

**The Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies:  
Academic Planning Discussion Paper**

**Emerging from Unit and Sector-Level Discussions  
(17 November 2014 through 9 January 2015)**

The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies (LA&PS) has established an international reputation for quality in research and teaching. It has played a critical role in York University's being ranked in the world's top one hundred universities in the humanities and social sciences in 2014. LA&PS has also a strategic plan that lays out its goals and aspirations. Among these goals and aspirations are the strategic rebuilding of the full-time faculty complement, the further augmentation of the Faculty's research culture, the achievement of a wholly engaged student body, and concomitantly engaged teaching by full-time faculty at both graduate and undergraduate levels.

The achievement of these goals and aspirations is, however, dependent on the Faculty's revenues and the management of its resources. If the discussion paper that follows appears to focus primarily on our undergraduate enrolments, it is because those enrolments are, practically speaking, the Faculty's sole source of revenue. The fees and grants generated by undergraduate students fund everything that the Faculty does, and the decline of almost 2,000 domestic fiscal full-time equivalents (FFTEs) over the past three years could scarcely have come at a less opportune time. The decline is more challenging because it has been unequally distributed across the Faculty's 21 teaching units, and because the continued increase in international enrolments--which has buffered to some extent the loss of domestic students--has been clustered in a very few units.

This discussion paper emerges from a series of unit-level and sectoral meetings and, to the degree it can, reflects the tenor of the discussions at those meetings. It emerges in the impending shadow of a new, activity-based budget model and operates on two budgetary assumptions: 1) that a certain level of undergraduate enrolment, at a certain ratio between domestic and international enrolments, is required if LA&PS is to proceed with the range of programs and at the level of quality that it has currently achieved and to which it aspires; the proposed level and ratio are set out in section 1 below; 2) that a more diverse distribution of those enrolments across the Faculty's units and programs is requisite for the betterment of our students' educations and for the continuing health of its programs.

Many, though not all, of the suggestions below offer points for discussion tending toward these two ends: the attraction and retention of undergraduate students sufficient to the Faculty's needs and purposes, and the distribution of those students across the vast breadth of the Faculty's offerings. Without the achievement of the first and at least the partial achievement of the second, the Faculty's capacity to achieve the goals and aspirations articulated in its Strategic Plan will be conspicuously hobbled.

**Larger Context:** This is a critical moment for LA&PS because of the intersection of four different factors:

- Significant shifts in patterns of student enrolment, both domestic and international
- The impending retirement of up to 33% of the full-time professors in LA&PS
- The shift to a new university-wide activity-based budget model
- The transition from one Dean to another effective July 1, 2015

**1. Revenue Generation:** Undergraduate student enrolments are York's principal source of revenue. LA&PS enrolls about 50% of York's undergraduate FFTEs and thus is York's largest revenue generator, which will become clearer when the new budget model is unveiled.

- LA&PS is planning for an undergraduate enrolment of 22,000 FFTEs
- That level of enrolment would generate sufficient revenue to achieve the teaching (undergraduate and graduate) and research goals set out in the Faculty's Academic Plan with a full-time faculty complement of about 700
- The 22,000 undergraduate FFTEs envisaged would be 85% domestic (18,750 FFTEs) and 15% international (3,300 FFTEs)
- 22,000 undergraduate FFTEs appears to be achievable because from 2010/2011 through 2012/2013, Faculty enrolments were above 21,700 FFTEs, reaching a high point of 21,963 FFTEs in 2011/2012
- 18,700 domestic undergraduate FFTEs appears to be achievable because that number is lower than the domestic FFTEs in LA&PS in any year between 2009/2010 and 2013/2014, but 800 higher than domestic FFTEs in LA&PS in 2014/2015
- 3,300 international undergraduate FFTEs appears to be achievable because the number of international FFTEs in LA&PS has more than doubled in the past five years and it is not unreasonable to anticipate a further 10% increase in each of the next three years
- A modest rebound in domestic enrollment in LA&PS and continued growth in international enrollment in LA&PS would make 22,000 undergraduate FFTEs achievable within three years

