



**FOR INFORMATION**

**PUBLIC**

**OPEN SESSION**

**TO:** Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

**SPONSOR:** Susan McCahan, Vice Provost, Academic Programs  
**CONTACT INFO:** (416) 978-0490, vpacademicprograms@utoronto.ca

**PRESENTER:** See above  
**CONTACT INFO:**

**DATE:** March 15, 2019 for April 2, 2019

**AGENDA ITEM:** 2

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

Follow-up Reports on Reviews:

- a) Celtic Studies programs (Faculty of Arts and Science; housed in St. Michael's College)
- b) Department of Geography and Planning (Faculty of Arts and Science)
- c) Department of Biochemistry (Faculty of Medicine)

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

The Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) is the point of entry into governance for reports, summaries and administrative responses on the results of reviews of academic programs and units commissioned by academic administrators. The role of the Committee is to ensure that the reviews are conducted in accordance with University policy and guidelines, that an appropriate process has been followed, that adequate documentation is provided and consultations undertaken, and that issues identified in the review are addressed by the administration. Under the University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process, the AP&P may request a one-year follow-up report when concerns are raised in an external review that require a longer period of response.

This report is forwarded, together with the record of the Committee's discussion, to the Agenda Committee of the Academic Board, which determines whether there are any issues of general academic significance warranting discussion at the Board level. The same documentation is also sent to the Executive Committee and Governing Council for information.

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

1. **Committee on Academic Policy and Programs [for information] (April 2, 2019)**
2. Agenda Committee of the Academic Board [for information] (April 8, 2019)
3. Academic Board [for information] (April 17, 2019)

4. Executive Committee of the Governing Council [for information] (May 7, 2019)
5. Governing Council [for information] (May 16, 2019)

### **PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

At its meeting on April 3, 2018, AP&P considered the following reviews:

- a) The October 2017 review of Celtic Studies programs (Faculty of Arts and Science; housed in St. Michael's College) and the March 14, 2018 decanal response. AP&P requested a one-year follow-up report that addresses concerns related to the progress towards the articulation of a clear vision for the program that could lead to strategic and operational sustainability, including the status of any new hires or involvement of cognate faculty.
- b) The September 2017 review of the Department of Geography and Planning (Faculty of Arts and Science), and the March 14, 2018 decanal response. AP&P requested a one-year follow-up report on the status of the working group and curriculum committee conversations regarding undergraduate curriculum development and the sustainability of offerings in physical and environmental geography science, including possibilities for collaboration with cognate units.
- c) The October 2017 review of the Department of Biochemistry (Faculty of Medicine) and the March 16, 2018 decanal response. AP&P requested a one-year follow-up report on the status of Department's strategic planning, the implementation of the rotation system, and the future of the bioinformatics and computation biology specialist.

### **HIGHLIGHTS:**

- a) The University of St. Michael's College, which sponsors the Celtic Studies program for the Faculty of Arts and Science, will continue to direct a combination of endowed and operating funds to support the program. The Faculty of Arts and Science will soon confirm the unit-level planning process, following which the program's academic lead will oversee the development of a unit-level academic plan that will articulate the unit's key academic plans over the next five-year period.

The creation of a continuing-status Teaching Stream appointment in Celtic Studies with a focus on Irish language instruction continues to be a top priority for the program, and an Irish language instructor hired for 2018-19 will be renewed for the coming year. Over the past year the program director and faculty members have cultivated partnerships with the departments of English and History, and will present a new course in Fall 2019 (the Global Irish Diaspora), intended to engage students in History, English and Celtic Studies.

- b) The Department of Geography and Planning has engaged in discussions to evaluate curriculum development and the sustainability of programs in physical and environmental geography (PEG), and struck three working groups to address the issues raised in the external review. With the input of these working groups, the Department is discussing significant curriculum changes. Specifically, they are considering reimagining PEG as a

program that focusses on understanding the science underlying contemporary environmental change, with an emphasis on computation.

