



Memorandum

Date: April 30, 2012
To: Cheryl Misak, Vice-President and Provost
Governing Council
From: Meric S. Gertler, Dean, Faculty of Arts & Science
Re: Update on the implementation of the Program Fee in the Faculty of Arts & Science

At the May 19, 2011 meeting, Governing Council requested that the Faculty of Arts & Science (A&S) monitor the Program Fee implementation for another year. The attached report is in response to that request.

Since the Program Fee was implemented in the Faculty, very significant improvements to our students' learning experience have been made possible. These include better access to courses, an acceleration in faculty hiring so that students get better access to professors, increased small-group learning experiences in which students can interact with peers and develop relationships with faculty mentors, a renewed emphasis on writing skills and more opportunities to engage in research and undertake international experiences.

Governors will recall that charging tuition by program is a common model in Ontario and other North American universities: more than half of Ontario's universities charge Program Fees and all other first-entry divisions on the University's St. George campus have used a Program Fee model for many years. Nonetheless, this was a significant change for A&S, and some concerns were raised about potential consequences at the time of its introduction.

As requested by Governing Council when it approved the A&S Program Fee model in 2009, the Faculty monitored the impact of the Fee during its first two years of implementation and reported back to Council. The Program Fee Monitoring Committee (PFMC) presented their 2011 Report at Governing Council on May 19, 2011. The Report was also discussed at two A&S Faculty Council meetings on March 7 and April 11, 2011. While recognizing that the implementation of the Program Fee had only been underway for two cohorts of students and much of the data available reflected only 1.5 years of implementation at a 4-course threshold, the general finding of the Report was that "there appear to be no major shifts at this time that present cause for concern." The Report concluded that the potential concerns that had been raised regarding the implementation of the first phase of program fee implementation had not materialized. As a result, no revisions to its implementation were required.

The next stage of implementation of the Program Fee model began in September 2011 when students admitted in September 2009 or later and taking 3 to 6 courses paid the Program Fee (except for students registered with Accessibility Services who continue to be assessed per-course to allow for a reduced course load). Previously admitted students remain grand-parented under the per-course model until the end of the 2013-14 session. With the understanding that some students are unable to enroll full-time, students continue to have the option of enrolling part-time (2.5 FCEs or less) and paying on a per-course basis.

At its May 2011 meeting, Governing Council also recommended that the Committee continue its work for 2011-12 and present a second report during the 2011-12 academic year, along with the University administration's recommendations regarding the Committee's findings. The 2012 Program Fee Monitoring Committee (PFMC) was once again chaired by Prof. Mark McGowan and included undergraduate students and faculty members from each of the major A&S sectors, the constituent and federated colleges, as well as a college registrar and the Faculty Registrar. The Committee's preliminary findings were discussed at the A&S Faculty Council on March 7, 2012 and the draft final report was presented and discussed at Council on April 9, 2012.

Similar to the previous report, the 2012 PFMC Report focuses on questions raised by governors, students, faculty and registrars. Committee members examined the possible effects of the Program Fee on student enrolment behaviour, academic performance, demand for financial aid, and co- and extra-curricular experience, as well as the ways in which A&S had used additional revenues to support undergraduate teaching and learning. In addition to the data provided by the A&S Office of the Registrar, Committee members considered data from the 2011 National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) for U of T students, using data from previous NSSE surveys as a benchmark.

It is clear from the 2012 PFMC Report that the potential concerns expressed in the discussions leading up to the approval of the Program Fee model have not materialized. The Report highlights the following findings:

- An emerging trend of more students enrolling in more than 5.0 FCEs per year.
- A developing culture in which “students are regarding their course selection process as more flexible” and taking advantage of the flexibility in course loads offered by the Program Fee.
- No significant changes in participation by first-year students in extra and co-curricular activities. The Committee’s examination of the NSSE data, which compared student activity under the Program Fee model in 2011 with first year cohorts from 2004, 2006, and 2008, confirms the same findings noted in the 2011 Report based on student focus groups.
- No evidence that students are delaying their progress by dropping to part-time loads below 3.0 credits to avoid the Program Fee.
- No negative impact on student academic performance, nor on Faculty recruitment and admissions.

The Program Fee has also had no effect on student financial need. The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) grant and loan entitlements are based on an assessment of a full-time student’s (defined by OSAP as taking 3 or more courses) financial need regardless of an institution’s fee model. The University’s unique student assistance program (UTAPS) ensures unmet need *is* met in the form of a non-repayable grant. The 2012 PFMC Report shows that the average OSAP and UTAPS disbursements remained constant with the implementation of the Program Fee and the number of non-repayable grants provided to A&S students is similar to that at UTM and UTSC where there is no Program Fee in place.

Finally, the 2011 Report identified some administrative matters that have been addressed by the Faculty. In order to address issues related to course ‘loading’ and imbalanced student timetables, this spring A&S Faculty Council approved a regulation to limit students to a course load of 6 courses per term in the Fall/Winter session and 2 courses per term in the Summer session, effective Summer 2012. College Registrars may approve an exception to this limit where circumstances warrant. As well, the course fees for required summer field work courses are now included within the Program Fee. The Faculty Registrar, working with the University Ombudsperson and the Fees Process Streamlining Working Group, has clarified the workings of the refund schedule and corrected a problem that arose with students who withdrew from studies at mid-year so that they now receive appropriate refunds.

The main benefits noted of the Program Fee model for students are improvements to the learning experience. The Faculty has allocated its Program Fee resources to initiatives that directly benefit students, including additional student financial aid, research and international experience opportunities, first-year learning communities, writing instruction, counseling and advising. As an example, we have increased the number of students whose travel costs are fully funded so that they can take part in our world-wide International Course Modules (ICMs). This program allows students to experience first-hand the phenomena, cultures, key events or unique natural settings they have been studying in class. Program Fee revenues have also been crucial to allowing us to increase the number of new faculty, teaching assistantships, course sections and spaces in order to meet enrolment pressures. On the recommendation of our Faculty Appointments Committee, we were able to approve 27 new faculty position searches for 2011-12.

The Program Fee Monitoring Committee has once again effectively addressed areas of concern with regard to the implementation of the Program Fee. Its work was thorough and extensive. I commend the Committee for the diligence and care it has shown in preparing this second Report.