

**Faculty of Arts Unit Review  
Summary Report**

Date of Site Visit: April 23-25, 2024

Names and Affiliations of Reviewers:

Barbara Crow	Dean of Arts and Science, Queen’s University
Bob Andersen	Professor of Business, Economics and Public Policy, Strategy & Sustainability, Ivey Business School, University of Western Ontario
Rob Stone	Associate Dean, Research, Internationalization and Graduate Studies, Alberta University of the Arts
Amy Burns	Associate Dean, Undergraduate Programs in Education, Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

**Executive Summary/Overview:**

As one of its largest Faculties, the Faculty of Arts contributes significantly to the diversity of knowledge and intellectual curiosity at the University of Calgary. While there are many bright spots in the Faculty, it is clear that substantial budget cuts have created significant challenges. The Faculty’s most notable response to the 25 percent budget cut was to reduce the number of administrative staff and reorganize their workload in a POD structure where Departments share administrative staff. This has created new problems. Coupled with other changes in work patterns stemming from the pandemic, there is much confusion among faculty members, students and staff. Although deeply committed to the Faculty and the University, there is also a general sense of defeat, especially among faculty members.

Based on a review of the self-study and meetings with faculty, students and staff during the site visit, the Unit Review team made the following recommendations with the goal of addressing the budgetary challenges, increasing morale, and enhancing the articulation of the Faculty of Arts place in, and future contributions to, the University.

## Review Findings, Recommendations and Faculty Responses:

### 1. Communication and Transparency

- A common theme among faculty is a lack of understanding about how they are to access support and the distribution of tasks among the new support staff structure (PODS). Although staff members noted that they have created and made available information for faculty, staff and students in multiple forms to address this issue, more clearly needs to be done. It was also clear that it would be helpful for communication to come directly from the Dean's office rather than from staff themselves. We recommend that the Dean's office provide easy access on its website to information related to a wide array of routine administrative tasks that faculty members are expected to carry out on their own.

#### Faculty Response:

The reviewers underscored communication as a challenging issue across a faculty as large as ours – we take seriously the need to improve communications. We are: establishing a series of meetings across all departments/units to discuss the findings of the unit review; planning regular appearances at department meetings by the Dean, Vice Dean, and Associate Deans to provide information directly to faculty and staff; scheduling "ask us anything" meetings for undergrad and graduate students with the dean, vice dean, and Associate Deans. We are auditing websites and streamlining D2L as well as sharepoint sites for better accessibility for students and supporting first-in-family (FiF) students by including a first-ever section of UNIV 205 (Effective Learning Strategies) with FiF students this term.

We are directing academic staff to already established single points of entry for all signatures ([artsdean@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsdean@ucalgary.ca)) and to similar email addresses as points of entry for undergrad ([ascarts@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ascarts@ucalgary.ca)) and graduate ([artsgradsc@ucalgary.ca](mailto:artsgradsc@ucalgary.ca)) students. We are offering training for faculty administrators (UPDs and UPAs, GPDs and GPAs, Heads/Directors and Managers). We are revamping alumni relations by developing an alumni strategy, including improving the visibility of our alumni, engaging them in areas such as career support and speaking opportunities, and building relationships with the Faculty of Arts. We are expanding and facilitating greater exposure of the Arts to both our internal and external audiences by expanding the communications team, including a videographer, brand copy writer, events specialist and digital advisor.

### 2. POD Staffing

- It was commonly expressed among all groups—faculty, staff and students—that the PODs tend to be understaffed. The timing of their creation (during pandemic) has resulted in an ongoing implementation phase that now shows more people will be required to effectively transition to this model permanently. This has created significant faculty and student discontent and serious stress on the Pod staff who are concerned about wellbeing and their inability to effectively support the work of the faculty.

- Several staff members volunteered that they must do additional work from home on weekends to finish all they required tasks. They also stated that they believed they are unable to provide service to faculty members at the level they would like to. We recommend that the Dean's office do a careful analysis of the PODs to determine the extent to which new hires are needed. At the very least, the hiring of a few new staff members who could roam among the PODS to fill gaps in services due would be much appreciated both by staff and faculty. A review of staff training to improve capacity to move effectively to different areas to provide cover is recommended.