## **2. Rebuilding Domestic Undergraduate Enrolments**

- Our comparatively low target for domestic undergraduate enrolments takes into account:
  - the slowing of demographic growth among the university-age population in Ontario
  - decreased or stalled participation rates among that domestic age group
  - increased post-secondary competition in the GTA and environs, both for traditional university-age students and for mature students
  - a more-or-less static “market share” for York
- Key strategies for rebuilding our domestic undergraduate enrolments through new student recruitment include:
  - more effective coordination with the Office of the Registrar in matters of recruitment, admissions, and registration
  - increased participation of academic units in the recruitment and conversion processes
  - improved communications with prospective students at the program level
  - a website that works for prospective students
  - increased participation in recruitment and conversion by current students and alumni
- Key strategies for retaining those students who are already enrolled in LA&PS programs include:
  - further development of bridging and semi-remedial programs
  - the fuller development in introductory courses of pedagogies attuned to students’ transition to university-level study
  - the development of more effective numeracy supports for students in number-based disciplines
  - more effective advising and earlier identification of students “at risk”
  - better provision for students unable to maintain honours standing
  - reconsideration of programs’ fourth-year requirements and offerings

## **3. Building and Diversifying International Undergraduate Enrolments**

- In the 2014-15 academic year to date LA&PS has enrolled more than 2700 FTEs of international undergraduate students who are drawn from 108 countries and now make up about 12% of our undergraduate enrolments

- While our international undergraduate enrolments have effectively doubled over the past six years, we need to diversify the countries of origin of these students, while maintaining the Faculty’s recruitment initiatives in China and India
- We need to expand the presence of international students to a larger number of LA&PS departments and programs, particularly by emphasizing the Faculty’s global ranking in the social sciences and the humanities
- The Faculty will maintain or increase its international profile by augmenting funding for international conference participation and research partnerships
- LA&PS international recruitment efforts will need to be even more closely coordinated with York’s centralized recruitment efforts
- On-campus supports, both academic and para-academic, for international students will need to be expanded
- The Faculty needs to develop programs in the Liberal Arts (particularly minors) that will be of interest to international students, particularly those attracted to our professional programs

#### **4. Strategically Reshaping Graduate Enrolments**

- LA&PS currently enrolls about 1,000 full- and part-time Masters students and more than 750 full-and part-time doctoral students in programs housed in 18 of its 21 departments and schools
- A challenge that many LA&PS graduate programs face relates to shortfalls in achieving externally established graduate enrolment “targets” as a result of many factors:
  - decreasing demand for graduate study in some fields
  - more competition among graduate programs in the GTA
  - an increasing number of senior full-time faculty retirements
  - uncompetitive funding packages for graduate students, especially at the Masters level
  - the presence of significant numbers of “ineligible” doctoral students
  - limitations on international enrolments in our Ph.D programs
- LA&PS certainly accepts responsibility for managing its global share of York graduate enrolments in line with York’s Strategic Mandate Agreement, but it anticipates the need to periodically adjusting enrolment “targets” for individual LA&PS graduate programs to reflect:
  - their enhanced or diminished international reputation

- their augmented or reduced capacity to enroll new students
  - the quality of their applicant pool
  - applications from international doctoral students of high caliber
  - adequate financial resources to provide students with competitive funding packages
- LA&PS proposes to introduce a program of prestigious doctoral fellowships for outstanding international students
    - These doctoral fellowships would be limited in number and would be awarded on a competitive basis for a four-year period with no teaching expectation
    - They would be funded from a set-aside on LA&PS international undergraduate tuition revenues
    - They would enhance the quality and international reputation of our most highly regarded programs
    - A one year post-doctoral fellowship (with opportunities for teaching experience) would also be made available to those international doctoral fellowship winners who complete their doctoral studies in four years
- LA&PS proposes to introduce a program of domestic post-doctoral fellowships
    - The purpose of these post-doctoral fellowship would be to encourage timely completion of LA&PS doctoral studies
    - These fellowships would be available exclusively to domestic students who complete LA&PS doctoral programs in five years or fewer
    - The fellowships would be funded by the minimum guarantee money already committed to the student, together with a limited top-up (as minimum guarantee funding for Year 6 covers only 2 terms)

## **5. Strategic Distribution of General Education Enrolments**

- Providing General Education courses in the social sciences and in the humanities is a core LA&PS teaching responsibility and one that the Faculty takes very seriously. As a result of recent legislative changes, any LA&PS unit may offer General Education courses that have been approved by a Faculty Council Committee which vets course proposals against established criteria and expectations
- Between 20% and 25% of LA&PS undergraduate enrolments are in courses designated as fulfilling General Education requirements for LA&PS program students and for students enrolled in programs in other Faculties
- Of the 225 sections of General Education courses being offered by LA&PS in 2014/2015, fewer than 30% are taught by full-time faculty, which is in sharp

contrast to the minimum standard of 60% full-time faculty teaching of our courses set out in the LA&PS academic plan, and is significantly below the 51% full-time presence across all our offerings

