



# **Strengthening York's Neighbourhoods**

## **Task Force on the Colleges Executive Summary & Recommendations**

**November 2006**



## Task Force on Colleges Strengthening York's Neighbourhoods Executive Summary


Over the past year a group of dedicated students, faculty and staff have undertaken an extensive review of the colleges on the Keele campus. This has been the broadest review of the college system since the Hare Report of 1986. The need for the establishment of a task force was identified by both the College Masters and the Vice-President Students as a result of many factors including significant changes in the profile of students enrolling in York, the distribution of part-time students across all Faculties and the undergraduate enrolment growth that York had experienced in the past five years. The Vice-President Students recognized the importance of these issues and believed that this should be addressed in his first year in the position.

The colleges have been a factor in the evolution of York for the past forty years. Much of the past twenty years has been turbulent for the colleges as their role in convocation, space allocation and offering of college courses have been points of contention, as well as rallying points, for many of the college's staunchest supporters. The Keele campus colleges have been reviewed, in whole or in part, extensively on at least two occasions, in 1986 and 1996. Despite the passing of time these reports proved to be very useful with recommendations that resonated with the task force.

The task force wishes to thank all those current and past community members that made the effort either to attend one of the public forums or submit their views in writing. All of these were very helpful and framed much of the discussion. A common thread that ran through many of the presentations was the need for the university to embrace the concept that colleges serve as "neighbourhoods" of a large metropolitan academic city. It is through these smaller enclaves that students should have the opportunity to meet and engage with fellow students, staff and especially faculty members. Active participation by faculty members, and graduate students as Fellows is crucial to the development of this experience.

The University Academic Plan has clearly articulated the importance that the university places on enhancing and understanding the student experience. The task force believes that York is well-positioned to meet its objectives and the college system can play an important role in the overall experiences of our students. Research has clearly indicated that the first year is critical to establishing a sense of "connectedness" to the institution. Providing the support, knowledge and opportunities to become comfortable in a new environment enhances the confidence of students as they undertake their studies and creates an awareness of their environment that promotes involvement.

The colleges already play an important role in the delivery of academic orientation programming but the task force also believes that their contribution to the student experience here at York can be greatly enhanced by directing their primary focus to the transition year of all new students to York, including those coming directly from secondary school as well as those transferring from universities and colleges.



The task force believes that it is critical that the colleges become integrated across the university with academic and student service units. For too long, colleges have been isolated to create and deliver their programs without the full benefit of professional and financial support. There is a need for a direction-setting body with academic and student service experience that links the colleges together as a matrix to ensure the colleges achieve their mandates as a collective while also recognizing the individual nature of each college. The role of the Master in each college is integral to achieving the increased levels of co-ordination.


The members of the task force believe that the recommendations in this report will serve to strengthen the college system at York. Although unanimity was not reached, recommendations do represent a consensus view. To bring about the success will require a significant effort by all members of the York community. Given the importance of these recommendations and the role that the college system can play here at York, it is also the view of the task force that the implementation of these recommendations be reviewed again in 2009—2010 to ensure that they remain valid. The task force firmly believes that colleges do have a role in enhancing the student experience at York and that these recommendations will serve to strengthen York's neighbourhoods.


Patricia Bradshaw, Faculty, Senate Representative  
Melissa Bridgeman, Student, President of Bethune College Council  
Carole Carpenter, Master, Vanier College  
Reuben Hodari Clarke, Student, President of Founders College Council  
Ioanna Gantzis, Student, President of Vanier College Council  
Susan Gapka, Student, Chair of the Student Senator Caucus  
Marilyn Lambert-Drache, Faculty, Associate Dean of Arts  
Robert Martellacci, Alumni, Fellow of Stong College  
Marie Rickard, Master, Winters College  
Corrie Sakaluk, Student, Vice President, York Federation of Students  
Sylvia Schippke, Administrator, Assistant Vice President Student Community Development  
Ted Spence, Administrator/Faculty, Director, Institutional Research and Analysis  
Robert Tiffin, Vice-President Students (Chair)



