fully share the concerns of the ERC about potential impacts on students and staff and we intend to proceed accordingly.

[p.3] Recommendation 2: *The Faculty should explore ways to better communicate the new vision and the excellent academic and teaching work that supports it. This must go beyond branding.*

In progress. The New Arts Narrative, a product of creative ferment in Arts over a period of five years, was consolidated only in the final months of last spring. We are just at the start of a campaign to disseminate it widely, so it is expected that constituencies do not yet have a complete picture. Starting with the “Meet the Dean” speech on Imagine Day 2015, we have begun to roll this out.

[p.3] Recommendation 3: UBC and the Faculty of Arts should work to ensure that international students are well supported academically, socially, and psychologically, through focused and appropriate services designed for their needs.

In progress. We are examining funding options to increase international student advising. We believe that in addition to administrative staff support, international students are also in need of additional faculty and peer support.

[p.4] Recommendation 4: The Faculty of Arts should develop better internal communications for experiential and other learning programs, to encourage greater participation.

In progress. We have decided to increase staffing for experiential learning programs and are proposing that some of the incremental revenues from international student tuition help fund such learning opportunities. Part of the role of additional staff members will be to communicate with and support faculty members and units endeavoring to develop programs.

[p.4] Recommendation 5: The Faculty of Arts should investigate the desirability of encouraging students to declare majors in second year or earlier.

Agreed. We currently allow our students to declare the major anytime after the end of the first year of study and until the end of the 2nd year of study (between 27 and 54 credits). While some of our departments are already working on a plan to encourage early declaration of the major, other units recently signaled their willingness to consider doing the same, and so we will work on moving the expectations for declaration more visibly toward the end of the first year of study. Our 4-year programs such as the BIE, Bachelor of Media Studies and the revamped BFA (proposal stage) all create direct entry to their programs.

[p.4] Recommendation 6: The University should provide training for instructors to deal with mental health issues in a consistent and timely fashion.

In progress. Following the development of Early Alert, the Office of the Vice-President Students has disseminated new mental health information to all faculty and staff. We are supporting the dissemination of critical information and the training of faculty and staff to support student mental health, but we should also add that course instructors cannot be trained as first-line responders and counselors, but should be trained primarily to recognize mental health issues and to refer students to resources that would help students to pursue the best options for them.

[p.4] Recommendation 7: Arts and UBC should explore the possibility of required courses in Aboriginal studies or language for all students in Arts and other undergraduate programs.

This is a recommendation with which we disagree (see below), but we have engaged for the last five years in an ongoing dialogue about a possible alternative proposal. First, let me explain the nature of our concerns. We have built our various First Nations and Aboriginal program concentrations on the hiring of many of the best Indigenous scholars in North America, and the majority of courses with strong First Nations content are taught by Indigenous professors. We have built these programs patiently on a strong research foundation and with intellectual content, and as a result they are being recognized around Canada and the world for their quality.

Given the conflicts and prejudices still present in Canadian society, our First Nations scholars have argued that *required* courses often have the counterproductive effects of: 1) increasing resentment on the part of some students concerning Aboriginal rights, 2) exposing the small numbers of Aboriginal students in these classrooms to uninformed opinions and thus heightening their sense of alienation, and 3) requiring either that Indigenous scholars teach almost nothing but such introductory courses, that we hire large numbers of new Indigenous faculty (unrealistic), or that such courses be taught by non-Aboriginal faculty.

We have, however, considered offering a new requirement for Arts students focused on high-level commitments of UBC's Place and Promise strategic plan: international, intercultural, diversity/equity and aboriginal engagement. We could include a large number of courses that would satisfy this requirement, allowing students to choose from among these courses if consistent with their academic interests. We have begun meeting to flesh out this proposal.

[p.5] Recommendation 8: UBC should consider whether the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is the best structure for the administration of graduate programs, or whether it might be better to move that administration into the disciplinary Faculties. If it is decided to preserve FG+PS, the relationship between that Faculty and Departments/Programs needs to be clarified and simplified.