- Two LA&PS departments with an historical “franchise” for General Education have among the Faculty’s highest percentages of colleagues who will reach or exceed normal retirement age by 2020
- Many of the Faculty’s interdisciplinary programs have traditionally offered General Education courses but, given the size of their programs and the limited number of full-time professors appointed to those programs, these programs have increasingly focused their limited full-time faculty resources on courses required for their programs and either cut back or even abandoned the teaching of General Education courses by full-time professors, or in some cases altogether
- At the same time, some of the Faculty’s most highly ranked departments have experienced significant undergraduate enrolment declines, although they offer large graduate programs and maintain a large full-time faculty complement
- LA&PS proposes to treat the 5,000 FFTEs attached to General Education courses in LA&P as a Faculty resource, one that can be apportioned to supplement the enrolments of units that have experienced varying degrees of enrolment decline and in parallel to diminish the pressure on programs with large enrolments but limited full-time faculty resources

## **6. Strategic Curricular Focus**

- It is increasingly clear that a combination of shifts in enrolment (both undergraduate and graduate) combined with a significant level of actual and anticipated full-time faculty retirements has had, and will continue to have, an impact on the program and course offerings of many LA&PS departments and schools
- Some of our most highly ranked departments, while still mounting large graduate programs, have already experienced dramatic declines in undergraduate enrolment that in many cases has been, and will continue to be, combined with a large number of retirements by senior professors
- Even at the former enrolment levels and former full-time faculty complement, these departments and schools have of necessity made choices about their areas of sub-field concentration
- Given our commitment to academic excellence, as tempered by our limited financial resources, the strategic renewal of our full-time faculty complement will require that we make further choices, even in our most accomplished departments,

about curricular overlap with contiguous disciplines and fields, and about the viability of sub-fields of concentration. In effect more and more programs will of necessity be moving from a “cover the discipline” to a steeples of excellence approach

## **7. Possible Programs in Motion**

- Our Faculty’s Strategic Plan calls for academic programs to be housed, administratively, where they are most likely to thrive
- At least four current LA&PS departments and schools (Communication Studies; Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies; Human Resources Management; and Public Policy and Administration) were once programs within another department or school
- There may presently be some large LA&PS programs that are at the point where the greater autonomy conferred by departmental or school status could be beneficial to the program, as well as to its professors and students
- Similarly, there may presently be some LA&PS programs that could find greater curricular support, and perhaps more closely aligned faculty colleagues, if they migrated to another home unit
- Even without the actual movement of programs from one department or school to another, programs within departments may find it beneficial to rearrange their relations to adjacent programs for mutual benefit and support

## **8. Targeted or Focused Minors**

- LA&PS has yet to realize the potential in its name by providing its undergraduate students with programs which bridge the Liberal Arts and Professional Studies
- Few of the more than 5,000 majors in Professional Studies enroll in a Minor on the Liberal Arts side, although most of those students have credit room in their Majors to take up a Minor, which suggests an opportunity for departments in the Liberal Arts to develop and/or market such Minors
- Attempts have been made on the Professional Studies side to develop Minors that would offer practical credentials to nearly 20,000 Majors on the Liberal Arts side, but these Minors have not all been designed with a clear eye to Liberal Arts students’ capacities and academic preparation
- Further efforts along these lines could produce linked programs that add breadth and range to our students, and offer a particular distinctiveness to the Faculty’s

programs, while also helping to redistribute enrolments across the Faculty's many academic units

## **9. Enhancing the Impact of LA&PS Colleges**

- Most LA&PS students are assigned to one of four Colleges (Vanier, McLaughlin, Founders and New) based on their program of study
- Student retention is both a challenge and an opportunity for LA&PS, and our four colleges. The support services and sense of engagement that our Colleges-- through their range of para-academic and extra-curricular activities--foster among students should be integral to our student retention efforts
- The challenge is that too few LA&PS students take advantage of our Colleges, at least in part because most of our Colleges are located at a distance from both the departments that they serve and the classrooms in which their affiliated students take their courses
- We need to seriously consider establishing, whether temporarily at the beginning of each term or more permanently, some kind of College presence where the students are (in the Ross, Vari and Curtis buildings, for example)
- We need also to develop more effective structures for enhancing the ties between academic units and the Colleges to which they are attached

## **10. More Effective Use of Quality Assessment Protocols**

- All undergraduate and graduate programs in LA&PS undergo Cyclical Program Review (CPR), which is both labour intensive and costly
- It has become clear that at the Faculty level, we have not employed the existing CPR process to the Faculty's and its units' best advantage
- Earlier consultation and collaboration between the Dean's Office and the units/programs, and harmonized agendas could do much to enhance the usefulness and increase the impact of the CPR exercise, which could justify the investment that it demands

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