

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

**THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

**REPORT NUMBER 154 OF THE COMMITTEE ON  
ACADEMIC POLICY AND PROGRAMS**

**February 28, 2012**

To the Academic Board,  
University of Toronto.

Your Committee reports that it met on Tuesday, February 28, 2012 at 4:10 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Simcoe Hall, with the following present:

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| Professor Andrea Sass-Kortsak<br>(Chair)  | Professor Heather MacNeil   |
| Professor Douglas McDougall<br>(Vice-Chair)   | Professor Michael R. Marrus   |
| Professor Cheryl Regehr, Vice-Provost,<br>Academic Programs   | Dr. Graeme Norval   |
| Professor Brian Corman, Vice-Provost,<br>Graduate Education and Dean, School of<br>Graduate Studies | Ms Yuchao Niu   |
| Professor Robert L. Baker   | Ms Judith C. Poë  |
| Professor Karen D. Davis  | Ms Helen Slade  |
| Professor Robert Gibbs  | Mr. Richard Levin, Executive<br>Director, Enrolment Services and<br>Acting University Registrar |
| Professor Rick Halpern  | Mr. Neil Dobbs, Secretary   |

Regrets:

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Professor Katherine Berg  | Professor Michelle Murphy   |
| Professor Joseph Desloges | Professor Elizabeth Peter   |
| Mr. Cary Ferguson         | Mr. Kevin Siu               |
| Mr. Adnan Hussain         | Professor Suzanne Stevenson |
| Professor Paul Kingston   | Professor Joseph Wong       |
| Mr. Nykolaj Kuryluk       | Mr. Tony Han Yin            |
| Ms Cecilia Livingston     |                             |

In Attendance:

Professor Jill Matus, Vice-Provost, Students  
Professor Edward Banning, Undergraduate Coordinator, Department of Anthropology  
Professor Anne-Marie Brousseau, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Programs,  
Faculty of Arts and Science  
Dr. Pamela Gravestock, Associate Director, Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation

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In Attendance (Cont'd)

Dr. Jane E. Harrison, Director, Academic Programs and Policy, Office of the Vice-President and Provost  
Professor June Larkin, Vice-Principal, New College  
Professor George Sumner, Principal, Wycliffe College  
Dr. Cherie Werhun, Course Evaluation Support Officer, Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation

**1. Report of the Previous Meeting**

Report Number 153 was amended on page 6, Item 4, “University of Toronto Scarborough: Specialist Program in Mathematics and its Applications – Closure.” The sentence that was amended originally read “Professor Halpern stressed that the full range of the reorganization was described in the document from UTSC; only the details were lacking.” That sentence was amended to read “Professor Halpern said that the full range of the reorganization was described in the original document from UTSC; however, the summary sheet lacked the details.”

Report 153 (January 10, 2012), as amended, was approved.

**2. Business Arising from the Report of the Previous Meeting**

**Item 3 – Grading Practices Policies**

A member recalled that the Committee had been advised of a process of extensive consultation that had taken place before the Committee had been asked to consider the new University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy, Transcript Policy, and Policy on Academic Continuity. The need for amendment of the policies had been raised as a matter of some urgency by the University Ombudsperson in two of her annual reports, and the resulting consultations had extended over more than two years. The proposed new policies had been considered publicly and at some length by the appropriate, representative governance bodies in the University – the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs and the Academic Board – and approved. It now appeared, however, that the Faculty Association had expressed concern about the policies and about the adequacy of the consultations leading to their approval.

Professor Regehr recalled that the concern of the Ombudsperson had arisen from certain discrepancies in the University’s general Grading Practices Policy and the policy applying specifically to graduate students. The existing Policy dealt with three distinct matters: grading practices, transcript notations and academic disruption. In the interests of clarity and application of the policy, the review recommended that three policies be developed. The University, like the community in general, had just come through the SaRS and the H1N1 crises, and the need for a policy dealing specifically with academic

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**2. Business Arising from the Report of the Previous Meeting (Cont'd)**

**Item 3 – Grading Practices Policies (Cont'd)**

continuity had become clearly apparent. The concerns of the Faculty Association centered on the Policy on Academic Continuity.

Professor Regehr acknowledged that the process of consultation and communication had indeed been broad and that substantial feedback had been received and integrated into the new policies. The policies had been approved following good discussions in the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs and in the Academic Board and were to take effect on July 1, 2012.

