



Weekly Bulletin for Department & Program Heads

Number 15 – Tuesday 26 February 2008

Academic searches

Here, in tabular form, is the status of our searches as of this morning.

Department	Search	Status
ANTH	Tenure-track	Candidate has accepted terms; formal appointment in process
ECON	Tenure-track	Candidate has accepted terms; formal appointment in process
ECON	Tenure-track	Candidate is considering offer from another institution
ECON	Tenure-track	Candidate to indicate decision today
ENGL	Tenure-track	Candidate has accepted terms; formal appointment in process
ENGL	Tenure-track	Candidate has accepted terms; formal appointment in process
JRN	Tenure-track	Candidate recommended
JS	Tenure-track	Interviews continuing
PSCI	Term	Shortlist pending
RLST	Tenure-track	Candidate has accepted terms; formal appointment in process
SOC	Term	Formal appointment has been offered
SOC	Term	Formal appointment has been offered



Enrolment minima

In the Arts budget presentation for the 2008-09 fiscal year, we stressed that in 2007 the Faculty of Arts taught roughly 34% of the credit hours delivered at the University of Regina (excluding the federated colleges), while consuming approximately 31% of total University expenditures on teaching. Our being able to punch slightly above our weight here stems from a small number of very large introductory sections, with enrolments ranging from 100 to more than 400.

That is a good thing. Despite it, however, in a very large number of the course sections we mount, we are repeatedly falling short of the enrolment minima set by the University in the 2006 budget letter. In 2007, for example, of the 721 individual sections mounted by the Faculty of Arts, only 391, or 54.2%, met these modest thresholds (20 for 100/200-level courses, 15 for 300-level courses, and 5 for 400/800-level courses).

Why did we mount more than 300 low-enrolment sections last year? The answers are varied. We can point to program needs (but programs can be changed, and the central administration is unlikely to grant our funding requests if those requests proceed from curricula that lock us in repeatedly to offering tiny sections of required courses at great cost); student needs (do we need to be more proactive in counselling students not to leave degree requirements until the last moment, and in making available to them multi-year timetables of course offerings in our departments?); courses that by the cut-off date

barely meet or exceed the minima, but in which real enrolment by Week 2 of term falls short of the minima because of drops and no-shows (suggesting to some that minima should in fact be increased); and occasionally – to be frank – instructors’ wishes to teach courses that attract very few students.

Modest as they are, it’s clear that Arts is unlikely ever to reach 100% compliance with the University-established minima. As we did in this year’s submission to the Budget Committee, we will continue to articulate the need for smaller sections in areas such as languages.¹ We will also continue to argue for a degree of cross-subsidization, wherein the large introductory sections help pay for smaller upper-year sections. We will also do our best for students who need particular courses to complete their degree programs in a timely fashion.

At the same time, however, if we are to succeed in the competition for scarce resources we have to do better, and be seen to be doing better. To have nearly half of our sections running below University thresholds is not sustainable.

This topic will be on the agenda for the next Dean’s Executive.

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Arts representation on Executive of Council – deadline approaching

The 5 March deadline for nominations for seats on Executive of Council is quickly approaching. So far, we’re aware of only 7 Arts members (4 from the social sciences and 3 from the humanities) who have put their names forward. This leaves 10 positions potentially vacant (7 in the social sciences and 3 in the humanities).

Please help ensure that Arts is fully represented on this body by allowing your name to stand, and encouraging colleagues in your area to do the same.

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Dean’s Office Closure

The Office of the Dean, including the Student Services Office, will be closed tomorrow, Wednesday 27 February, from 8:15 a.m. to 12:00 noon so that staff can attend an Aboriginal Awareness Training Session.

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Departmental academic advising

Thus far only one department has contacted *Kevin O’Brien* (in the Arts Student Services Office) with the name of a person appointed to specialize in academic advising in their discipline. Please give some thought to whom this person should be in your area and forward a name to Kevin as soon as possible.

