



1 March 2017

Professor Sioban Nelson
Vice-Provost Academic Programs
University of Toronto

Re: Follow-up of the Rotman Commerce Undergraduate Program

Dear Sioban,

As per your letter on May 4, 2016, we are writing to provide a one-year follow-up report to the January 2015 external review of the Rotman Commerce undergraduate program. As noted in our administrative response, the Rotman Commerce program is a joint endeavor of the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS) and the Rotman School of Management (RSM) and the program blends together the excellence and expertise of the globally recognized faculty from both the Department of Economics and the Rotman School of Management. The external review committee highlighted the “quality of the program’s students, faculty and dedication of the administration and support staff” but also raised several issues which both Faculties are working to improve.

A number of changes to the program have been agreed to and instituted over the past year to strengthen the program. There also remain some issues that the Faculties continue to work on. Below we specifically provide an update on the four areas outlined in your request for follow-up: admissions, student morale, teaching assignments, and organizational structure. Going forward, our shared objective remains the same as expressed last year: to maintain academic quality and significantly improve student experience in the program, with the goal of making this the leading commerce program in Canada.

Admissions

Several new initiatives have been undertaken by the Director to improve the admissions process at Rotman Commerce:

- For the supplemental applications (video and written essays), it is now the case that at least two assessors review each candidate’s submission. A third assessor is used when the two assessors’ evaluations differ significantly. This directly addresses the external reviewers concerns of only one person reviewing these documents. Each assessor provides a rating on a five point scale, resulting in a nine point scale after adding the two assessments together. This replaces the previous coarser three point rating scheme.
- For the first time, Rotman Commerce will be making a majority of its offers in February and March rather than May. We hope this will improve yield rates of quality candidates and the predictability of yields. This will also allow time to build relationships with potential students and engage in more conversion initiatives.
- New statistical analysis (in conjunction with staff from Enrolment Services and FAS) is being used to improve yield predictions and the academic quality of applicants. In recent

years, the program has experienced considerable fluctuations in acceptance rates – both up and down – as well as changes in attrition rates over the summer. It is hoped that improved models will reduce this uncertainty resulting in greater accuracy in meeting admission targets that yield higher quality candidates.

- The Director is exploring ways to increase admissions of transfer students from FAS and from other institutions in Year 2. Previously very few students were able to transfer to the program because of lack of capacity but with better ability to predict yields in admissions, the program office will be in a better position to leave some capacity for high quality transfers.

Student Morale

There have been numerous initiatives undertaken by both Faculties and the Director which are starting to make a notable improvement in student morale and student life.

- **Building Community:** The program office has introduced a house system for first year students. Incoming students are placed in one of five houses creating smaller communities within the larger class. These houses engage in various social activities and competitions throughout the year. The house system helps build community and provides opportunities for students to undertake leadership roles as house leaders. Also, Rotman Commerce backpacks have been distributed to all students. This initiative fosters pride and a sense of awareness of the program as students in the program can now proudly identify each other on campus and around the city.
- **Curriculum:** The curriculum has been changed (see further discussion below) with more business courses in Year 1. This helps build a stronger Rotman Commerce identity among new students, and strengthens community as many of them have several classes together in the first year, giving more opportunity to bond with their classmates.
- **Space:** As noted last year, limited and non-contiguous space is a significant constraint for program staff and students. Addressing space needs is both a short-term and long-term objective for the Faculties. There are three main initiatives that have occurred over the past year to address space needs.
 - The program office made a significant investment in improvement to the space outside the four classrooms in the lower level of Woodsworth Residence. New furniture, laptop bars, improved lighting, and updated study rooms were added over the summer to the lower level area, giving students a significantly improved student space around the four classrooms.
 - In the spring, both Faculties worked to secure space on the 4th floor of the OISE building located at 252 Bloor St. West across the street from the current offices and main classrooms for Rotman Commerce students. This new space is intended to accommodate the growth needed in career services as well as to provide needed event space for the program and additional meeting and interview rooms. Renovations have now started and the expectation is to have staff move into this space August 2017.