The Faculty Association's recent concerns had arisen, however, at the time of a possible strike by teaching assistants. As a result, the administration had undertaken additional consultation with the Faculty Association which was ongoing. If, as a result of these consultations, the administration judged that there was need to amend the new Policy on Academic Continuity, recommendations would be brought forward.

Professor Regehr indicated that she would report back to keep the Committee informed.

THE FOLLOWING ITEM CONTAINS A RECOMMENDATION TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD.

**3. Theology: Master of Religion Degree Program at Wycliffe College – Closure**

By way of background, Professor Regehr recalled that the University offered degrees in theology conjointly with the Toronto School of Theology and with the seven theological colleges (three that formed parts of the federated universities - St. Michael's, Trinity and Victoria - and four others - Knox, Regis, St. Augustine's and Wycliffe). The first Provostial review of those programs had just been completed, and it was anticipated that the review report would come before the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs in September. One of the conjoint degrees was the Master of Religion (M.Rel.) degree, which was offered uniquely at Wycliffe College. Enrolment in that program had become very low, and another program – the Master of Theological Studies program – would meet the needs of students who wished to pursue studies in the field. The closure of the Master of Religion program would also mean the cessation of offering the Master of Religion degree.

Professor Sumner said that Wycliffe was the only institution in the world to offer the M.Rel. program, with the result that graduates encountered some difficulty with respect

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**3. Theology: Master of Religion Degree Program at Wycliffe College – Closure**

to recognition of the degree – a three-year second-entry undergraduate program. Professor Sumner had met individually with each of the students currently enrolled in the program. He had provided reassurance that each would be permitted to complete the degree or, if they wished, to transfer to the two-year Master of Theological Studies program.

On motion duly made, seconded and carried,

**YOUR COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS**

THAT the proposed closure of the Master of Religion Program, offered conjointly by Wycliffe College (Toronto School of Theology) and the University of Toronto, and with it the Master of Religion degree (M.Rel.), as described in the proposal from the Toronto School of Theology dated February 5, 2012, be approved with an effective date of September 2012 for the closure of admissions and an anticipated program closure date of January 2014.

ALL OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE REPORTED TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD FOR INFORMATION.

**4. Student Financial Support: Annual Report of the Vice-Provost, Students, 2010-11**

The Chair said that the Committee's responsibility in reviewing the Annual Report on Student Financial Support was to evaluate the efficacy of the student financial support programs to achieve the goal of the Policy on Student Financial Support – that no student offered admission to a program should be unable to enter or complete that program due to a lack of financial means. She noted that the Business Board and the Governing Council, in connection with their review of the tuition-fee schedule for 2012-13, receives a report on student financial support and is advised of this Committee's consideration of the Annual Report on Student Financial Support and any issues that the Committee may have noted.

Professor Matus said that the Report was consistent with that provided in previous years but added two elements. First, there was information from a survey of students who had graduated to determine their debt levels. Second, the report contained a number of case studies to illustrate the working and the effect of the various student-aid programs. Mr. Levin stated that the essential point of the report was its demonstration that the student financial support programs did achieve the commitment of the Governing Council policy to ensure that students were financially enabled to enter and complete their programs. The University's programs went beyond the requirement of the Province's accessibility guarantee to meet student needs with respect to tuition fees and books. The

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University programs also ensured that there was assistance where it was required to meet student needs for living expenses as assessed by the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP).

A wide-ranging discussion took place. Among the matters that arose were the following.

**(a) Student debt.** A member noted that student advocates made the claim that the University's report did not recognize the total amount of debt incurred by students, including debt beyond OSAP loans. Mr. Levin replied that previous reports had dealt only with OSAP debt. The concern about additional debt was the reason that the University had conducted its survey of graduates on their indebtedness. Of the survey respondents, 56% reported that they had no debt apart from any arising from government student loan programs. A relatively small percentage reported that they had incurred bank loans or had used lines of credit. The remaining students indicated that they had either incurred debt in the form of loans from members of their family or that they had credit-card debt. Private debt was usually held in a relatively small amount. Professor Matus noted that the information about private debt, unlike that about OSAP debt, was based on self-reporting and was therefore not wholly reliable. However, even assuming its reliability, it appeared that the general concern about students graduating with overwhelming amounts of private debt was not well-founded. Another member asked for some explanation of the disconnect between (a) the perception of large amounts of private debt, and (b) the survey outcome. Mr. Levin said that there were some students who had in fact incurred very substantial private debt. They frequently included students who had completed both undergraduate programs and professional programs; the survey had included only students who had completed undergraduate degrees. The relatively small number of cases of severe debt no doubt contributed to the perception of a more widespread problem.

