

**THE FACULTY OF ARTS
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC STRATEGIC PLAN
2015-2020**



February 2015

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VISION STATEMENT

The Faculty of Arts within St. Francis Xavier University is committed to excellence in teaching, research, and service, and to supporting the institution's distinguished history of social justice and leadership. We are dedicated as well to the ideal of a shared intellectual life with our students and our colleagues. Effective and creative pedagogy, along with engaged research and scholarship, are crucial to achieving our purpose of providing a comprehensive, high quality education for our students. The Faculty recognizes the relationships and cooperation that exist among the Humanities, Social Sciences, Professional, and Science disciplines. Professional disciplines are grounded in the theories, methods, and approaches, as well as the empirical findings and insights, of the various disciplines in the Faculty of Arts. The Science disciplines are informed and enhanced by an awareness of the cultural, social, political, and economic contexts in which they operate and develop.

Our objectives are to provide students with the means and opportunity to obtain superior foundational knowledge in the fields of study of their choice, to train them to become highly skilled in analysis, critical thinking, and problem solving, and to prepare them intellectually for the rapidly shifting realities of global culture. Graduates from the Faculty of Arts at StFX will be ready to take their place as informed and productive citizens locally, nationally, and internationally.

PROCESS AND GOALS

Process

In order to develop the Academic Strategic Plan for the Faculty of Arts three Working Groups were constituted with representatives from the following departments and programs:

Working Group 1 – Aquatic Resources, Catholic Studies, Sociology, Economics, English

Working Group 2 – Art, Political Science, Religious Studies, Anthropology, Women's and Gender Studies, Modern Languages

Working Group 3 – Development Studies, Celtic Studies, Psychology, Philosophy, Music, History

Each participant in the Working Groups was asked to provide suggestions from her or his Department or Program in order to advance the purpose of the Academic Strategic Plan. The

Working Groups met at least twice in order to compare ideas and develop a list of possible recommendations.

A meeting of the Chairs and Coordinators in the Faculty of Arts was called to discuss the recommendations generated by the Working Groups, and to establish Categories for Action. As well, at that meeting an ad hoc Committee to Develop the Strategic Plan for the Faculty of Arts was struck, to be chaired by the Dean of Arts, consisting of two Chairs from the Humanities, two Chairs from the Social Sciences, one Chair from either the Humanities or the Social Sciences, and two Coordinators from Interdisciplinary Programs, to develop a draft document based on the Categories.

The members appointed to the ad hoc Committee were: Steve Baldner (Philosophy), Jim Bickerton (Development Studies), Doug Brown (Political Science), Patricia Cormack (Sociology), Nancy Forestell (Women's and Gender Studies), Réjeanne LeBlanc (Modern Languages), Cory Rushton (English). The Committee met eight times between September of 2014 and January of 2015.

A draft of the Academic Strategic Plan was presented to a meeting of the Chairs and Coordinators of the Faculty of Arts, and suggestions from that group were incorporated where feasible into the document.

A copy of the document was circulated to all members of the Faculty of Arts, and a motion that the Academic Strategic Plan be endorsed was presented at a Regular Meeting of the Faculty of Arts in February 2015.

Upon endorsement by the Faculty of Arts the Academic Strategic Plan will be presented to the Academic Vice-President and Provost. Implementation of the recommendations will occur through consultation with the Departments and Programs within the Faculty of Arts, and in conjunction with the University Strategic Plan.

Goals

The Faculty of Arts will have achieved its strategic purpose if, in five years, two broad goals are reached: first, that the Faculty of Arts will have continued to play a central role at StFX; second, that the quality of the student academic experience will have increased. A key measure of success for the first goal will be maintaining a minimum student enrolment in the Faculty of Arts of 25% of the total undergraduate population of the University. The second goal will be difficult to quantify, but indications of higher quality at the end of the five-year period should be visible in a number of areas, including but not limited to the following: more student participation and better academic performance, greater integration of academic work and student life, a more geographically diverse student body, a higher profile and enhanced academic reputation for the Faculty of Arts, and more student involvement in research.