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¹ An interesting bit of fallout on this issue can be observed in several recent requests to the Student Appeals Committee from students who had enrolled in one of the “two courses in the same language” that form part of our core requirements. After completing the first course, these students found the second one unavailable because of low enrolments, insufficient stipends, lack of a qualified instructor in a given term, etc. As was apparent to the Committee, on the one hand we insist that students have two courses in one language ... and then in some cases make it difficult if not impossible for them to get those two courses.

On student retention

The following article by Pauline Tam, "Freshman Year Claims Many Students," appeared last Wednesday, 20 February, on the Canwest news service.

OTTAWA -- Nearly one in four high-school graduates with A averages are at risk of being kicked out of university after their freshman year, new Canadian research reveals.

A study by the University of Manitoba, to be released Wednesday, suggests first-year university can be an equalizer, reducing both high achievers and average performers to students vulnerable to academic probation or worse, being forced out.

Previous research has shown that students in their freshman year are at the highest risk of dropping out of university.

The University of Manitoba data provides a glimpse into just how many first-year students run into academic trouble. While university enrolment is at an all-time high, the number of undergraduates who perform poorly, drop courses or drop out entirely is also climbing.

Until now, there has been little published data on the extent to which this is happening.

The Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at the University of Oklahoma tracks the number of U.S. and Canadian students who advance from first year, but that data, while shared among universities, is not generally made public.

The data is also woefully inadequate on the average number of Canadian students who move past first year.

The only reliable figures come from the Council of Ontario Universities, which show that on average, 88 per cent of the province's first-year students move on to second year. Educators say that number has remained steady over the past decade.

Among Ontario's 18 schools, Queen's University, at 93.4 per cent, had the highest rate of student retention after the first year. The lowest retention rate was reported by the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Oshawa.

But those figures don't capture the large number of students who may not even be aware that they are struggling, says Christine Blais, the University of Manitoba researcher who compiled the data on at-risk students.

Many experience the academic and personal stresses associated with the critical transition from the more structured environment of high school.

A growing number arrive on campus wrestling with homesickness, loneliness, lack of structure, inadequate high school preparation or uncertainties about their academic majors.

As a result, first-year students tend to see their grades plummet by as much as 15 percentage points compared to what they were used to in their final year of high school, says Blais. The risk of lower academic achievement is the same among students who were high achievers in high school and those who entered university with average grades of 70 per cent or less, says Blais.

Her research also shows that once they enter university, nearly two-thirds of Canadian undergrads are either unsure of what they want to study, or they aimlessly change their majors with no apparent goal.

"They just wander and change their minds," she says. "What they dreamed of doing is not what they can do or want to do -- or what their parents want them to do."

The result is that undergraduates take progressively longer to complete a four-year degree.

Blais will present her findings today at a national conference on first-year education sponsored by Carleton University.

Educators at the three-day conference, the first of its kind in Canada, are expected to discuss ways to support and retain first-year students.

With fewer high-school graduates coming up the ranks, more Canadian universities are turning their attention to retaining first-year students out of enlightened self-interest. Administrators recognize they not only have a financial duty to ensure their institutions don't lose revenue from students at risk of dropping out, they also have an ethical responsibility to ensure that otherwise capable students have the supports they need to succeed. A handful of universities have introduced a variety of tutoring, counselling and support services to help first-year students cope.

At the University of Manitoba, Ms. Blais directs an innovative program called University 1, designed to catch first-year students before they run into trouble.

The centrepiece of the program allows first-year students to try a wide range of courses without first declaring a major. In other words, the program gives students the flexibility to sample different programs -- from anthropology to physics -- before settling on one they like.