A member suggested that it would be useful for the University to include in subsequent surveys students in second-entry professional programs who might be forced to incur higher levels of debt, as well as international students who might be required to obtain loans from their families. Mr. Levin agreed that students in second-entry professional programs might incur significant private debt, which was available to them in the light of their higher income potential. The current report included the first survey of graduates; because it was new it had been limited to students completing undergraduate programs. He and his colleagues would consider the feasibility of extending the survey to other students in future years.

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**(b) Repayment of government student-loan debt.** A member observed that many students had difficulty in understanding the requirements for repayment of student loans provided under the OSAP program. They were frequently under the impression that they would be required to repay the full amount of their loans plus interest quickly upon their graduation or their ceasing for any other reason to be a full-time student. Mr. Levin replied that the requirements concerning repayment were complex. The OSAP program had a ceiling on the debt that would be incurred by a student amounting to \$7,300 per year of study. If a student's need assessment exceeded that amount, the student would receive relief in the form of an Ontario Student Opportunity grant. There was also a maximum amount that students would be required to repay each year. Mr. Levin offered to provide further information on loan repayment requirements in the next year's Report, and the Chair asked that the information be included.

**(c) Accessibility.** A member asked whether the data in the report might reflect a situation in which only students from higher or middle-income families actually attended the University, with students from lower income families – fearing the perceived debt burden – simply chose not to attend. Mr. Levin replied that while there was literature indicating an enhanced debt aversion among students from lower income families, there were significant programs of need-based support for such students. Professor Matus cited the data from the University's performance-indicator studies which demonstrated that over 50% of the University's students who received OSAP support had a combined family income of less than \$50,000 per year. The University was therefore providing real access to student from low-income families.

**(d) Part-time work.** Referring to figure 9 in the Report, a member observed that 23% of University of Toronto first-year undergraduate students had reported to the National Survey of Student Engagement working eleven hours or more per week at part-time jobs. 39% of senior-year students had reported doing so. The apparent need of students to spend so much time at part-time work was a source of serious concern. It should also reduce the comfort provided by the figures on the debt loads of graduates; many students were clearly being required to work substantial hours at part-time jobs to avoid accumulating large amounts of debt. The member noted that about half of students in the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering worked full time, through the Professional Experience Year program, between the third and fourth years of their programs. For those students, their substantial earnings in that year enabled them to eliminate or reduce their debt loads. As a result, there was again less cause for comfort in the figures on student debt loads.

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**5. Student Awards: Annual Report on Awards Established, Amended and Withdrawn, 2010-11**

The Committee received for information the annual Report on Student Awards Established, Amended and Withdrawn. Mr. Levin noted that most of the withdrawn awards had simply lapsed according to the terms of the donations that had funded them.

**6. Faculty of Arts and Science: Program Closures**

Professor Regehr reported that the proposed closure of five academic programs had arisen from the process of curriculum review and renewal in the Faculty of Arts and Science. In most cases, the closures were proposed for programs with low enrolments where students would be able to meet their needs in other related programs. In one case, the recommended closure arose from the retirement of the faculty members who were essential to offering the program.

Professor Brousseau, Professor Banning and Professor Larkin responded to a number of detailed questions. Among the more general matters that arose were the following.

**(a) Threshold for consideration of program closure.** A member observed that a number of programs had very low enrolments, and he asked whether there was an effective minimum enrolment, perhaps enduring over a given number of years, which would cause the Faculty or Department to give formal consideration to program closure. Professor Brousseau replied that there was no numerical threshold that would automatically trigger a review and that consideration of program closures was not based solely on enrolment. Enrolments could vary over time, and special circumstances could apply – for example the value of a low-enrolment Major or Minor program as a complement to some other program(s). All programs were being reviewed in the Faculty of Arts and Science’s curriculum renewal process (a process that would be completed by the end of the summer of 2012) , and all programs in the University were also subject to regular review under the University’s Quality Assurance Process. Decisions concerning the continuation or closure of programs would be considered in those processes. In addition, enrolments in each Arts and Science program were reviewed each Fall and, where enrolments were low on an on-going basis, options would be discussed with the relevant Department, including such steps as improved promotion of the program.