CATEGORIES FOR ACTION

1. CURRICULUM

Issue

Curriculum in the Faculty of Arts should be comprehensive, reflecting the knowledge, concerns, and perspectives of the diverse disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences, which provide the essentials of a liberal arts education. It should encourage cross-disciplinary exchange, collaboration, and integration, exposing students to a dialogue of perspectives and methods. Disciplinary boundaries can sometimes frustrate this outcome by presenting students with a set of course offerings that discourages the sharing of knowledge and resources across departments and programs. Curriculum development within the Faculty of Arts should evolve in directions that will contribute to a structured, coherent and systematic learning experience for the student. Maintaining a strong liberal arts curriculum that includes rigorous Honours programs, while developing interdisciplinary studies and programs to meet new and important needs, will remain crucial.

Objectives

- Establish a process through which innovative curriculum proposals and teaching options can be developed and implemented.
- Encourage faculty to generate courses that create specific opportunities for interaction between disciplines.
- Strengthen departments and interdisciplinary programs.
- Demonstrate a willingness in the Faculty of Arts to explore options that distinguish our offerings from other primarily undergraduate institutions.

Recommendations

1. Create a Standing Committee in the Faculty of Arts for Curriculum Development whose purpose is to encourage and guide new developments in program delivery.
2. Create an Indigenous Peoples Studies Program centred in the Faculty of Arts.
3. Develop guidelines for structuring team-taught courses and encourage such classes to be provided both within and between departments and programs.
4. Find ways to sustain capacity in departments to maintain strong Majors and Honours programs.
5. Develop interdisciplinary Minors (e.g. Visual Culture, Languages, English Canadian and French Canadian Literature, Health Care and Cultural Diversity, Environmental Studies, Cultural Studies, History and Sociology of Science).

6. Investigate best practices concerning Writing Across the Curriculum programs to be shared by the different Faculties in order to implement university-wide, foundational writing skills in StFX students.
7. Highlight existing courses, and create new courses, that are attractive not only to Arts students but also to Business, Science, and International students.
8. Require more consultation between Departments/Programs and Continuing and Distance Education concerning the coordination of courses during Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter terms.

2. RESEARCH AND CREATIVE WORK

Issue

Researchers in the Faculty of Arts have specific needs that differ from those in the Physical and Health Sciences. It is important that the University continue to find ways to actively and creatively support new and ongoing research projects within the Faculty of Arts, as well as innovative research collaborations. Also, there must continue to be strong advocacy for greater government support through granting agencies for research at small universities. Another key challenge for the Faculty of Arts is documenting and conveying the scope and diversity of faculty research and expertise. In general, greater visibility and more publicizing of Arts Faculty research is needed. This includes research into, and the development of, innovative approaches to teaching. To address this issue, an improved and sustained public relations effort is needed, as well as more systematic celebration of research output by members of the Faculty of Arts. This should include recognition for contributions of faculty time and expertise toward the public good beyond the confines of the academy.

Objectives

- Generate more financial and logistical support for Arts Faculty research and research collaborations.
- Ensure a high and sustained level of visibility and publicity for Arts Faculty publications, creative work, research funding, and research interests.
- Establish a multi-faceted, well-supported, and systematic public relations effort that will be effective for both internal and external audiences.

Recommendations

1. Expand and enhance the role of University Communications in advertising and publicizing the research and research interests of members of the Faculty of Arts to external audiences, particularly through university, departmental, and faculty websites, as well as through social media.

