

Review of Colleges
Final Report

Overall Assessment:

Overall, the review determined that while the financial controls within each individual College are appropriate, there are significant areas for improvement in the general structure of the Colleges and mandate they fulfill.

Specific Assessments:

AUDIT OBSERVATIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS	MANAGEMENT ACTION PLANS
<p>Role, Mandate and Value</p> <p>York’s Colleges were created in successive years between 1965 and 1971 and York is one of only three universities in Canada in which all undergraduate students belong to a College. Traditionally, the role of Colleges has been to serve as an academic and a social home base at the University for students, and a locus of interdisciplinary interaction among faculty.</p> <p>According to their mission statements, Colleges aim to provide meaningful communities for students, and enhance the student experience for both residential and commuter students. Clearly, there is a direct correlation between the role of Colleges and the University’s priority of student success which is an overarching theme in the 2015-2020 University Academic Plan (UAP) recently approved by Senate.</p> <p>A “Student Centric Approach” was also identified as one of</p>	<p>The University should review the mandate of the Colleges to ensure it is in line with and best support its priorities. The mandate should explore opportunities for optimizing the value Colleges bring to the University by improving the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Strategic planning; – Measurement of outcomes; – Closer engagement with Faculties; – Broader engagement with students; – Coordination of efforts; and – Utilization of space. 	<p>The Vice-President Academic & Provost has requested each Faculty Dean to commence discussions with their respective College Master(s) in order to share the audit findings and discuss remedial action. The results of these discussions will shape a new strategy for Colleges going forward, with an emphasis on best utilizing their strengths and existing resources to support student success. The strategy will align with the Institutional Integrated Resource Plan (IIRP) for the University and in particular the results of the working groups whose reports are due in Summer 2016. It is anticipated that the new strategy for Colleges will be finalized by Spring 2017.</p>

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<p>the key priorities of the University’s recently-launched IIRP (Institutional Integrated Resource Plan), and a number of working groups have been launched in response, including an “Advising” and “Campus Experience” Groups.</p> <p>Given the correlation, and the University’s investment in Colleges, the value they add to the student success endeavor should be clearly demonstrated through positive outcomes, close alignment with the University’s key priorities, extensive support of students, and effective utilization of resources.</p> <p>The audit found the following:</p> <p><u>Strategic Planning</u></p> <p>A few Colleges have developed detailed, multi-year strategic plans clearly outlining the linkages to the University Academic Plan and to the enhancement of student success. However, most of the Colleges have not reached this level of strategic planning and operate on the basis of annual plans listing all the programs and events they plan to deliver in the coming year. Strategic planning that is more integrated with Faculties and other departments would help improve the overall direction and clarity as to the general mission and role of Colleges within the University.</p> <p><u>Measurement</u></p> <p>The University contributes around \$3 million to Colleges every year in the form of operating and program funding,</p>		

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<p>along with the course releases and stipends to Masters and College Academic Life Coordinators. The audit found that while the resources devoted to the Colleges (the inputs) are readily measured, there is a need for more measurement of the value added by Colleges to the students and to York (the outputs/outcomes). With a few exceptions, e.g. the PASS program which measures how students participating in this College-run program were able to improve their grades, there was limited evidence confirming the role of Colleges in improving student retention, contributing to student advising, or the effectiveness of their co-curricular programming and social-cultural activities. As a result, it is unclear if Colleges are in fact achieving their goals or optimizing their resources.</p> <p><u>Accountability</u></p> <p>Each College is led by a Master, who is a tenured faculty member. The Master position is open to all faculty members and successful candidates are appointed for a five-year term.</p> <p>According to the job description, Masters are expected to manage the College, develop a strategic plan, implement an annual operational plan, provide a collegial atmosphere, enhance the quality of the community life, liaise with the Student College Council, etc. The audit identified a number of areas where the accountability of Colleges to the Faculties could be improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clearly defining the Faculties’ roles and responsibilities with respect to Colleges and their expectation of Colleges; 		