### **Faculty Response:**

The administrative restructuring from a traditional departmental administrative structure to a pod system has proven to be challenging. The early days were plagued by a number of managers on medical leaves which meant that any one manager could be covering two pods – effectively covering up to six units – for long periods. Fortunately, we are at a better place to assess workload as we are approaching a full-staff complement and can see where the workload issues are most apparent. To address workload issues: we have hired two new staff members (Administrative Assistants) into the GEOG/ANAR/PSYC pod; we have hired a temporary archivist and an administrative assistant who are floating among the pods. We are initiating a review of technicians to ensure that their unique place in our Faculty is properly understood and appreciated.

### **3. Curriculum Concerns**

- *Curriculum renewal.* The Faculty has chosen to largely focus on staff reductions as a way to accommodate the 25 percent budget cut. While this may be a reasonable strategy, we feel that focusing on inefficiencies in teaching and the curriculum could yield even better results. Most importantly, the curriculum should be reviewed and redesigned to match teaching capacity and research expertise of the fulltime faculty. We see this not only as an attempt to reduce costs, but also as an opportunity for the Faculty to redefine its academic priorities. The first step in this strategy is ensure that their teaching areas are the same as their research areas. In other words, ensure that course offerings reflect what the Faculty does well in the realm of research.
- *Courses taught by sessionals.* Coinciding with the curriculum renewal discussed above, the Faculty should endeavor to significantly reduced its reliance on sessional instructors. For example, Law and Society is a high demand area with very few tenure-track faculty. This program could be handled in one of two ways: 1) reorganize the curriculum so that it may be taught by full time faculty in a manner supportive of student experience, or 2) if this is not possible, close the program. Additionally, low enrollment programs should be eliminated, however high demand courses, even if not part of a program with a major, should be kept as an important part of the intellectual community.

- *Certificate programs.* It is recommended that embedded certificates be eliminated. Those in discussions noted they are administratively draining; they are not revenue generating and low enrollments and a lack of clarity regarding transferability to the labour market make them unsustainable.
- *Courses taught by PhD students.* We strongly recommend that the Faculty consider increasing its opportunities for senior level doctoral students in all departments to teach as a part of their funding package. This initiative would create financial opportunities for both the Faculty and the PhD students. It would also contribute to the professional learning of the PhD students and provide them with valuable experience for the labour market.

### **Faculty Response:**

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring the high quality of all of our academic programs. As confirmed by the unit review, a number of programs across the faculty are challenging to continue to offer due to low demand. At the same time, we recognize that some course offerings generate significant demand and must be retained. The Faculty of Arts currently offers 42 distinct majors and 46 minors. We have created a new Associate Dean position – Associate Dean Academic – with a specific focus on undergraduate curriculum renewal.

A growing reliance on and use of sessionals has been an issue that we began to tackle in earnest over the past two years. We allocate a specified number of HCEs to each unit, based on programmatic needs, full-time faculty absences (RSL, secondments), and overall teaching capacity. We made significant gains over the past year by reconsidering the HCE distribution at the same time retaining program coherence while reducing our use of sessionals (a \$600k savings). Some programs are consistently heavy users of sessionals suggesting that program changes must reverse-engineer this trend.

We understand the reviewers' suggestions that graduate students might be offered sessional positions as part of their funding package. While this may provide students with important experience for future academic careers, not all programs are equally geared to academic career paths. We plan to investigate this suggestion as a method to provide meaningful teaching experiences for graduate students while also carefully considering their career paths and the appropriate use of sessional instructors.

We plan to address the curriculum challenges in a phased response. Certain low enrolment programs will be given the opportunity to renew their offerings. Our renewal plan will roll out over the next three years, with scheduling to be determined in association with curriculum (and unit) reviews.