This reimagining will occur in tandem with the replacement of a faculty member retiring in July 2019, and the Department will request a Teaching Stream position with expertise in Biogeography/Hydrology and GIS/GIScience/Remote Sensing. While these curriculum and teaching staff changes are being considered, the Faculty will provide a 2-year CLTA to the Department to ensure that existing programs are supported during this transition period. The Chairs of the Department of Geography and Planning and the Department of Earth Sciences have begun to discuss the potential for collaboration in the delivery of their respective curricula, and an interdepartmental working group will further explore this collaboration.

- c) The Acting Chair of the Department of Biochemistry implemented a planning session at the Departmental retreat, which will be repeated annually. The Chair will consult with other department heads to help find a suitable consultant to assist with generating a cogent 5-year plan that allows for discussion around the shape of the Department's undergraduate programs, graduate program, and graduate mentorship, and captures the most important Departmental goals.

A rotation system for graduate placements was instituted in September 2017. Early evidence strongly suggests its success. Since the implementation of the system, students are finding supervisors and projects suited to their interests with greater ease, and no students have needed to be reassigned to new supervisors.

After lengthy consideration and consultation, the Bioinformatics and Computation Biology (BCB) Specialist was moved to the Department of Cell and Systems Biology in 2018. The sole Professor from Biochemistry teaching in the program continues to do so, will serve as Co-Director while new leadership is identified, and will likely continue to be involved through cross-listed courses.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Not applicable.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

For Information.

**DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

- a) Celtic Studies programs (Faculty of Arts and Science; housed in St. Michael's College) Follow-up Letter from Dean David Cameron, dated March 6, 2019.
- b) Department of Geography and Planning (Faculty of Arts and Science) Follow-up Letter from Dean David Cameron, dated March 8, 2019.
- c) Department of Biochemistry (Faculty of Medicine) Follow-up Letter from Dean Trevor Young, dated March 1, 2019.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

March 6, 2019

Professor Susan McCahan  
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs  
University of Toronto

Dear Susan,

I am writing in response to the request by the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) in regards to the October 12, 2017 external review of Celtic Studies and its undergraduate programs. At its meeting of April 3, 2018, AP&P requested a one-year follow-up report addressing *“the progress towards the articulation of a clear vision for the program that could lead to strategic and operational sustainability, including the status of any new hires or involvement of cognate faculty.”* The Faculty has worked with the Principal of the University of St. Michael’s College and Director of Celtic Studies, Professor Randy Boyagoda, to address the concerns of the AP&P committee, as follows:

**1) Articulating a clear vision for the program that could lead to strategic and operational sustainability**

The University of St. Michael’s College, which sponsors the Celtic Studies program for the Faculty of Arts and Science in its capacity as a federated institution of the University of Toronto, is invested in the long-term sustainability of this program. The College directs a combination of endowed and operating funds to support the Celtic Studies program and will continue to do so. To ensure strong student experience and sustained enrolments, over the past year, the College has continued its practice of supporting students with their research-related travel, with specific scholarships for program students, and with funding and staffing support from the Principal’s Office for student-led events and conferences. A strong and recent indication of new undergraduate interest in Celtic Studies was the large number of applications to be part of the first-year SMC One Seminar, The Boyle Seminar in Scripts and Stories (pilot year). The Seminar focuses on the intersection of Celtic and mediaeval cultures, and allows students to choose Celtic language tutorials and have a co-curricular intensive international learning experience in Dublin, both of which in turn offer Seminar students a new gateway into the program. The larger collegiate and alumni communities’ interest in the Boyle Seminar has led to the donation of new funds to support offering the course.

**2) Complement planning, including the status of any new or recent hires or involvement of cognate faculty**

The top priority for the program is the creation of a continuing-status Teaching Stream appointment in Celtic Studies with a significant focus on Irish language instruction. The College will continue its partnership with the Ireland-Canada University Foundation, an external organization that provides annual funding for a dedicated Irish language instructor; a new instructor joined the program for the 2018-2019 academic year, with plans for her to renew her appointment for the 2019-2020 academic

year. The College will continue to support the hiring of sessional instructors as needed to ensure a robust set of course offerings for Celtic Studies students. Furthermore, as the program plans for the next academic year, it will build on newly-cultivated partnerships, as recommended in the AP&P Report. In response, over the past year the program's director (the College Principal) and faculty members have had discussions with the English and History departments, and the program is mounting a new course in Fall 2019 - on the Global Irish Diaspora - that has been intentionally developed to engage the interests of students in History, English, and Celtic Studies.