This is a University issue, and not simply an Arts issue. We believe there are important functions to be played by a central oversight of the graduate enterprise, and we appreciate the work of G+PS in the stewardship of doctoral exams and standards, the brokering of funds for graduate support that come through the University, and professional training for graduate students (although many of these programs are not sufficiently relevant to Arts students and so we often reproduce them locally) . It might be possible to enroll graduate students in the "line" Faculties that oversee their degrees, but we would prefer to do this in conjunction with a central G+PS office. In short, we are willing to participate in ongoing university-wide discussions of the best structure and function of an office/faculty of graduate and postdoctoral studies but do not currently imagine the erasure of a central graduate/postdoctoral function.

[p.5] Recommendation 9: *The Faculty of Arts should look at the sizes of its programs, to determine whether some would benefit from slightly smaller numbers and therefore more supervisory resources; they should continue with and expand the alternative career work; and they should develop full data on placement of graduates, for all programs.*

In progress. This is exactly the advice that the Faculty has given to our departments over the last five years to “right-size” their graduate programs. We are fully engaged in all three components of this recommendation and are working with the Office of the Vice President Students to pioneer an expanded program of career preparation.

[p.6] Recommendation 10: *The Faculty of Arts and the Office of the VP Research should provide additional support to faculty members developing Tri-Council and other external grant applications, ideally through assigning at least one additional staff person to this task.*

We intend to add a staff person to expand the degree and range of support that our Research Office is able to provide. We will discuss with the Office of Research Services how to best apportion the existing and proposed position between the OVPRI and Arts.

[p.6] Recommendation 11: *The Faculty of Arts and the University should review what continuing support is provided to those who do succeed in acquiring large external grants, including CFI awards. Some consideration should also be given to the more robust provision of seed money to assist in the development of larger partnership grants.*

We are keen to assist research teams in securing large grants and in building sustainable projects. Seed funding is available through the transparent and adjudicated Arts internal grants, which provide support for researchers who wish to organize workshops, attend international meetings and secure a research grant to build capacity towards a major Tri-Council application. The Hampton fund similarly provides matching funds for SSHRC Partnership Development and Partnership Grants as well as research grants for junior and established scholars pursuing new research areas. Finally, the Faculty provides matching funds for Partnership Grant applicants, and encourages departments to do the same.

One aim of the Tri-Council Partnership Grants is that researchers will develop independent funding over the life cycle of the grant. While the Faculty cannot replace Tri-Council funding, we will work with researchers to develop partnerships and secure support where appropriate. In terms of research infrastructure, we are pleased to note the transition of many successful CFI projects after the granting period based on new revenue streams, as in the case of the Museum of Anthropology. While we accept that there will be individual instances where increased support from the Faculty may be necessary to keep research infrastructure functioning at a high level, we hope to see

some of those needs met by increased returns from the revised policy on indirect costs of research.

[p.6] Recommendation 12: *The University should lobby the provincial government to change its position on providing matching funds for successful CFI applications in the Humanities.*

We appreciate the University's willingness to backfill the rejected BCKDF support. We are working with the OVPRI to make sure that all CFI grants explicitly address Provincial priorities. Should the previous pattern recur, we would appreciate any strategic advice or engagement with the Provincial Government that the University is willing to give.

[p.6] Recommendation 13: *The University should ensure that Arts research is given equal prominence to that of other Faculties in all reports and external communications, and in general be a "champion" for research, creative, and professional activities, in the Faculty of Arts.*

We are confident that there is enormous goodwill and support for Arts research and researchers within the OVPRI, and we have been grateful for both ongoing and for special-issue assistance. Nonetheless, there can be ongoing issues in translating between the kinds of massive partnership-focused, tech-intensive research projects that are the focus of most University research offices and the varieties of research in the Faculty of Arts (which spans "bench" science to the creative practice in the Arts to mostly solo archival and interpretive projects in the Humanities). We are committed to working with the OVPRI to help ensure that the research granting and support apparatus of the University fully incorporates and nurtures this range of research.