The reviewers also focused on embedded certificates and we plan to fully investigate their resource implications. The certificates are variably subscribed to, from a low of three students (Geographic Information Science) to a high of 575 (Mental Wellbeing and Resilience). We understand that the reviewers are concerned with ensuring that we do not “upsell” certificates whose benefit to students is yet to be substantiated, nor that we place undue stress on already limited resources. We feel a thorough review is warranted to determine the impact of embedded certificates on timetabling and workload before we can plan our next steps.

#### 4. Teaching Concerns

- *Workload of Teaching-stream Faculty.* Professors in the teaching stream expressed significant concerns around workload. They also expressed concern over the often-precarious hiring positions under which they enter the faculty (limited term contracts). There were also concerns regarding the lack of Teaching Assistant support given the often-large class sizes they are tasked with leading. In addition, they are expected to research in Scholarship of Teaching and Learning topics when this may not be their disciplinary expertise, impacting their ability to be considered for research stream positions at other institutions. The current 8-course load for teaching stream faculty appears too taxing. We recommend a 6-course load for those in these positions and made consistent across the Faculties. We also suggest more appropriate Teaching Assistant support for large enrollment courses.
- *Course release.* Many faculty members expressed concern about inequities in course reductions. There needs to be a transparent process put into place that makes clear how faculty will receive course releases for research, administrative positions, and service. A maximum limit should be imposed on course releases to ensure full time faculty are available and engaging in the teaching of courses within their department.

#### Faculty Response:

We appreciate that reviewers have identified the significant workload of teaching faculty – though teaching stream faculty in Arts teach a maximum of 7 courses, not 8. The number of courses aside, we have already identified issues with respect to assigned workload. Specifically, we have found that in some units, teaching stream faculty are assigned lower-level large classes to the exclusion of upper-level courses that appear to be reserved for research-stream and often senior faculty. We plan to address these inequities as we move forward – starting with the workload letters that we have received in June, and timetabling for 2025-26.

There are also inequities when it comes to GAT distribution across the faculty and GAT assignments across departments. We are working: 1) to create a transparent system to distribute GAT units to departments (considering both graduate and undergraduate student pressures). Our AD Graduate has been working on this for the past year with the Arts Graduate Student Centre. 2) We are examining the ways in which teaching GATs are deployed by units. We recognize there are disciplinary differences, but the experience of teaching assistants varies widely and potentially impacts graduate student progression and professional development. The goal is to ensure a more equitable experience for both graduate and undergraduate students. 3) We plan to develop a system where students can apply for teaching assistantships so that they are better able to develop career-related experience both within and outside of their home departments [see below].

We have recently drafted a course release policy that provides consistency across the faculty for various administrative and service roles, as well as clarifies how teaching release works with research funding.

We recognize that there are opportunities for transdisciplinary teaching and sharing common courses. We are encouraging units to search for and build these opportunities where possible. Reviewers suggested that we should design new programs that build on transdisciplinarity and engage students who appear to have lost interest in traditional programs. The process of curriculum renewal (noted above) will facilitate that effort, as will our faculty renewal plan which largely focuses on hiring within our five priorities [these priorities were identified as part of our strategic planning process]. We expect that this hiring strategy can be leveraged to create opportunities for developing courses and programs building on priority areas (Justice, Equity and Transformation; Health and Wellness; Connection, Community and Culture, and; Digital Futures; Climate, Energy and Sustainability).

Reviewers also mentioned the idea of a dedicated research centre in transdisciplinary work. The Calgary Institute for the Humanities (CIH) has done a significant amount of work in this area and we look forward to more fully investigating how we might leverage the work done in CIH on transdisciplinarity to serve the Faculty of Arts more widely. At the same time, the Faculty of Arts does not want to re-create efforts already in place at the institutional level that support transdisciplinarity.