- The two Faculties have also worked together to push forward efforts to add Rotman Commerce to the terms of reference for a possible longer-term building site. Plans for this building site are currently in a feasibility study phase.
- Resources: Last year, both Faculties committed to increase the program base budget by 27% above the 2015/16 budget, by the end of 2017/18. The program office is now developing a 5-year budget plan, outlining key metrics and financial goals needed to compete with the best business schools. This 5-year plan will help inform the investments needed after 2017/18 and the two Faculties will work together to determine any changes needed to the base budget in order to improve student services and to continue addressing issues around student morale.

Teaching assignments and curriculum structure

The changes to the curriculum outlined last year of moving more business courses into the first year have now been implemented and there are ongoing discussions about increasing flexibility in course selection and increasing access to courses and disciplines outside economics, finance, and accounting.

- In response to the external report, both Faculties approved a new curriculum which became effective in the 2016-17 academic year and increased the number of business courses taught to Year 1 students. Rotman now offers four half-courses in the first year on marketing, finance, accounting, and management. These four half-courses now replace a full-year introduction to management. Students now have a better ability to make an informed choice of specialization after being exposed to the foundations of each of the specialist streams. The increased business teaching in the first year created a double cohort of teaching for Rotman this year which will carry through over the next three years. Rotman has responded and increased its teaching assignments accordingly. While it is not mandatory for students to take all the offered RSM half-courses in first year, between 80 to 90% of the students have chosen to take these courses, so the option to take business classes earlier seems to have been well received by students.
- A curriculum committee consisting of two Vice-Deans – one from each Faculty -- as well as the Director of the program and the Chair of the Economics Department was formed in August 2016 to consider how to improve access to other Arts and Science disciplines (outside economics) and how to broaden the choice of specializations offered to increase exposure to a wider variety of areas within business. The committee continues to rethink these aspects of the curriculum design.
- Rotman continues to signal to its faculty the equal importance of both undergraduate and graduate teaching. This is represented in several additional ways from what was noted last year: (a) both the Director and Managing Director of Commerce are permanent members of Rotman's Management Committee where information and issues facing all programs (ie. staffing, admissions, etc.) can be shared and brought forward; (b) Rotman continues to invest more in undergraduate teaching – notably illustrated by ongoing efforts to increase the portion of undergraduate sections taught by full-time faculty members.

Organizational Structure

There are several elements of the organizational structure which have been discussed over the past year.

- With the significant space needs of the program, it is clear that fundraising efforts for the program must be expanded. Based on input from Division of University Advancement (DUA) and the Executive Directors of Advancement at both FAS and RSM, the two Faculties have agreed to provide additional resources to hire two additional advancement staff members whose main focus will be on fundraising for the program. The Faculties have also agreed to an improved organizational structure which will better tie in the strategic mission of the Program to fundraising initiatives.
- Recognizing the significant changes needed in the program that require additional investment, access to courses and improved governance, the two Faculties have agreed to comprehensively revisit all aspects of the program and its organizational structure. There are two ways in which the Faculties continue to engage in discussions about the program:
 - The Faculties are currently reviewing the existing Interdivisional Teaching Arrangement (IDT) and these deliberations are ongoing at this stage.
 - The Deans of both Faculties meet regularly to ensure efforts continue in addressing concerns raised in the external review. There is also an ad hoc Operating Committee with representatives from each Faculty which meets to oversee and guide the implementation of the agreed program improvements. There are current discussions about how to best structure the program governance to ensure the Faculties and the Program Director continue to work together to bring forward and support new program initiatives.

To conclude, the Program, the Faculty Arts and Science and the Rotman School of Management continue to move forward with plans to address the recommendations as presented by the external reviewers. We are committed to implementing changes in the program which will deliver an exceptional and distinctive student learning experience and to providing a broader and deeper access to disciplines taught in the Faculty of Arts and Science and in Rotman.

Sincerely,



David Cameron
Dean and Professor of Political Science
Faculty of Arts and Science



Tiff Macklem
Dean and Professor of Finance
Rotman School of Management

cc. David Goldreich, Director, Rotman Commerce Program