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monitoring and assessment of performance; – Defining the consequences for not meeting expectations. <p>Improved accountability and a stronger control environment would help support the continued improvement and excellence of Colleges.</p> <p><u>Engagement with Faculties</u></p> <p>The Task Force of Colleges released its report in 2006 with a series of recommendations, the most significant being the change in reporting lines from VP Students to Faculties. The audit found that the engagement between Colleges and the Faculties to which they report remains generally weak, specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Faculties have not set up clear and measurable expectations for the Colleges; – The monitoring of the Colleges’ activities has not been effective; – There is a low number of collaborative projects undertaken by College and Faculties; – Recruiting new Masters from within the Faculties has become increasingly difficult with numerous failed searches and a dwindling pool of faculty willing to take on the Master role. This suggests that the Faculties may not recognize the Colleges or their role in helping the University. <p>A cohesive and co-operative working relationship between Colleges and Faculties presents many opportunities where the services offered by one supplement the services offered</p>		

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<p>by the other, and could help improve crucial, high-priority areas such as student advising and retention.</p> <p><u>Student Engagement</u></p> <p>The audit noted that Colleges play a key and visible role in student orientation, which attracts a large number of first-year students. The student participation rate in other College activities is low. While Colleges each have a cohort of students who engage frequently, this represents a fraction of the University's total population, and the majority of students do not engage.</p> <p>In addition, the College system and the College affiliation can be confusing, especially to first-year students. Often they receive two letters from two Colleges, each claiming affiliation, one based on the student's residence and one based on their major. This also happens when students change their major, which triggers a change in the associated College.</p> <p><u>Coordination of Effort</u></p> <p>Each College provides co- and extra-curricular programs, as well as social-cultural events, many of which are also provided by the other Colleges or elsewhere on campus, e.g. career workshops, graduate school applications, academic skills, mental health, etc. The audit also noted differences in the level of service and support provided to their students by various Colleges. There is an opportunity for Colleges to pool their resources and offer the services in a more collaborative way to improve coordination.</p>		

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<p><u>Utilization of Space</u></p> <p>There are a total of 28,000 square meters in the seven buildings where Colleges reside (excluding New College which has a small footprint in the Atkinson building). This space is assigned as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 55% to Faculties and departments for offices and classrooms. – 17% to the Masters’ Offices including Senior/Faculty common rooms (which the audit noted have a utilization rate of 30-40% during the daytime). – 18% student space, including the junior common rooms, student organizations, pubs, etc. Some of this space is open to the public during the day, while some must be reserved through the Master’s Office. – 8% to two large dining halls. – 2% other. <p>Increasingly, space at York is being recognized as a valuable and limited resource. The University is under pressure to improve the space provided to students and indeed the newly established IIRP “Campus Experience” working group is looking at refurbishing and developing student space to improve the campus experience. The large amount of space currently allocated to Colleges needs to be scrutinized in detail as part of this working group.</p>		

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<p><u>Program Budgets</u></p> <p>Each College has a program budget which is used for programs and activities. The audit identified an accumulated surplus of \$311K as of April 2015. All Colleges had a surplus and five out of the eight Colleges had more than \$44K, which represents roughly 90% of annual funding. This suggests that the programming budgets are misaligned with programing activities.</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>While the mandate of the Colleges has remained essentially the same over the past 40 years, the University and its student demographics have changed significantly, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Undergraduate enrolment has tripled; – More of the University’s students are commuters; – 80% of students work part-time; – 25% of students have transferred to York from another post-secondary institution; – New technology and social media have resulted in dramatic changes to student participation rates in activities and events. <p>It is crucial that Colleges and the University adapt to this changing environment in order to effectively support their mutual priorities and contribute to student success. This will required improved strategic planning, measurement,</p>		

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accountability, engagement with Faculties and students, and coordination of effort within the Colleges in order to optimize their value to the University community.		