[p.7] Recommendation 14: *The Dean and Provost should continue to examine the organization of the Faculty of Arts with the goal of establishing an administrative structure that is practical and sustainable, while also making sense from an academic perspective.*

In progress. We have been resistant to promoting mergers that don't proceed from a reasonable agreement of the parties concerned and a sense of academic objectives, but we have seeded a number of active discussions of unit amalgamation, and are planning as creatively as possible within the confines of Senate policy to reduce the number of small unit reports in Arts.

[p.8] Recommendation 15: *The Dean's Office should initiate a broad discussion of the future academic structure for language and literature programs, drawing on all appropriate existing expertise, with the aim of developing an integrated framework for the delivery of language training to the Faculty and the larger university.*

In progress. The Dean's Office has created a TLEF grant in collaboration with our five units that offer language instruction (ASIA, CENES, CNERS, FHIS, and FNEL) to advance

language pedagogy and language learning technology, supervised by a Committee called Curriculum Renewal in Arts: Language Teaching and Learning. Linguistics has been involved regarding innovations in pronunciation software. We also initiated a discussion concerning a possible merger of two departments in languages, literatures, and cultures (CENES and FHIS). There has been sharp resistance to the idea of a merger within these departments, but we are continuing to discuss how best to structure the configuration of languages at UBC, and we are happy that other forms of collaboration continue to take hold. We do not believe that a global language instructional institute or school along the lines of U Wisconsin or MIT is in keeping with UBC's approach to languages, literatures and cultures.

[p.8] Recommendation 16: *Strong consideration should be given to the development of an interdisciplinary program in Religious Studies. (This would presumably also necessitate some re-thinking of the current name and/or configuration of the current Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies.)*

This has been an active file for the last five years, but has encountered strong pushback. We will follow up on this recommendation with a renewed effort to design a workable interdisciplinary program, but because of a number of reasons, the timeline will stretch well into next year.

[p.8] Recommendation 17: *The Dean's Office should undertake a broad review of First-Year programs, including service courses offered to other Faculties, with the aim of facilitating better coordination of programs and their delivery, and ensuring that all full-time and part-time faculty have an appropriate academic "home" unit.*

Well underway. We appointed a coordinator of First Year Programs, provided a staff position, and are in year two of a three-year study of how best to leverage these programs for a maximally impactful first year for our students and as a component of a distinctive and marketable UBC Arts curriculum. Although the ERC highlighted the costs of offering Arts One, we are convinced that the benefits of having such a program far outweigh the costs—it is not a program for all of our students, but the data show that those who seek it out perform well in subsequent years. We are convinced that the reorganization of First-Year Programs and the renewal of our First-Year curriculum, alongside other innovations of the New Arts Narrative, can yield impressive results for our students.

[p.9] Recommendation 18: *The Faculty of Arts is encouraged to continue its efforts to establish an "Arts and Culture District" on campus, while seeking to promote increased programmatic integration of both academic and non-academic units through a review of the "mission" of the latter.*

Well underway. We are due to launch the Arts & Culture Quarter, have hired a communications coordinator, and will appoint an academic director.

[p.9] Recommendation 19: *The Dean of Arts is encouraged to continue to seek opportunities for increased integration of the professional schools into the Faculty.*

In progress. Both the School of Journalism and SLAIS have been much more active in academic integration across Arts and the campus. This is a goal as well for the School of Social Work, highlighted in their recent external review.

[p.9] Recommendation 20: *The Dean and department heads are encouraged to maintain the atmosphere of transparency regarding budgetary processes and administrative decisions, and where appropriate to expand the opportunities for management and professional staff to participate in planning processes, given their significant levels of knowledge and experience.*

Agreed. We are delighted that the ERC found that “enormous progress had been made in this area.”

