



## Senate of York University Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee

### Memorandum

To: Senate Committees  
Faculty Councils

From: Rebecca Pillai Riddell, Chair, Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee of Senate

Date: October 7, 2015

Subject: **University Academic Plan 2015-2020 Consultations**

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The process leading to approval of the next version of the University Academic Plan is now underway. As the most important bodies in collegial governance, Senate committees and Faculty Councils should have the first opportunity to provide advice on the focus of UAP 2015-2020, and APPRC seeks your responses to the five questions on the following page.

The overarching themes of the current University Academic Plan are

- academic quality
- student success
- engagement and outreach

We take it as axiomatic that these themes will remain central to academic planning, and that the goal of ensuring York is recognized for its excellence and global leadership in the nexus of research, teaching and learning will continue to infuse our plans and drive our efforts. The questions have been designed to solicit views on contexts, priorities and objectives, and the structure and thrust of the next UAP. APPRC also welcomes advice on any other aspect of the document.

Responses from Senate committees and Faculty Councils will help shape a wider phase of consultations in November. We ask, therefore, that responses from Senate Committees and Councils (or their appropriate committees) be transmitted by Monday, November 9.

A UAP 2015-2020 Website has been created to provide you with background material as you prepare a response. The documents listed below are particularly helpful as a

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collective expression of the vision for York as a comprehensive, research intensive university committed to excellence, student success, outreach and partnership.

UAP 2010-2015  
UAP 2010-2015 Summative Report on Objectives  
Suggestions from the Deans, Principal and University Librarian  
Provostial White Paper  
Institutional Integrated Resource Plan  
Strategic Research Plan  
Strategic Mandate Agreement

These documents are housed on the APPRC pages under current initiatives / UAP 2015-2020 at

<http://secretariat.info.yorku.ca/senate/academic-policy-planning-and-research-committee/university-academic-plan-2015-2020-uap/>

Please submit your completed responses to Robert Everett of the University Secretariat ([beverett@yorku.ca](mailto:beverett@yorku.ca)). We welcome broad engagement throughout the UAP renewal process and look forward to gathering members of the community at an open forum scheduled for Thursday, December 10. Thank you in advance for your vital assistance.

### **Questions**

1. What sets York apart from other universities and how is this advantageous?
  - the world is at our doorstep due to our diverse student body. Our diverse student body is an asset in terms of helping students to learn to work with others and acknowledge different perspectives. But it is also a disadvantage when getting students in their earlier years to work together in teams, or work on projects together. But if teaching them to work together is embedded in the curriculum then it could be quite the advantage in building leaders of tomorrow or change agents.
  
2. What should be York's academic priorities for the next five years? Please rank your priorities if possible.
  - help the students to understand why EE is important,
  - help the students to understand that choosing the easiest path through their program does not necessarily help them achieve their future goals. Eg many students avoid courses with team projects, experiential education opportunities, writing, oral presentation, etc because they feel that these

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stand in the way of themselves achieving a high grade. This is particularly seen in students who simply want to be told what to study, memorize that content and get A+'s so they can apply to professional programs and be successful in their applications. They treat their undergraduate degree as a stepping stone, but not really part of their intellectual development journey, we need to change this attitude and help students adopt a more growth/fluid mindset approach to their higher education.

3. What are the most pressing challenges facing York now and in the next five years that should be addressed in the next UAP?
  - lack of faculty member engagement with the students, with each other, with the university. This might be a by product of being so large, or there not being anywhere for faculty members to get together with each other, or the fact that many faculty members do not live close to campus so it is difficult for them to stay behind and talk with students or socialize with colleagues. It is also possible they are not engaged with the university because they are left with the attitude that they have been hired to conduct their research and that is it. Everything else is just an obstacle to them being successful in their research.
  - finding/creating alternative external funding resources to help programs/faculty members to conduct research on their teaching, send them to conferences about teaching, etc.
  - individual schools and department want access to data about their students, yet often data is averaged across the entire Faculty and possibly across the entire university. This is not helpful for individual programs. We need consistent access to timely data broken down by program.
  
4. What are the most compelling opportunities for York now and in the next five years?
  - a student body that wants to be engaged and desires contact with the faculty members
  - great people to help move our initiatives forward
  
5. Do you have any other advice about the University Academic Plan 2015-2020 in terms of its organization and structure, specificity of objectives, indicators of progress and the like?
  - there are many academic initiatives (e.g., FYE, EE, elearning, SEM) so sometimes it can come across as a lot of overwhelming additional work for faculty members to engage in these initiatives. These initiatives have to be

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embedded in our academic culture and communicated as our efforts to enable and promote high quality teaching and learning. But they can not be added on to what is already being done they have to become seamlessly part of what needs to be done.

-for me an indicator of progress is when faculty members, program staff and students know about the academic initiatives, and can speak to some best practices and successes around those initiatives.