Campus digital archive

The Library has put in place the infrastructure to maintain an online archive that can serve as a repository for all academic and administrative documents being produced at this University. There are several advantages to storing your area's documents in the archive. It will furnish permanent URLs for any documents submitted (useful when creating website links). It allows users to link keywords to any documents submitted, a feature which, combined with a built-in, powerful search engine, will allow others to find relevant documents very readily. Users can define themselves as belonging to archival "communities", which offer an easy and natural way for others on campus and the general public to find work of interest and relevance to themselves. While the collection will be open to public use by default, sections of it can be password protected and so rendered suitable for storing administrative documents. It offers automatic notification of new document submissions to all those subscribing to the relevant communities. And the Library will carry the administrative workload for any departments and other units that don't want to carry it themselves. Think of it as a way of offloading the document-storage component of departmental and administrative websites with minimal effort and no cost to yourselves.

Rick has been asked to collect a list of the various categories of documents that departments and other units within the Faculty of Arts would be interested in storing in the archive. Possibilities include departmental working papers, scholarly work of any kind that faculty members would like to make public, electronic serials (such as *Arts & Minds*), committee and departmental agendas and minutes, planning and policy documents, etc. Please let Rick know at your earliest opportunity of the documents your area would be interested in storing on the archive and, for each of them, the person(s) whom you want to be responsible for administering the relevant portions of the archive.



Calendar of upcoming events

Date	Time	Place	Event
FEBRUARY			
Tuesday 26	3:30	University Club College West	HRI book launch – Sheila Petty (Fine Arts) on memory, origin, and discourses in Black diasporic cinema
Tuesday 26	7:30	Café Orange 2136 Robinson St	Philosophy Café – David Elliott (PHIL) on stem cell research
Thursday 28	2:30	AH 431	French seminars – Alison Hayford (SOC) on “Maman est femme, papa est fantôme”
Thursday 28	7:30	Chapters Southland Mall	Coffee House Controversies – Gedis Lankauskas (ANTH) on memory in Eastern Europe
Friday 29	3:30	AH 347	Raymond Blake (HIST) on Trudeau, family allowances, and constitutionalism
Friday 29	3:30	Campion College Room 322	Ben Fiore (Campion/RLST) on Christian kinship in the paranesis of Philemon

MARCH			
Friday 7	3:30	CL 408	PSCI series – Shadia Drury (PSCI/PHIL) on demonizing the enemy
Friday 7	3:00	LBA Main floor commons	INTL ST – Reception for students (all welcome)
Wednesday 12	2:30	AH 527	Faculty Council
Wednesday 12	7:30	Education Auditorium	Minifie Lecture (JRN) – Carol Off on the Canadian narrative
Thursday 13	7:30	Campion Auditorium	Nash Lecture (Campion) – Dan Coleman on reading, spirituality, and cultural politics
Thursday 13	7:30	Chapters Southland Mall	Coffee House Controversies – Rozzet Jurdi (SOC) on Arab women and contraception
Friday 14	3:30	CL 408	PHIL/CLAS, PSCI, and WMST talk – Margaret Ogrodnick (UMan) on Simone de Beauvoir
Friday 14	3:30	AH 348	Murad Academic Discussions – Scott Wilson (ENGL MA candidate) on Chuck Palahniuk
Wednesday 19	3:30	CK 185	HRI – Cindy MacKenzie (ENGL) Dickinson book launch
Wednesday 19	3:30	CL 408	PSCI series – Jenn Ruddy (MA candidate) on feminist activism in the Saskatchewan NDP
Thursday 20	10:00	Riddell Centre Shu-Box Theatre	Leslie McCurdy performs her one-woman play on Harriet Tubman – free performance for U of R employees and students – classes are welcome – co-sponsored by Arts, Education, Fine Arts, Depts of Justice Studies, Sociology, and Women’s Studies
Thursday 20	7:30	Education Auditorium	Stapleford Lecture – Lynda Haverstock on citizenship, governance and duty
Tuesday 25	4:00	Campion Auditorium	HRI talk (rescheduled)—Dan Coleman, Nick Ruddick, and Lynn Wells on research culture in the humanities