## 5. Graduate Student Experience

- *Inadequate funding.* We recommend that the Faculty of Arts seek external funding to better support doctoral students in the first four years so that they may fully engage in their studies, ensuring higher on-time completion rates and a more robust student experience. In addition to implementing the PhD teaching recommendation suggested above, we further recommend that the funding provided by the Faculty of Graduate Studies be moved into the Faculty of Arts so that local decision making can be employed in the best interests of the students.
- *Graduate curriculum review.* A graduate program curriculum review should be undertaken in all departments. This will assist with the collaboration noted above and may allow for the consideration of a transdisciplinary hub where methods and professional learning can be housed and where the future of new graduate programs might be developed.
- *Common courses.* It is recommended that all graduate level courses be reviewed. We also suggest considering opportunities for collaboration across departments. Such opportunities would help increase the possibility of transdisciplinary research and reduce costs. For example, the Faculty should consider having some research methods courses taught in one department but accessed by students across the Faculty. In addition, skills should be integrated into courses that allow students to better understand not only a potential future within the academy, but in other areas also.

### Faculty Response:

Graduate students are largely supported by the Faculty of Arts, with scholarship success varying across the faculty and by discipline. Reviewers noted that Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) funds should be

moved to the Faculty of Arts for distribution. FGS appears to be in agreement with this suggestion and funds will come directly to the Faculty of Arts effective 2025-26.

Our Associate Deans (Research) are attending department meetings to explain the significance of tri-council funding for their graduate programs. Our goal is to improve tri-council grant success among faculty, as both a direct and indirect means of supporting grad students. Departments and the Arts Graduate Student Centre (AGSC) have been tasked with offering workshops to students on tri-council application processes.

In addition, to better align with other faculty practices (e.g., Werklund, Kinesiology) the Faculty is taking steps to revise the current distribution of GATs to an online application system for 2025-26. Programs will be able to develop better training of Teaching Assistants and to increase funding opportunities for students across programs. Moreover, this will help to offset the relative number of GAT applications to be processed over a given time period.

In consultation with FGS, we have launched our schedule of curriculum reviews at the graduate level (see table below).

<b>Graduate Program Curriculum Review Schedule:</b>		
<b>Year One [2024-25]</b>	<b>Year Two [2025-26]</b>	<b>Year Three [2026-27]</b>
SLLLC (LING, LLAC), ENGL, ART, POLI, SCPA (DRAM, MUSI)	CMSS, GEOG (GEOG and MGIS), CLARE (GRST, RELS), PHIL	ANTH/ARKY, ECON, HIST, SOCI, PSYCH (Clinical and Psychology)

We also appreciate and look forward to the opportunity to develop courses at the graduate level that serve more than one program and are supporting efforts to do this. A first step has been to encourage collaborations regarding orientations as a means to get graduate students from multiple disciplines together.

The AGSC is poised to play a larger role in advising graduate students. The physical space of the Centre was recently opened and efforts are underway to position AGSC as a one-stop location for the variety of administrative questions that graduate students have. Reviewers recommended GPDs as the primary point of contact for students – to that end we are providing training for GPDs to complement current FGS offerings. At the same time, the role of GPD is often limited to three-year terms. We also acknowledge and hope to strengthen, with the help of FGS, the significant role that supervisors play as advisors and mentors.

## **6. Research Concerns**

- The Faculty should be commended for its efforts in research. It is both highly productive and impactful. In short, support provided to research is proving successful and may warrant further support to ensure excellence into the future. In particular, there was significant praise for grant writing and research accounting support. We would recommend that the Faculty of Arts continue providing more of this kind of support to that is yielding increased grant proposals and success.

### Faculty Response:

We are pleased that the reviewers feel our efforts to support research have yielded strong results. Our goal is to continue this effort. We hope to generate more awareness of the research team, as the ADs (Research) and Senior Research Advisor have embarked on departmental visits to introduce the research team, introduce various supports and initiatives, encourage applications to tri-agency and other funding agencies, and importantly to continue the conversation about what is needed to keep the faculty engaged and successful.

In the months ahead, the research team's plans are threefold:

- 1) To continue with initiatives that have worked well and resulted in grant success as well as to monitor the success of new initiatives introduced this year;
- 2) To offer a variety of workshops aimed at both established and emerging scholars that increase capacity in team management, work with postdoctoral scholars, and research account management, as well as augmenting skills in grant writing, articulating impact of research (through a three-part hands-on workshop on narrative CV building), and EDIA in research team design. This fall (2024), we will also launch the College of Mentors. Managed by Arts' research team who will match mentees and mentors across the faculty, the College will help emerging scholars build successful careers in academia.
- 3) Stemming from department visits, to develop supports in research identified by our researchers.

