

New Faculty Initiative

Progress Reports to Senate, Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee, 2018-2019

September 2018

In the autumn, Senate committees develop priorities for the year. To do so helps ensure that the most pressing issues receive appropriate attention. This exercise is now in progress and APPRC will report to Senate Executive soon on its priorities for 2018-2019 following the receipt of advice from the Technical Sub-Committee. Items that are likely to be candidates for priority status include the following:

- further work on the development of “incomparable metrics,” responses from the Deans and Principal to questions posed by APPRC last year, and follow-up to the February Forum of Ideas jointly sponsored with ASCP, along with ways to engage Senators and the community
- planning for the Markham Centre Campus
- a UAP recommendation to review the University’s academic unit structures so as to achieve a structural array that is appropriate to York’s overall mission and support the achievement of objectives; **including supporting the initiative to establish the new Faculty (FES-Geography-Others) approved in principle by Senate in Spring 2017**
- preliminary forecast on the process and framing of the 2020-2025 UAP

October 2018

In June 2017 Senate approved in principle the establishment of a new / re-visioned Faculty composed of Geography, FES and other possible units. APPRC updated Senate in June 2018 on the status of the initiative, noting that after a great deal of effort to further articulate the vision, refine the curriculum and collaborate on the make-up of the new Faculty, the process had been suspended pending further reflection and the appointment of a Dean in FES.

The proponents who led the exercise last year, Professors Gail Fraser (FES) and Tricia Wood (Geography, LA&PS), discussed with APPRC their reflections on the experience, and encouraged that the interest and momentum generated among colleagues be nurtured toward a successful outcome. Clarifying and supporting the process for the development of a new Faculty became an APPRC priority this year.

At its meeting on October 18, the committee discussed and endorsed a process to bring to completion this academic year the development of the new / re-visioned Faculty focused broadly on environmental themes. A Facilitating Group, co-chaired by the Senate APPR and ASCP Committee Chairs (Les Jacobs Professor Kim Michasiw respectively) will facilitate and bring oversight to the process. Supplementing the membership of the Group will be Deans Alice Horvoka (FES) and JJ McMurtry (LA&PS), the Chair of the Geography Department Professor Joseph Mensah, the Vice-Provost Academic Alice Pitt and Provost Philipps. Fuller information about the Facilitating Group and the process is set out in Appendix A to the APPRC report.

APPRC and ASCP will be consulted and kept apprised as the initiative progresses, as will Senate in turn.

November 2018

In June 2017 Senate approved in principle the establishment of a new Faculty comprising the Faculty of Environmental Studies, the LA&PS Department of Geography, and potentially other departmental units or programs. The goal is to create a bold new structure woven around environmental themes that aptly positions the Faculty - and the University - in the competitive post-secondary landscape.

After the process was paused this past spring, a Facilitating Group is reviving the initiative, lending support and providing oversight to resume the momentum initially generated by FES and the Department of Geography. Under the auspices of the Academic Policy, Planning & Research and the Academic Standards, Curriculum & Pedagogy committees, the membership of the Group includes the Provost, the Vice-Provost Academic, the Deans of the Faculties of Environmental Studies and Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, and the Chair of the Department of Geography. The Chairs of APPRC and ASCP are its co-chairs.

The Facilitating Group is commencing discussions with relevant programs and key individuals to collectively cultivate a sharpening of the academic vision and values statement for the new / re-visioned faculty. This vision is central to thinking about curriculum development, as well as aligning related programs and units across the university. An articulation of the new Faculty vision is anticipated by January 2019. The co-chairs are also planning visits with the FES and LA&PS Faculty Councils early in the new year to brief them on its facilitation of the process.

December 2018

The Facilitating Group is continuing consultation with programs and key individuals to help identify opportunities to align and coordinate institutional support for the collegially- led initiative to establish a new / re-visioned Faculty.

January 2019

Since being convened in mid-autumn of this academic year, the Facilitating Group largely spent its time between November – December getting up to speed on the Faculty Blue processes, activities and progress made to date. Members have debriefed with the past co-coordinators from Geography and FES, and met with representatives from the Urban Studies and Disaster & Emergency Management programs. The aim was for the Group to gain further clarity on how it can align and coordinate institutional support to champion the Geography / FES-led initiative. As Co-Chairs of the Facilitating Group, Professor Kim Michasiw and I took the opportunity afforded by the Faculties of Environmental Studies and Liberal Arts & Professional Studies to speak to their respective Faculty Councils in January to help foster understanding about the role of the Facilitating Group and to address any questions members of the Faculties had about the initiative. The Council member engagement at the FES presentation was particularly lively and welcoming of support from the Facilitating Group.

Conversations have been frank and constructive, touching on such matters as the vision for Faculty Blue, cross-disciplinary strengths at the University across the spatial-urban-environmental research spectrum, academic programming opportunities and impediments to the re-structuring plan. While reluctance to change the status quo has been expressed by some individuals, so too is there novel energy in related departments for carving out new programming options and structures that would consolidate and project York's strength in the fields of environmental /urban / geography / disaster planning. Themes of cross-Faculty frameworks, the creation of a program / research hub at the University, and integration with one of the Organized Research Units within this disciplinary area are preliminary ideas that have surfaced.

In sum, the Facilitating Group is continuing to work closely with all relevant parties to cement the Faculty vision, identify options, address hurdles and tackle the resource questions.

Two succeeding Co-Coordinators of the initiative were recently elected by each of the Faculty of Environmental Studies and the Department of Geography in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies; they are Tarmo Remmel from Geography, and Liette Gilbert from the Faculty of Environmental Studies. They met briefly with the Co-Chairs of the Facilitating Group on 17 January 2019. Next steps are being confirmed.