The Vice-Dean, Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives, will continue to work with the College Principal to ensure that the program is of high quality. The Faculty is in the process of developing a model for unit-level planning. Following a UTQAP review, the academic lead for the program will oversee the development of a unit-level academic plan. This document will be submitted to the Dean by the end of the academic year following the review, and should articulate the unit's key academic plans over the next five-year period. The Faculty will work with the College Principals to develop a planning template that is tailored to College-sponsored programs.

I feel confident that the changes initiated by the College, the Program, and its faculty address the concerns of the AP&P follow-up request.

Sincerely,



David Cameron  
Dean and Professor of Political Science

cc:

Randy Boyagoda, Principal of the University of St. Michael's College, Director of Celtic Studies  
Penelope Lockwood, Vice Dean, Academic Planning & Strategic Initiatives, Faculty of Arts & Science

Daniella Mallinick, Director, Academic Programs, Planning & Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Andrea Benoit, Academic Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SCIENCE

March 8, 2019

Professor Susan McCahan  
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs  
University of Toronto

Dear Susan,

I am writing in response to the request by the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs (AP&P) in regards to the October 12, 2017 external review of the Department of Geography and Planning and its undergraduate and graduate programs. At its meeting of April 3, 2018, AP&P requested a one-year follow-up report addressing *“the status of the working group and curriculum committee conversations regarding undergraduate curriculum development and the sustainability of offerings in physical and environmental geography science, including possibilities for collaboration with cognate units.”* The Faculty has worked with the Chair of the Department, Professor Richard DiFrancesco, to address the concerns of the AP&P committee, as follows:

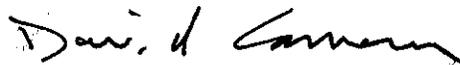
The Department has been engaged in a series of discussions to evaluate curriculum development and the sustainability of programs in physical and environmental geography (PEG). In the fall of 2018, the Chair struck three working groups (the PEG Working Group, the GIS/GIScience Working Group, and the Planning Working Group ) to address issues raised in the external review. With the input of the working groups, the Department is discussing significant curriculum changes. Specifically, the Department is considering reimagining PEG as a program that focusses on understanding the science underlying contemporary environmental change, with an emphasis on computation, as suggested by the reviewers. The Dean’s office notes that any proposal for curriculum change will be reviewed through the normal Arts and Science governance process.

The process of reimagining PEG will take place in tandem with the replacement of a faculty member retiring in July 2019. Consistent with the proposed curricular direction of the program, the Department will request a Teaching Stream faculty member with expertise in Biogeography/Hydrology and GIS/GIScience/Remote Sensing. In the Faculty of Arts and Science, units submit requests for new faculty positions through a formal process to the Faculty Appointments Committee (FAC). Units submit requests in February/March of each year for consideration by the FAC, which includes faculty representatives from across the three Arts and Science sectors (the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences) as well as the Colleges. After considering the full range of requests, the FAC makes recommendations to the Dean. Any request for additional faculty has an impact across the division, and as such, faculty appointments are considered not in isolation, but with respect to needs that exist across the Faculty. The Teaching Stream position request from the Department of Geography and Planning will be considered as part of the FAC process this year. While the Department engages in these changes in curriculum and teaching staff, the Faculty will provide a 2-year CLTA to the Department to ensure that the existing programs are appropriately supported, and to ensure support during this transition period.

While the Department does envision the attainment of a vibrant and sustainable PEG program within the Department of Geography and Planning, the Chair also acknowledges that both PEG and Earth Science programs have the potential to work together in certain areas. In February 2019, the Chair of the Department of Geography and Planning met with the Chair of the Department of Earth Sciences to discuss the potential for unit-level collaboration in the delivery of their respective curricula. Both chairs agreed to strike an interdepartmental working group to study options for synergistic collaborations going forward. Both chairs agreed that there is tremendous complementarity between the two units.

