

Senate UAP Questions For Discussion - 7 December 2015

FGS consulted with its Academic Planning and Policy Committee and Faculty Council, along with individual faculty, staff, and students to formulate its response.

1. **What sets York apart from other universities and how is this advantageous?**
 - A. York University needs to celebrate its **scale**. We are huge and contain multitudes. On the graduate side, we have the 4th largest number of graduate students in Ontario, distributed across 60+ graduate programs, many offering unique degrees.
 - B. **Diversity** with a French-language campus (Glendon) and multi-lingual, multi-cultural faculty, staff, and students.
 - C. **Interdisciplinarity**, long a hallmark of York, is best engaged by students at the graduate level, where students from 40+ doctoral programs work with and inspire graduate faculty.
 - o York ORUs are locations that support graduate education and foster strong interdisciplinary research.
 - D. York University has a strong **history** of over fifty years of excellence in graduate education and scholarship.
 - o York has an **alumni network** that remains untapped, not only in terms of developing the endowment, but in terms of creative opportunities for community engagement and graduate student mentorship. Connecting with the vast and diverse array of grad alumni, and showcasing York graduates in all types of careers should be a priority.
 - Advancement must adapt its community engagement and fundraising efforts to the particular demographics of York students (such as cultural diversity and first generation university attendance).
 - E. York has a tradition of **leadership** in many disciplines (including interdisciplinary fields), housing leading scholars in their fields. We lead in community engagement, social justice, business, and the arts, and take advantage of creative options outside conservative academic structures.
 - F. York University is at the **centre of the GTA** and will increasingly be at the centre of the city as it grows and densifies north.

2. **What should be York's academic priorities for the next five years? Please rank your priorities if possible.**
 - A. **Intellectual curiosity** must flourish. Imagination, creativity, and daring vision must be fostered, and these values should inform strategic and operational decision-making at all levels, including graduate education.
 - o Recognize and build on existing research and pedagogical strengths.
 - o Facilitate research collaboration across campus and including graduate students.
 - o Create graduate funding models that enhance student research and degree progress.
 - o Increase teaching opportunities for graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.
 - B. Ensure that resource restrictions do not constrain intellectual curiosity.
 - o Resource questions should not limit what types of research are possible at our university. Interdisciplinary opportunities within graduate education should continue to be fostered across Faculties and satellite campuses, both current and future.
 - C. Strengthen and further develop **graduate student services**.
 - o Enhance the **student experience** during their time at York.
 - o Enhance **professional skills** to prepare students for both academic and non-academic careers. These include writing and publishing support, conference and travel funds, field

placements, enhanced experiential education (especially at the MA level), and other forms of professional development.

- Offer enhanced support services and accommodations for **students with disabilities**.
- Offer enhanced support services for **students with mental health challenges** and improvements in recognition of mental health stressors.
- Offer enhanced support services for **international graduate students**.

D. Create conditions for excellence in graduate student supervision and research development.

- Increase full-time graduate **faculty complement** and reduce teaching load to ensure capacity to provide excellent graduate supervision, teaching, and research.
- Offer better support for and recognition of **Indigenous scholarship**.
- Heighten **university research profile** with high profile hiring and promotion of excellent researchers currently on campus.

3. **What are the most pressing challenges facing York now and in the next five years that should be addressed in the next UAP?**

- We must continue to **lobby government** to increase support for universities, and ensure that society acknowledges the value of what universities do.
- **Funding for graduate students** needs to be streamlined and more strategic. The current funding model for graduate students does not allow them to maximize research and scholarship opportunities.
- We must address the finite **capacity of the full-time graduate faculty** complement to address the supervisory, teaching, research, and other needs of our students.
- **Governance** issues stemming from SHARP budget must be negotiated, ensuring that the academic role of FGS as a pan-university body that undertakes oversight and advocacy for graduate academic excellence is preserved.
- **Demographic challenges to growth**—smaller numbers of students entering university at both the undergraduate and graduate levels over the next —require York to consider a period of consolidation. During the term of this UAP, consolidation rather than growth allows the university community to concentrate on quality and efficient organization as a way to adapt strategically to the massive changes of the last decade. This would allow York to focus on strengths and be prepared for future change in the postsecondary and graduate environments.

4. **What are the most compelling opportunities for York now and in the next five years?**

- **Creativity** and creative thinking are fundamental to graduate education and to the university more broadly. Newer areas of study and research should be fostered and grad is the best arena for curricular and disciplinary innovation. These initiatives can often add opportunity for more established areas of research, and broaden departments and programs in important ways.
- **Student engagement** in campus activities outside of formal graduate programming should be valued and encouraged. This means work on the recognition and integration of grad professional skills within core curriculum, programs encouraging community engagement, and other types of campus activities designed to enhance the overall student experience.
- Increase the number and enhance support services for **postdoctoral** fellows and visitors at York University.
- If interdisciplinarity is to remain a driving academic focus at York, then it **is flexibility across structures** that support graduate education that fosters an environment of interdisciplinary research and the development of broad critical thinkers and communicators.
- Need to increase engagement with **alumni** to support graduate students and other university activities, and build on diverse student population history.

- York University should plan to **host more events** to increase profile given the subway expansion.

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?

- It is essential to consider graduate students in all aspects of our visionary and operational planning. Every time the word “student” appears, it should be clear whether it means undergraduate student, graduate student, or both.