2. Ensure that annual reviews of these media are undertaken by a dedicated Communications Officer who works with department Chairs and program Coordinators with a view to renewal, updating, consistency, and high quality.
3. As part of a research showcase initiative, create an online Newsletter that features announcements and stories about research in the Faculty of Arts.
4. Use the Newsletter as a venue for recognition of different types of public service by faculty that is related to their research interests and areas of expertise.
5. Under the direction of the Dean of Arts, launch an annual “new books” celebration that is prominently featured in alumni and recruitment-focused literature and communications.
6. Increase the number of internal research presentations by Arts faculty, and promote these in various forums and venues, both on campus and in the wider community.
7. Create a feature lecture, if possible once every semester, that will be used to highlight research accomplishment.
8. Ensure that there is adequate space provision and administrative support for research institutes and interdisciplinary research clusters and workshops.
9. Take measures to encourage research mentoring of probationary faculty.
10. Enhance the overall research effort and research climate in the Faculty of Arts through the establishment of endowed research chairs, both dedicated and rotating.
11. Collaborate with University Advancement in a fundraising campaign to solicit alumni support for dedicated and rotating research chairs in the Arts Faculty.
12. Dedicate a portion of the funds solicited for faculty research to the hiring of student research assistants.
13. Encourage the negotiation of short-term time release for faculty seeking to complete major research or writing projects.

3. TEACHING

Issue

The Faculty of Arts is committed to an ethos of strong engagement with students, in and outside of the classroom. Maintaining small classes taught mainly by full-time, continuing faculty is increasingly challenged by financial constraints and decreasing resources. The Faculty of Arts is committed to incorporating new teaching technologies, as appropriate, while maintaining the effective use of traditional pedagogical strategies.

Objectives

- Encourage new teaching strategies and increased student-teacher interaction.
- Extend pedagogical connections and continuities among departments and with other Faculties.
- Ensure the continuation of shared intellectual and cultural life and supportive mentoring relationships with students.

Recommendations

1. Continue to affirm the mutual dependence of teaching and scholarship.
2. Ensure class sizes that permit effective student/teacher and student/student interaction, relative to disciplines.
3. Adopt a faculty-wide view of hiring and replacement to ensure the effective use of teaching resources.
4. Pursue funding for professorial Chairs (on the model of Celtic Studies) which would have teaching as a substantial component of their mission.
5. Encourage and support the dissemination of student research, including the development of guidelines for collaboration with students to help develop publications out of their work (especially theses), as an aspect of mentoring.
6. Establish fundamental writing courses, and continue to encourage departments to incorporate writing requirements.
7. Encourage and extend the work of the Faculty Development Committee, and increase resources for faculty development.

4. RECRUITMENT AND PROFILE

Issue

Enrollment in the Arts has been in gradual decline at StFX, as it has at many other Canadian universities. A common explanation is that there is a growing perception among students and parents that an Arts degree is less directed towards jobs and careers at a time when there is increasing competition among university graduates for employment. This has negatively affected trends in enrollment, especially in disciplines within the Humanities. The broader value of a liberal arts education has been placed in question, despite evidence that the long-term career and employment record for Arts graduates remains strong. Within the broader University community, there are expressions of concern that the Faculty of Arts has lost focus, profile, and may continue to experience enrollment declines.

Objectives

- Restore the profile of Arts as an essential and integral part of the StFX mission, future, and continuing achievements.
- Stem the decline in enrollment with targeted recruitment, and improve marketing efforts on the value of an Arts education.
- Understand better the concerns of students and the broader community about the continued relevance of the Humanities and Social Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts.
- Innovate in Arts programs, courses, and extra-curricular activities to meet student demand, demonstrate value, and generate interest.

Recommendations

1. Seek the University's commitment to a strategic target for the Faculty of Arts of a minimum of 25% of total enrollment at StFX.
2. Set explicit targets for enrollment in Arts among more diverse and potentially expanding student markets, in particular international students, Aboriginal students, African-Canadian students, mature students, and other under-represented populations.
3. Establish improved contact between prospective students and Arts faculty at critical junctures in the recruitment and admission process.
4. Determine the effectiveness of the newly established Arts Pathways web-based device for assisting students to choose Arts options, and revise the site as needed.
5. Undertake a faculty-wide upgrade of department web sites.
6. Involve Arts faculty directly in select recruitment initiatives such as high school visits, mini-lectures or debates on high profile topics, and encourage their presence at university recruitment fairs.
7. Examine trends, evidence, literature, and policy on the relevance of Arts education.
8. Recognize and plan for service courses taught by departments in the Faculty of Arts for students pursuing degrees in both Arts and other Faculties.
9. Strengthen existing interdisciplinary programs and explore the feasibility of new ones, including both the one-year (e.g. colloquium) and multi-year (degree focused) models.
10. Provide better support and encouragement of existing and new efforts to demonstrate the significance of Arts teaching and research at StFX. This could include residence-based events and speaker series.