February 2019

Regular meetings of the Faculty Blue Facilitating Group and planning discussions with the Faculty Co-Coordinators have been occurring since late January. A Plan of Action has been prepared for this term, January-June 2019, with further stages of development of the new Faculty to be finalized in the coming weeks.

The immediate focus of the exercise is the definition of the aspirational vision for the new Faculty, the identification of the broad disciplinary themes and planned degrees and programs to be housed in the Faculty. These tasks will be the order of business at a retreat for members of the Faculty of Environmental Studies and the Department of Geography on 27 February 2019. The draft vision and program framework produced in collaboration by the two units will be reviewed by the Facilitating Group for input, and is anticipated to proceed through the governance paths in FES, Geography and LA&PS in March / April this year.

The culminating action targeted for completion this academic year is the recommendation to Senate and the Board to establish the Faculty, its components and program foci. With the achievement of that step, the subsequent stages of development (i.e., the Faculty governance structure, approval of new/revised programs, program transfers, budget plans etc.) can proceed apace.

March 2019

The Committee last advised Senate that members of the Faculty of Environmental Studies and the Department of Geography were holding a retreat in late February, the focus of which was to develop the vision for the new Faculty, the broad disciplinary themes, planned degrees and programs to be housed in the Faculty, and the selection of a name for the new unit. Aided by a comprehensive collection of background information and data, the retreat was held and reportedly yielded concrete outcomes.

The Faculty Co-Coordinator, Professors Tarmo Remmel and Liette Gilbert, presented to the Facilitating Group in mid-March the plans that emerged from the retreat. The Facilitating Group (consisting of the Provost, the Vice-Provost Academic, the Deans of FES and LA&PS, the Chair of Geography, the Chair of ASCP and myself) provided feedback on the framework presented. It offered guidance and recommendations aimed at supporting the goals of the initiative to create a new Faculty with innovative and novel programming that attracts students, and consolidates and projects York's strengths in the disciplines of environmental / urban / geography.

Developing the proposal for the establishment of the Faculty is the next major step in the process. It remains the plan to have a proposal ready for Senate review and approval in June.

April 2019

A draft proposal for the establishment of the new Faculty comprising Geography and Environmental Studies has been prepared. It is in circulation for feedback and finalization prior to its formal review by Faculty Councils in Liberal Arts & Professional Studies and Environmental Studies. The Facilitating Group met on April 16 and provided guidance on key

matters to address. Planning is also underway for the many related stages and processes associated with the launch and transition to a new Faculty.

May 2019

APPRC has reported in recent months that the timelines for the establishment of the new “Environment-Geography” Faculty envisioned a proposal coming to Senate for approval this spring. At recent meetings, the Facilitating Group focused on resetting the timeline for the remaining stages in the development process. Of particular importance at this point is giving shape to the innovative curriculum and pedagogy that will express the Faculty’s vision. Our governing bodies rightly expect that new, compelling curriculum initiatives will be at an advanced stage as the Faculty per se goes through the final, formal phases of approval anticipated for the autumn of this year.

Given this priority, the Facilitating Group considered ways to ensure that curriculum development benefits from an arrangement that takes full advantage of existing collegial structures. It accepted an offer from the Chair of Senate ASCP to establish a temporary Sub-Committee wholly dedicated to assisting in deliberations and consultations. The ASCP Sub-Committee will include the Chair of ASCP, the Vice-Provost Academic (a current ASCP member), along with individuals from Environmental Studies and Geography who are most closely involved with curriculum design. The Chair of ASCP will serve as Chair of the sub-committee. It is anticipated that it will be convened for the period of (late) May 2019 – 31 December 2019.

There are precedents for short-term, task-oriented sub-committees of Senate standing committees. There are also considerable advantages to this approach, especially these:

- Senate’s policy committees have maintained close involvement in the process since 2017 and retain a desire to provide timely and effective assistance; ASCP’s mandate and expertise will be valuable aids to processes
- a defined time frame for the sub-committee will help reinforce timelines and maintain focus on curricular innovations
- those who are most closely involved in curriculum development will be able to participate in regular meetings with professional governance support
- linkages to ASCP (and APPRC) will ensure timely and effective coordination and cooperation
- the composition of the sub-committee will be equitable and inclusive
- processes can be streamlined and accelerated without compromising thoroughness and integrity

- because the sub-committee will have explicit accountabilities, it will uphold Senate's expectations about the form and nature of proposals, including the stipulations of the Quality Assurance framework
- crucially, the sub-committee will have express responsibilities for undertaking consultations with allied programs and keeping lines of communication open.

The Vice-President Academic & Provost has recorded her support for establishing the ASCP Sub Committee; a copy of her written statement is attached as Appendix B.

A draft version of a proposal for the establishment of the new Faculty has been in circulation for several weeks. As the ASCP Sub-Committee completes its work in the months ahead, efforts to refine the full proposal in alignment with the curriculum planning will continue apace. As noted above, it is the expectation that a final proposal for the establishment of the Faculty will now be ready for review in the autumn by Faculty Councils, Senate and the Board of Governors.

Distinct from the Faculty proposal, individual curriculum proposals for new and revised programs destined for the new Faculty will emerge from the ASCP Sub-Committee and proceed through the normal governance route to Senate for approval.

All the work to be carried out will be characterized by the good will, openness and active outreach in a highly consultative mode that has been a hallmark of the process to date.