I feel confident that the changes initiated by the program and its faculty address the concerns of the AP&P follow-up request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Cameron". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

David Cameron  
Dean and Professor of Political Science

cc:

Richard J. DiFrancesco, Chair, Department of Geography and Planning

Poppy Lockwood, Vice-Dean, Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives, Faculty of Arts & Science

Daniella Mallinick, Director, Academic Programs, Planning and Quality Assurance, Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs

Andrea Benoit, Academic Review Officer, Office of the Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science

## ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP REPORT: DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

Issues identified in the 5-year review that required a follow-up report:

### **1. The status of the Department of Biochemistry's strategic planning**

As a first step towards this goal, Walid Houry, Acting Chair during the Chair's 6-month administrative leave, implemented an annual planning session at the Departmental retreat. This consisted of a 3-hour meeting at which a variety of issues were discussed, including the way the current undergraduate teaching load is distributed among faculty members. This was considered to be a good practice and so this will now become an annual event.

More recently, the idea of enlisting a professional facilitator in a formal Department-wide strategic planning session has been discussed. There is agreement that the Department needs to have a lengthy discussion around the shape of its undergraduate programs, graduate program, and graduate mentorship. This would include some of the matters identified in the 2017 review, such as creating a greater sense of mission around the Department's Majors. In general, the impression is that the Department has all the pieces necessary to cultivate an integrated sense of mission. The Advisory Committee to the Chair, moreover, feels that this would be an excellent means of further enhancing a shared sense of commitment among the core faculty and the status-only faculty in the partner research institutes.

The Chair will consult with other Department Chairs who have generated 5-year strategic plans using a consultant with a view to identifying the appropriate individual for the Department of Biochemistry. The goal is to generate a cogent 5-year plan around the most important Departmental goals, and then to use the annual planning meetings and shorter Departmental meetings to ensure their implementation.

### **2. The implementation of the rotation system**

The Department instituted a rotating system for graduate placements in September 2017. It is too early to draw conclusions regarding the rotation system, as there is limited experience to draw on. Nevertheless, the information available strongly suggests that the rotation system has been a success. Prior to its implementation, the Department experienced "problem matches" between students and supervisors every year. Typically, these students needed to be shifted from one lab to another during their first year, losing valuable time from their funded period as graduate students. This also resulted in significant expense to the Department because part of the stipend had to be absorbed during the movement process.

Since the implementation of rotations with the September 2017 class, however, the Department has not had to reassign a single student. This suggests that the system is having the desired effect: students are finding supervisors and projects that best suit their interests and temperaments. The Department will continue to monitor factors pertaining to graduate education such as times-to-completion, student success in terms of publication, and the need to relocate students mid-stream.

### **3. The future of the Bioinformatics and Computation Biology (BCB) Specialist**

After lengthy consideration and discussion, this program was moved to the Department of Cell and Systems Biology in 2018. Cell and Systems Biology has greater depth in this field than Biochemistry and will be a better home for it. The sole Professor from Biochemistry teaching in the program, Dr. Boris Steipe, also served as the Program Director; the rest of the faculty were in other programs. Dr. Steipe continues to teach in the program and, in the interim, will serve as Co-Director while new leadership is identified. Biochemistry is not involved in that process.

The Chair will be meeting with Vince Tropepe, Chair of Cell and Systems Biology, in the spring to formulate a plan to preserve some involvement of Dr. Steipe in the BCB program, perhaps on a cross-listed course basis. The intent of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, with the support of the Chair, is for Dr. Steipe's teaching to be more tightly integrated into Biochemistry's Major and Specialist programs. These are issues that will be fully resolved through the strategic-planning exercise.



*L. Trevor Young, MD, PhD, FRCPC  
Dean, Faculty of Medicine  
Vice-Provost, Relations with Health Care Institutions  
March 1, 2019*