The Business Operations Centre also provides a great deal of help on their website "[Admin 101 for Researchers](#)" which we will better promote in the months ahead. This website offers planning tips and help with project administration (including a downloadable manual for researchers). The workshop we are offering this fall on E-fin and research accounting will be an opportunity to highlight this resource and also help researchers build their project management skills.

We continue to provide in-person support for grants and awards, as well as develop tools and resources that will help researchers with project management (e.g., hiring, legal, contracts, guidelines on pay for RAs, etc.), transdisciplinary work (resources and how-to guides available on internal pages), and research communication, showcasing research success in collaboration with our Communications Team.

We will also continue (started in spring 2024) organizing gatherings of researchers, students, postdocs and partners from outside of Arts and academia, aimed at building bridges and facilitating dialogue on social, cultural, and environmental issues that guide the work of our scholars and which have become the pillars of our 2024-2029 strategic plan (Justice, Equity and Transformation; Health and Wellness; Connection, Community and Culture, and; Digital Futures; Climate, Energy and Sustainability).

### 7. Campus Culture

- Members of all stakeholder groups, with particular emphasis on students, noted a lack of community and physical interaction in the Faculty. Students noted an inability to meet with professors and administration, while faculty noted a lack of positive morale. This appears to be exacerbated by the POD structure which has resulted in many support staff being removed from their departmental homes and fewer faculty being on campus than previously. Also as mentioned above, communication also appears to be



somewhat problematic, especially for faculty. While the current administration is widely respected, many faculty argued that it could be more transparent in terms of how decisions are, and will be, made. Many also argued that more frequent engagement with the administration would also go a long way to helping morale.

### **Faculty Response:**

There were significant concerns regarding the administrative structure that had been put in place in 2021. In early January 2023, we began a fact-finding effort and spoke with all staff (pods and business centre), technicians and advisors (grad and undergrad), and managers across the faculty. We also consulted with faculty in administrative positions (heads/directors, undergraduate program directors, graduate program directors). Since then, we have come a long way to ensuring that pods are fully staffed and managers are in place – a great deal of stress was caused by increased workload due to unfilled positions or medical absences. We are in a better place today, and better understand the workload now that positions are filled. Though limited in our ability to hire permanently, we have addressed workload issues through a number of temporary positions, from a facilities coordinator, to a floating AA, to more communications staff. These operational changes have taken some pressure off pod staff and will facilitate a better campus culture by reducing frustration for all parties (staff, students and faculty).

For students, we have rolled back the COVID work-from-home initiatives and the Arts Students Centre is open five days a week. Most of our classes are back to in-person. We recognize that significant challenges remain to bring faculty back to campus and re-invigorate the student experience. Our Associate Dean (Teaching, Learning and Student Engagement) will be undertaking a variety of meetings with student groups across the Arts. We have planned opportunities for students to "ask us anything", and are working on engagement events for various student groups and added a section of UNIV 205 (Effective Learning Strategies) with First-in-Family students this term.

Together with the Communications team, a roster of Dean's appearances have been established for the upcoming semesters [see point #1 above]. Many departments have social committees and events – we are working to ensure that the Dean's Office is aware of these events in order to send either the Dean or a designate.

We have recently hired a Facilities Coordinator who has already significantly improved the atmosphere in a number of departments/units. The Coordinator has met with all managers and department heads/directors and has created a formidable list – and made considerable headway – of ways that can improve the physical spaces that we inhabit. These improvements speak to campus culture and a well-functioning environment.

Finally, we have assembled an Intergenerational Equity Committee. The primary objective of the committee is to understand the experience and the opportunities afforded as a result of when someone was hired and how this may have resulted in differences in and expectations of workload.