Professor Regehr agreed that enrolment was an important indicator of students’ need, and if students’ needs moved in different academic directions, the University should be prepared to respond. Members commented that closures of programs with low enrolment were required to enable the University to innovate and to offer other programs in new fields. It was also noted, though, that there were some programs with low enrolments that the University would, for scholarly reasons, wish to maintain. Difficult decisions about

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**6. Faculty of Arts and Science: Program Closures (Cont'd)**

priorities would have to be made to ensure that the programs the University did maintain were viable and well resourced. It was noted, too, that the Faculty of Arts and Science had succeeded in making those hard decisions in its process of curricular renewal.

**(b) Time limits to complete programs.** A member observed that while there were dates specified for terminating admission to programs and anticipated dates for program closures when all current students would have completed their programs, there were no time limits for students to complete the programs to be closed. In his division, there were specified time limits for students to complete programs. Professor Regehr and Professor Brousseau replied that the matter of time limits was specific to particular divisions. In some programs, including those in professional Faculties, completion within a stated time period was appropriate. In Arts and Science, students could take longer. Students who did so included part-time students, students with special needs, and students who interrupted completion of their programs for a period of time. Professor Banning added that in the case of the programs being closed in the Department of Anthropology, the required courses would continue to be available or the Department would approve appropriate substitutes.

On motion duly made, seconded and carried,

**YOUR COMMITTEE APPROVED**

The proposed closure of the following Faculty of Arts and Science undergraduate degree programs, as described in the proposal from the Faculty, with an effective date of April 1, 2012 for the closure of admissions and an anticipated program closure date of June 2014:

1. Anthropology (Biological) Specialist
2. Archaeological Science Major and Specialist
3. Paradigms and Archetypes Minor
4. Philosophy of Science Specialist
5. Molecular Biophysics Specialist

**7. Implementation of the New Course Evaluation Framework: Presentation from the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation**

Professor Regehr recalled that the Committee had, during the 2010-11 year, engaged in discussions of the University's course-evaluation framework on three separate occasions. At its meeting of April 5, 2011, the Committee had considered and endorsed the revised *Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching in Courses*. Following that approval, the University, through the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation (C.T.S.I.), had moved forward to implement the new system of on-line course evaluations.

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Two divisions had participated in the pilot stage of implementation: the Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing and the Faculty of Arts and Science. The results of that stage had been received, and there was now an opportunity to report on how the program was working.

Dr. Gravestock and Dr. Werhun presented the report and responded to questions. A copy of their presentation slides is attached hereto as [Appendix “A.”](#) Among the matters that arose in questions and discussion were the following.

**(a) Rating of overall performance as a university instructor.** A member noted the absence of a question that had previously appeared on most course-evaluation questionnaires – one requesting that students rate the overall performance of the instructor. Responses to that question had frequently been used as one factor in the evaluation of teaching performance in various personnel decisions. Dr. Gravestock replied that the Course Evaluation Framework Working Group had concluded, in part on the basis of substantial literature on the subject, that many biases could enter into students' responses to so broad a question. In the new framework, the first five questions (which were institution-wide) dealt with specific aspects of students' experience in each course. The mean of those responses yielded a composite that correlated well internally and provided a reliable and valuable view. The sixth question, requesting students' rating of their overall learning experience, was a broader question that could provide a simple input into personnel decisions, if divisions and departments wished to use a single score. Despite the breadth of the question, the responses to it correlated well with the composite score on the first five questions.

A member expressed strong approval of the new approach. Evaluation of teaching performance was a multivariate problem, and reliance on the responses to a single broad question was an inappropriate basis for personnel decisions. He urged that raw data on responses to each question be supplied to divisions and departments as a basis for a much stronger analysis. Dr. Gravestock said that the raw data, not identifying individual respondents, was provided to instructors and formed a part of the reporting to Deans or Chairs in multi-department faculties. A part of Dr. Werhun's role was to assist individual Faculties or Departments in the interpretation of the data.

**(b) Roll-out of the new system.** In response to a member's question, Professor Regehr and Dr. Gravestock said that it had been necessary to roll out the new framework over time in order to address various technical and other problems that expected to arise in implementing customized software. At this stage, all divisions were welcome to opt in and to date, eight divisions had done so.