[p.10] Recommendation 21: *The Faculty of Arts is encouraged to explore a greater use of cross-appointments, including those at “100-0” which have no budgetary implications, with the aim of fostering greater engagement between and among disciplinary units and interdisciplinary programs.*

We have recently cross-appointed three CRCs with other Faculties. We have two cross-appointments with Law, and at least one with Education, one with Engineering, one with Medicine, a few with Science (another in progress). Within Arts, we have made four cross-appointments in the last year just with the Institute of Asian Research and partner departments. We have also made at least 8 cross-appointments involving First Nations Studies/First Nations Languages and partner units in the last 6-7 years. It is likely that there are scores of such appointments within Arts, and there has been much activity in the last six years on this front. 100-0 appointments look much like Associate Faculty status at UBC, and this is an appointment used extensively in Arts.

[p.10] Recommendation 22: *The Dean’s office may wish to develop some mechanism to ensure that units comply with university HR policies and procedures.*

The mechanisms to ensure proper practice are in place: our unit administrators (coordinated by an Assistant Dean Facilities and HR). The Faculty of Arts, however, is extremely diversified with respect to job families and classifications, and this presents unique challenges with respect to areas of responsibility. The Assistant Dean meets monthly with unit administrators and provides updates on policy regarding human resources and best practices. A central Human Resources Advisor is present at those meetings, and time is allowed for discussion. In addition, each unit administrator has direct access to the Assistant Dean for specific advice or support where needed.

But we agree that we can provide even better support for Administrators, as we have done with the finance hubs, presumably by utilizing a dedicated, central HR person to be embedded into the Faculty of Arts. Such a position could be funded on a 50/50 basis, similar to some Development and Alumni Engagement staff. This would help especially in an area of particular need: proactive planning and training.

[p.11] Recommendation 23: *The Faculty should provide clear guidance to assistant professors about the expectations for tenure and the process for tenure reviews. To reduce the uncertainty that can result when information is received from different sources, there should be opportunities for representatives from the Dean's office to present information about tenure procedures to all assistant professors, and to respond to their questions. Department heads should be encouraged to set up mentoring procedures within their units to ensure that assistant professors receive career advising from senior faculty in their discipline about how their work will be evaluated in their field.*

The Faculty already requires that the Head provide mentoring and that s/he assign an additional departmental senior faculty mentor to each junior faculty member. We will make sure that these requirements are followed rigorously. For the last four years, the Faculty has also been assigning a non-departmental mentor to each new tenure-stream hire, and we provide modest support to facilitate meetings of mentors and mentees. Our Associate Dean Faculty and Equity runs a tenure and promotion workshop each year for heads and directors and their administrative staff who assist in the process. We are grateful for the suggestion of a direct Faculty workshop for all faculty, and we plan to organize one or more of these each year.

An additional challenge that we take seriously is to mentor well in the Educational Leadership stream, as the newly defined stream grows and matures under the new policies. Because there may not be senior instructors in every department to mentor new instructors, the Dean's Office has assumed a particularly prominent role in clarifying the promotion and tenure process for faculty in the educational leadership stream. Last year, the Dean's Office hosted a well-attended information/Q&A session for Department heads and tenure-track faculty in the educational leadership stream. We have stressed the need to ensure that untenured faculty in this stream have ample opportunities to demonstrate the type of educational leadership that will eventually support promotion to Professor of Teaching.

[p.11] Recommendation 24: *We urge the Faculty to provide best practices for continuing reviews for 12-month lecturers with an eye to consistency and fairness. Ideally, the lecturers should have representation on the committee that identifies these practices. We also suggest that consideration should be given to opportunities for term-limited faculty to participate in shared governance as appropriate.*

We have shifted toward greater utilization of 12-month lecturer contracts rather than per-course sessional lecturer appointments, and we will work with departments to promote consistency in best practice and to ensure periodic performance evaluation. Regarding the role of 12-month lecturers in departmental governance, we have flagged this issue for discussion by the heads and directors, and will attempt to reach consensus on how to promote inclusion in governance given very different roles of contract faculty and different models of governance at the unit level, as well as limitations in the Collective Agreement. Some of our departments already include representatives of the 12-month lecturers in faculty meetings.

[p.12] Recommendation 25: The Faculty of Arts should explore the possibility of partnering with other universities and colleges in the region.