5. INTERNATIONALIZATION

Issue

International recruitment efforts in Canadian universities have typically focused on students most likely to choose professional programs. This pattern of recruitment should be addressed to ensure that international students come to StFX to obtain a first-class university education, with enrollment distributed across university faculties. The Faculty of Arts should strongly support greater internationalization of the student body in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Visual and Performing Arts. It should also support strengthening of student and faculty exchange programs. At the same time, efforts to expand internationalization must be accompanied by appropriately increased levels of staff support.

The larger project of internationalization will involve expanding international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of the university. The Faculty of Arts is especially well positioned to take a leading role in this process given the research expertise of many of its faculty and already existing curriculum in many of its departments and programs.

Objectives

- Develop a strategy to recruit international students toward achieving a target of 10% of student enrollment in the Faculty of Arts.
- Enrich programs through a more diverse student body.
- Further develop and enhance student and faculty exchange programs.
- Enhance international, comparative, and global perspectives in teaching, research, and service.

Recommendations

1. Ensure good quality and readily available English as Second Language training for students.
2. Facilitate discussions between faculty and administration to help faculty identify, understand, and deal with the needs of international students.
3. Highlight curriculum and scholarly expertise in the Faculty of Arts of particular academic benefit to international students.
4. Provide adequate support for international students to ensure that they gain an excellent education at StFX.
5. Provide residential and recreational options for international students such as an international house on campus where Canadian and international students could

interrelate/network. Examine housing subsidies as a means of attracting international students.

6. Direct StFX recruitment staff to develop a detailed and targeted strategy for attracting international students specifically for the Faculty of Arts.
7. Work with the Office of the Associate Vice-President Research and Graduate Studies to ensure improved international support of research collaborations abroad.
8. Work more closely with the Coady International Institute to ensure greater collaboration between its staff and faculty in Arts, and to ensure more direct benefits for undergraduate students.
9. Enhance research collaborations abroad.
10. Build upon and expand international exchange programs for students and faculty to widen the geographic scope and increase the types of exchange.
11. Ensure the periodic evaluation of exchange programs.

6. OUTREACH

Issue

Outreach to the extra-university community must be recognized as an important element of the Faculty of Arts. It is the natural extension of our fundamental academic mandate: to pass on the benefits of our scholarly work to others. We should acknowledge that the community of learners is wider than just the students enrolled in our classes, and as a publically funded institution we should strive to fulfill our obligation to serve the public. Such service provides a great benefit in promoting the University, in recruiting students, and in fund-raising.

Objectives

- Expand our teaching mandate to a wider, extra-university audience.
- Share professional expertise with the community.
- Make the University better known to potential students and supporters through outreach activities.

Recommendations

1. Direct individual academic units to evaluate their current outreach efforts, and consider new initiatives.
2. Create town/gown lecture series.

3. Offer non-credit summer courses to attract mature students and alumni to campus, depending on faculty interest and availability.
4. Offer certificate programs for various skills in specific areas during the summer.
5. Bring high school students to campus in the summer for special courses, clinics, or workshops; bring instruction at appropriate times to the schools.
6. Encourage faculty to be available for media commentary.
7. Encourage faculty to participate in public advisory boards, commissions, and committees.
8. Provide expertise to, and encourage engagement with, citizen groups.
9. Support research involving community partners.
10. Encourage student engagement with the community through Service Learning.