## Task Force on the Colleges Recommendations

1. That effective May 1, 2007, College Masters report to the Dean of the respective Faculty to which his/her college is academically aligned. (Page 24)
2. That the Council of College Communities be established to provide direction and ensure there is a consistent, standard level of co-curricular programming activities provided by the colleges. The Council will be responsible for strategic planning and goal setting for the college system. Membership shall include decanal representatives, Masters, students and representatives of the Vice-President Students Division. (Page 22)
3. That a primary focus of colleges be on the development and delivery of co-curricular programming and the creation of a diverse cultural experience for all York students to assist them to connect with faculty and other students within the community. A special emphasis will be placed on new students. (Page 7-11)
4. That each college be encouraged to develop unique co-curricular programming linked to their Faculty affiliation while also seeking out programming that will encourage participation from across all colleges. (Page 11)
5. That the Master continue to have a close working relationship with Residence Life Coordinators, College Council representatives, and Student Community & Leadership Development in the development and delivery of programs. (Page 11)
6. That the budget for programming in each college be increased and that a portion of these funds be directed by the Council of College Communities. (Page 19)
7. That Residence Life Co-ordinators be full-time positions reporting to the Manager of Residence Life n Student Community & Leadership Development. (Page16-17)
8. That graduate students be encouraged to apply for Residence Don positions. (Page16-17)
9. That the Pond Road residence be affiliated with a college to be determined in consultation with Deans, Masters and the Vice President Students upon completion of current discussions on the restructuring of Faculties. (Page 16)
10. That college-Faculty affiliations and the number of colleges be reviewed upon completion of current discussions on Faculty restructuring. (Page 19)
11. That colleges be further incorporated into recruitment and admissions activities and literature to encourage students, in particular commuter students, to become active participants in the college community. (Page 7)

- 
12. That colleges be further incorporated into orientation activities, especially summer academic orientation when students attend campus for academic advising and course selection. (Page 9)
  13. That the scope and nature of summer orientation sessions in the colleges be augmented to provide more opportunities for students to align their activities with their colleges. (Page 9)
  14. That closer links be developed between College Academic Advisers and Faculty Academic Advisers to ensure a common understanding of the student experience and to develop joint programming that addresses the advising concerns of students. (Page 12)
  15. That the knowledge of College Academic Advisers and student peer mentors/advisers be strengthened through contact with central providers of information and services, e.g. Office of the Registrar, Student Client Services, Counselling Development Centre. (Page 10)
  16. That Masters, Deans and other members of the academic community encourage faculty member involvement and renewal by actively recruiting faculty to serve as Fellows of the College system. (Page 13)
  17. That Fellows participate in the life of each college primarily by establishing opportunities for undergraduate students to be in contact with them. (Page 13)
  18. That graduate students be invited to join colleges as Junior Fellows and establish points of contact for them with graduate and undergraduate students. (Page 13)
  19. That Masters continue to work closely with the Fellows' community to recognize their commitment and energy to undergraduate students. (Page 13)
  20. That Masters and the Director of Alumni Relations work together to ensure a continuing relationship with their college community, e.g. York's 50th anniversary celebrations, York University Alumni Association. (Page 13-14)
  21. That students continue to graduate by program and Faculty and that the Office of Ceremonials and Special Events work with Deans, Masters and the Vice-President Students to ensure that colleges are clearly represented in convocation activities. (Page 11)
  22. That student spaces in the colleges be maintained and the quality improved to ensure that they are known, accessible, functional and inviting for students. (Page 15-16)
  23. That the Vice-President Students work closely with colleges to ensure that the space and furnishings available to students is adequate and meets their needs. (Page 15)

- 
24. That each college should maintain a balance of academic, student and office space. (Page 16)
  25. That technology be employed to enhance the opportunities for students and faculty to become aware of college activities and to interact through a variety of electronic means including webinars, e-mail, e-chats in which students both on- and off-campus interact with faculty and academic advisers. (Page 18)
  26. That college Web sites be reviewed and re-designed to enhance appearance, content, consistency of appearance and that the navigation from the York Web site be improved. (Page 18)
  27. That other areas of the university be encouraged to promote college activities, e.g. Faculty Councils, Excalibur, and other publications, and that college newspapers be given a higher profile across the university. (Page 18)
  28. That the implementation of the recommendations of this report be reviewed in Fall to Winter, 2009—2010. (Page 25)