We have long-term interests in such partnerships, but have felt that in the first instance we needed to concentrate on international partnerships and on innovation and renovation of our own programs. Nonetheless, the aboriginal student partnership with Langara College was pioneered by Arts and we have a strong relationship with Corpus Christi College for students experiencing academic difficulty in Arts—some of these students have the opportunity to transition to and later back from Corpus Christi.

[p.12] Recommendation 26: The Dean should develop new terms of reference for the Faculty of Arts Advisory Board, and work to develop the right mix of members to fulfill its mandate.

In progress. This has been our intent for the year following the conclusion of the *start an evolution* campaign, and the Dean's Advisory Board is scheduled to talk about this later this semester.

[p.12] Recommendation 27: The Faculty of Arts should develop a strong alumni strategy and program.

The Faculty exceeded all of its ambitious alumni targets for the capital campaign, and we continue to communicate with and engage our alumni in new ways, including Tri-mentoring, our ambitious career preparation plan, departmental events, and our alumni survey. We recognize that we began the last capital campaign with very little history of alumni contact and engagement. We recently added a staff person to work on alumni contact.

[p.13] Recommendation 28: As the Faculty of Arts considers ways to hone and highlight their messaging about the value of Arts education, we suggest that the University could partner with them by emphasizing the centrality of Arts to the University's overall mission.

Unlike some Arts faculties in North America, we do not feel under appreciated or ignored by this University's central administration; rather, we are comfortable with the strong voice that Arts possesses within the University. There are, however, ways in which the University could be more explicit concerning the fundamental role of Arts (and Science) education within the university, and in particular regarding the role of the creative and performing arts in campus and intellectual life. We would be pleased to engage in discussions of how this might be accomplished.

[p.13] Recommendation 29: *The University Librarian, in consultation with the Dean and Provost, should examine ways in which the Library's acquisition budget can be used to best advantage with a view to offering the highest possible level of support for research activities and graduate programs in the Faculty of Arts. In particular, the acquisition of monographs in the Humanities requires protection.*

We second the importance of the Library as a fundamental research support for Arts. As part of the investment strategy for research, we would support a vigorous discussion of how to protect the Library's acquisitions budget from the ravages of inflation and currency fluctuations.

[p.14] Recommendation 30: *Given the importance of development activities to the future of the Faculty of Arts, it is recommended that the Dean aim for increased clarity and transparency regarding the process of determining priorities for fundraising. We encourage the Dean to offer opportunities for academic unit heads to learn more about advancement activities in Arts, so they have appropriate expectations for fundraising and can become effective partners and allies in these efforts.*

Our Development group visited every department for detailed discussions of the role and practice of university development. However, at least half of our heads are new to their jobs since the period in which Development engaged the departments in articulating their fundraising priorities. In the post-capital-campaign period, we will re-invigorate the discussion about fundraising priorities with departments.

[p.14] Recommendation 31: *That the University review its IT infrastructure to ensure that it meets the needs of the users, and that it assists, rather than impedes, the development of new academic programs and continuing efforts to enhance the learning experience for students.*

Although the last six years have seen a number of major IT issues, some of them highly impactful, we are convinced that the University now takes seriously the role of "users" in helping design and purchase IT systems and programs and that it is attempting to solve the problems of a previously sub-optimal consultation process. There has also been some progress on the relationship of UBC IT to the IT operations within Faculties (Arts ISIT for example).

[p.14] Recommendation 32: The University should assess the seismic fitness of all Arts buildings and facilities, and develop plans for physical upgrades as needed.

The assessment *has* been done—the problem, as we understand it, is in funding the significant costs of seismic readiness, costs that would need to be borne in the main by the university with support from the Province. This issue tops Arts’ annual Risk Register, in part because so many Arts buildings were built in the “problem era” of concrete construction from the 1950s to the 1970s. AnSo, Lasserre, Buchanan E, Kenny, and parts of MOA are especially vulnerable. We will raise this at the Budget and Academic Planning Process with the other deans and the UBC Executive, to see if we can’t achieve more clarity on timeline and the lobbying effort needed.