### **8. Transdisciplinarity**

- Although transdisciplinarity was noted as a major initiative for the university, exactly what it means, its expected outcomes and how it will be implemented is not well understood. Faculty members would benefit from clarity around the metrics, the budget

implications and the allocation of positions related to transdisciplinarity. **It would be helpful if the central administration clearly articulated what they mean by transdisciplinarity, the explicit goals to be delivered from specific hires and metrics to assess outcomes.**

- While it was not clear such a concern is warranted, some faculty members expressed concerns that traditional measures of success may not be recognized in this area (grant funding) and that additional support may be needed.
- Perhaps most important, transdisciplinarity is being viewed as solely a function of research and is being discounted in pedagogical spaces. As discussed earlier with respect to curriculum renewal, ensuring a strong match between teaching and research priorities might help overcome this problem.

#### **Faculty Response:**

The Calgary Institute for the Humanities, housed in Arts, has been centrally involved in efforts to clarify the institutional definition of transdisciplinarity, and wrote a report entitled, **Transdisciplinary Scholarship: Breaking Boundaries for a Better Future**.” Their definition includes looking at a complex issue or problem as well as incorporating a range of knowledge from those who may be directly or indirectly involved. While their work has advanced the definition of transdisciplinarity, we recognise that much work is yet to be done on how transdisciplinarity is to be incorporated into faculty work and student learning and how it is to be supported. In the past year, we hired a Transdisciplinary Research Coordinator to build capacity in transdisciplinary research and creative activities, as well as three tenure-track, research intensive, assistant professor positions, in the areas of Digital Mental Health, Environmental Communication, and Mountain Studies. We hope to leverage these positions to grow our understandings of transdisciplinary research and learning. While these positions are research-intensive, our goal is to have them facilitate and create learning opportunities not only for students but also for faculty.

The significance of assessing transdisciplinary research was evident during our most recent FTPC processes, as well as figured in developing the Arts handbook. There are some challenges regarding how transdisciplinary research output, for example, might be viewed when assessments are based largely on disciplinary criteria. We expect this will take some time to successfully manage.

#### **9. Pay Equity Audit**

- Many suggested the possibility that pay inequities may exist with regard to numerous factors including pay differences between the teaching and research streams, gender, race, ethnicity, administrative position and so on. We recommend an audit and resultant correction. Particularly noteworthy is the possibility of pay equity issues among support staff. For example, managers spoke of making less than SPA 3 colleagues. We recommend that a pay equity audit be performed to identify if they are glaring problems that need to be addressed.

**Faculty Response:**

We are launching audits for both academic and non-academic staff over the coming months and agree that this is a serious issue with significant career implications.

We have planned presentations for Dean's Advisory Council and Arts Faculty Council this academic year on various elements of faculty salaries. The presentations will focus on faculty compensation, including, but not limited to:

- market supplements
- base and starting salaries
- provost salary adjustments
- salary anomaly adjustments
- stipends and allowances
- honoraria

**10. Indigenous Colleagues**

- Indigenous members of faculty brought a series of points relating to support and curricular change. While they felt supported and respected by the Dean's office, they also expressed concerns on their workload, how they are evaluated, and engagement with the indigenous community. We make several recommendations with respect to these issues in the appendix.

**Faculty Response:**

We are fortunate to have a group of very active and dedicated Indigenous researchers in the Faculty of Arts and hope to provide more support for them and for Indigenous students. We plan to reinvigorate our support in a number of ways, including:

- Consulting more regularly with our already-existing Indigenous Advisory Group for guidance regarding various guidelines (i.e. workload, and to establish what is outstanding performance in Indigenous teaching, research, and service)
- Identifying and engaging a local elder with the Faculty of Arts
- Identifying a singular meeting place for Indigenous scholars. Notably, we identified a number of spaces across Arts buildings that have been identified as Indigenous spaces, but we hope to identify one space that we can better resource (rather than relying on individual researchers to create and maintain such spaces)
- Engaging our Indigenous colleagues in the Transdisciplinarity initiative and highlighting Indigenous pedagogies and epistemologies.

**Closing Remarks:**

The Unit Review Team would like to thank the University of Calgary and the Faculty of Arts for the opportunity to be part of this review. They note that it is clear that the Faculty of Arts is well situated to be a critical part of the University of Calgary and they hope the information provided in the review will be helpful in that regard.