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**(c) Inclusion of students auditing courses.** A member observed that, from time to time, instructors allowed students to audit courses, and perhaps even to complete course assignments. In small-group seminars, for example, graduate students would sometimes audit undergraduate courses and would often make valuable contributions to the seminar discussions. When course evaluations were completed in paper format, the instructor could invite such students to complete evaluation forms and benefit from their feedback. With the on-line system, however, such students had no opportunity to participate in the evaluation. Professor Regehr and Dr. Gravestock replied that unless students were formally registered in a course, they would not receive the e-mail invitation and link to the course evaluation system. The C.T.S.I. would, on request, seek to make arrangements for special situations.

**(d) Correlation of responses to specific questions and the general evaluation question.** A member referred to the observation that students' responses to the five, University-wide, specific questions correlated well with students' evaluation of the quality of their overall learning experience. The member commented that the correlation was not surprising because the survey suggested the specific bases for that overall evaluation. She was concerned however, that some other factor(s) might well contribute to a good overall learning experience, and the fact that that other factor was not included in the five specific questions would tend to bias students' overall evaluation.

**(e) Timing of evaluations.** A member observed that in the old, paper-based system, instructors could select the timing of distribution of course evaluations. That was particularly valuable in half courses because the instructors could delay the evaluation until students had the opportunity to gain the fullest overall impression of the course. Would the instructor have the ability to determine when the evaluation process was carried out under the new system? Dr. Gravestock replied that each division determined the evaluation period for its courses. To prevent confusion in communications to students and to prevent administrative problems, that period had to be the same for all courses in the division. The recommended time period for completion of the evaluation was two weeks. According to the literature, and in line with the experience of the company providing the system, that time period encouraged the best possible response rate. The recommended timing – and that adopted by such large divisions as the Faculty of Arts and Science and the University of Toronto Mississauga – was the two-week period ending the day before the examination period. Avoiding the examination period encouraged responses. Making the two-week period as late as possible enabled students to experience as much of the course as possible.

**(f) Comparison of evaluations under the old and new systems.** In response to a question, Dr. Gravestock said that the C.T.S.I. was not able routinely to compare course-

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evaluation results under the old system and those under the new. The Centre did not have access to the data gathered under the old system. Even with access, the questions under the old and new systems differed. However, on request of a division and with the old data supplied, Dr. Werhun would undertake a comparison of the data from the two systems, to the extent possible, and provide a summary report. Professor Regehr added that, to facilitate such comparisons, divisions could make adjustments in the questions other than the University-wide core questions. She also stressed that the University would very much like to perform as much analysis as the data allowed.

**(g) Teaching evaluations and tenure decisions in the transition from old to new systems.** A member observed that, while many policies stated that course evaluations should not be used as the sole method of judging teaching performance in personnel decisions, it was the member's understanding that they had frequently been used as either the sole method or the main method. Given the difficulty of making comparisons between the data from the old, paper-based, course-evaluation system and the new on-line system, what protections were being provided to faculty members approaching tenure decisions to ensure fair judgements of their teaching? Professor Regehr noted that the C.T.S.I. would continue to provide assistance in identifying other ways of evaluating teaching, and it would continue to encourage Faculties and Departments to use such other methods. The University had also provided for pre-tenure faculty members who had begun their careers at the University when the previous paper-based system was being used; they could choose to have their current students use the paper-based questionnaires until decisions on their tenure had been made. It was hoped, though, that the enhanced quality of the reports produced would encourage faculty to use the new system that also ensured that faculty members' teaching would be compared to that of others according to a system that was the same across the University.

Professor Regehr commended the good work of Drs Gravestock and Werhun, in which they had undertaken extensive consultations with faculty, students and others to customize the evaluation questionnaires to meet the needs of each division and to encourage participation. Participation had been at a very high rate, with many enquiries from students who wished to participate in the process. Possible future enhancements could include the ability to complete evaluations on smart-phones and other portable devices, an advance on which the supplier of the system was working.

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**8. Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair reminded members that the next regular meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 3, 2012 at 4:10 p.m. The major item of business would be the second part of the annual report on the reviews of academic programs and units. If members had not already done so, they were asked to notify the Secretary whether they would attend that meeting and participate on a team as a lead reader of perhaps two reviews.

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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Secretary

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Chair

March 12, 2012