7. PHYSICAL SPACE

Issue

As the Faculty of Arts is dedicated to student-centred, interactive learning, the physical design of campus and classrooms is an essential component of the student experience, recruitment, and the Faculty of Arts profile. Students have to be able to engage with ideas and incorporate them into their understanding of their everyday world and broader timely issues. They are acquiring languages, debating political ideas, grappling with philosophic distinctions, or engaging with social issues. In all cases, students must be able to communicate with faculty and each other in a setting that is conducive to such learning—from the classroom to informal spaces to the campus itself. The Faculty of Arts is also dedicated to learning in the Visual and Performing Arts. These latter are particularly important for the intellectual and cultural atmosphere of the campus.

Objectives

- Ensure faculty consultation in plans for renovations of buildings to make sure these spaces are pedagogically optimal for the Faculty of Arts.
- Revisit policies for current space utilization to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.
- Develop plans to allow for Visual and Performing Arts to be a larger part of the campus culture.

Recommendations

1. Consult with faculty, staff, and students regarding pedagogical needs concerning space and design renovations and construction of Arts buildings (Nicholson Hall, Annex, Library).

2. Design comfortable, accessible, quiet meeting rooms for students to study/debate.
3. Develop accessible common spaces/lounges in departments, library, and Nicholson Hall to use for study, but also to hold academic and social events for students.
4. Use empty corners in hallways and elsewhere for informal meetings between students and instructors.
5. Explore the creation of flexible, accessible classrooms that can be subdivided to support small class sizes.
6. Design space and locate faculty in close proximity to each other to enhance the goal of integration and collaboration among Arts faculty members.
7. Dedicate space for students in close proximity to the offices and laboratories of faculty.
8. Consult with the Accessible Learning Office about how best to design physical space to accommodate students with disabilities (physical and learning) with the view to including these students in the process of building and campus design.
9. Allocate classroom space to serve the pedagogical and technological needs of the Faculty of Arts on an equitable and university-wide basis. Use of space at the Coady International Institute by members of the Faculty of Arts during the Winter Term should be negotiated.
10. Discontinue the university policy of charging academic departments for the use of university space.
11. Explore more academic integration into residence life through the creation of appropriate spaces for small seminars and study groups.
12. Think creatively about using Visual and Perform Arts to enhance everyday student experience.
13. Develop service learning activities that add to physical space design.

8. CAREERS

Issue

Maintaining student enrollment in the Faculty of Arts is an ongoing challenge. The Bachelor of Arts Degree is no longer perceived as offering the same economic benefits it once did. Arts students currently enrolled at StFX are afforded only limited opportunities to apply outside the

classroom what they are learning via internships and co-op placements. Little effort has yet been made to package their skills or develop targeted supports for post-graduate employment.

Objectives

- Create better messaging for prospective and current students regarding the economic and career benefits of an Arts degree.
- Enhance learning opportunities outside the classroom which combine academic and practical skills development.
- Provide opportunities for Arts students to access career planning and post-graduate employment options.

Recommendations

1. In collaboration with individual academic units develop a repository of research and information, to be housed in the Dean of Arts Office, about the professional value (or career benefits) of attaining an Arts degree. Materials should be regularly disseminated to the heads of academic units and to student recruiters and the Student Career Centre.
2. Direct Admissions/Recruitment to create promotional materials that highlight how an Arts degree develops analytical, writing, oral, and artistic communication skills in addition to broad-based knowledge that prepares our students for the current job market.
3. Direct Admissions/Recruitment to develop promotional materials that convey how StFX is educating citizens for the global marketplace and for engagement in social change.
4. Work with the Student Career Centre to develop Faculty of Arts workshops that help students recognize and promote skills and knowledge, identify potential employment opportunities, learn to write resumes, and develop a social media career profile.
5. Explore the feasibility of internships and co-operative education opportunities with Faculty of Arts departments and programs.
6. Create certificates in specific skill-based areas.
7. Encourage Departments and Programs to track postgraduate studies and careers.