



*University of Toronto: Academic Planning in the context of Towards 2030*  
*September 2009*

***Introduction***

The University of Toronto has affirmed, in *Towards 2030*, to strengthen its position as one of the world's leading publicly-assisted universities. Our students benefit from internationally renowned faculty members and their research, as well as a wide and deep array of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across three campuses and many faculties. Our trajectory has been an impressive one and it is critical for the state of knowledge in this country that we maintain it, especially during these troubled economic times.

The University engages in careful planning in order to keep itself on its trajectory and to protect and enhance our core values: excellence in research, education, and accessibility. We have been guided by some excellent university-wide academic plans. In 2003, the comprehensive *Stepping UP* set the context for a unified, simultaneous planning process across all our divisions. In 2007, we embarked on a sustained process of consultation, task forces, and more far-sighted planning, culminating in the *Towards 2030: A Third Century of Excellence at the University of Toronto*. It sets out the long term and overarching goals for the University with respect to matters such as enrolment, the student experience, the three campus model, resources, funding models, and university governance.

The primary mechanism we have for ensuring that we continue to improve in a way that is true to our core principles is by local academic planning. Faculties or divisions (such as UTM and UTSC) determine their visions, priorities and implementation plans, coherent with the University's aims. These divisional plans speak to teaching, undergraduate and graduate enrolment, research, government advocacy, financial resource development, and capital plans. They are the structures in which faculty, students and staff operate and thrive. Local planning is an ongoing matter, to be systematically thought through when there is a change in leadership.

This document outlines the process of academic planning for faculties or divisions. How multi-department faculties decide on their internal planning are decided by the division. Divisions might choose to have all their constituent units plan simultaneously or they might choose to roll out to their departments the model outlined here.

Academic divisions are on five-year rolling budgets, reviewed annually by the Provost, along with their advocacy and advancement aims. Divisions are thus continuously scrutinizing and modifying their plans in light of new circumstances. Divisions and faculties put together plans within two years of a new dean coming into place or within a year of decanal re-appointment.

University-wide administrative portfolios are also subject to periodic review and divisional leaders will be consulted during the course of those reviews for input and feedback.

## ***Building on previous academic plans***

*Stepping UP* addressed matters that spanned all divisions - academic, human resources, student life, etc. It identified five key priorities for the University: enhancing the student experience; fostering interdisciplinary collaboration; bringing together undergraduate and graduate research opportunities; connecting the University of Toronto to the broader community through policy and outreach; and improving equity and diversity.

*Towards 2030* also identifies key objectives for the university and, unsurprisingly, there is considerable continuity with *Stepping UP*. The *Towards 2030* objectives include:

- Maintaining our research-intensive culture, the academic rigour of our educational offerings at all levels, and the excellence of faculty, staff and students across all three campuses and partner institutions.
- Enhancing our global reputation for the generation of new ideas and transformative discoveries.
- Engaging all categories of faculty with our teaching mission, and maintaining an emphasis on nurturing inquiring minds and building the creative and analytical capacity of our students at all levels.
- Reinforcing our strengths in research and scholarship through our enrolment and recruitment strategies, and maintaining our leadership position in graduate and secondary professional education.
- Focusing on providing an excellent experience for students, inside and outside our classrooms.
- Contributing substantially to the prosperity of the Toronto region, Ontario and Canada.

This is the context in which we operate. Divisional plans ought to keep in close contact with the *Towards 2030 Synthesis document*.<sup>1</sup>

## ***Timing of Plans***

As academic planning is linked to the leadership of an academic division, then in the first two years of a new dean's term, it is important to embark on a process which will lead to a plan. This process involves engagement of faculty, staff and students; consultation with other members of the division's community; consultation with other campuses and divisions; consultation with the relevant Vice-Presidential portfolios (Human Resources, Advancement, etc.); and a review of existing strengths, challenges and opportunities. A division's plan should have a time frame of five to seven years, aligned with the normal decanal term. It should be nimble enough to respond to emerging circumstances and opportunities. Deans who are re-appointed for a full second term will find value in assessing, and re-evaluating and updating a division's academic plan.

The planning process aims to be aligned with the emerging quality assurance/reviews process, the framework of which is currently being drawn up by the Quality Assurance Task Force, a sub-committee of the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents. Accordingly, we make use of our review process to monitor the academic standards of our existing undergraduate and graduate programs, and to assure their ongoing improvement. The alignment of this process

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.towards2030.utoronto.ca/synth.html>

with the planning process is such that divisional plans are informed by preceding reviews and provide the basis for subsequent reviews.

## **Framework for Academic Planning**

### **Process**

Academic planning relies heavily on a self-study and external review process designed to summarize the current state of the unit. A *self-study* is a broad-based, reflective report that includes critical analysis. It is an assessment of the appropriateness and strength of the areas of activity in the division. The process of preparing a self-study should involve faculty, students and staff. The self-study should include:

- *measures of quality* (faculty research citations and numbers of articles/books published, student teaching evaluation scores, numbers of teaching awards received, dissertation awards received, graduate student placement results; evaluation of programs as per their degree level expectations; etc.)
- *measures of quantity* (how much teaching the division does and in which programs, enrolment numbers, advancement performance; alumni engagement, etc.)
- *relations with the rest of the university and the broader community* (the significant connections the division has and/or the important connections that it may have failed to develop)
- *the significance of the activities* (the extent to which the division has responded to some of the larger intellectual questions of our time, how successfully the division engages with matters of public, social, cultural interest; levels of commercialization and knowledge transfer; the impact of research and teaching, etc.)

The self-study is a document provided to external reviewers. The findings and recommendations of that external review should be taken into account and addressed when writing the academic plan. Information regarding the review of academic units is available in the *Provostial Guidelines for Review of Academic Programs and Units*.<sup>2</sup>

Academic plans should be developed through an iterative process of consultation, formulation, and further assessment. The planning processes should involve not just tenure stream and teaching stream faculty, but also administrative staff and students – i.e., all those who have a stake in the future of the division. For multi-departmental faculties, academic unit plans (departments, extra-departmental units, and programs) should be considered.

Some of the activities a division engages in will be self-contained within the division. However, there will be many activities that cut across divisional boundaries and the planning process will require a unit to engage in conversations with others. These conversations may be with faculties and schools, with the other campuses, with affiliated hospitals and other allied institutions.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/policy/academic/reviews.htm>

## **Contents of the Academic Plan**

An academic plan sets out the division's vision, priorities and path for implementation over the medium term of five to seven years. As appropriate to the mission of the division, each section of the division's academic plan should address the following:

- strengths and areas for improvement in research and scholarship
- strengths and areas for improvement in the quality of undergraduate, graduate and second entry professional education, as well as the student experience more broadly defined
- areas for disinvestment/initiatives that no longer warrant continuation
- enrolment strategy / academic program renewal and development
- government advocacy
- resource development and advancement
- capital, renovation, and new buildings
- assessment of achievement and benchmarks for success

### **1. Defining the Goals**

An academic division should articulate what it wants to have achieved at the end of the planning period and how these achievements will enable it to exercise national and international leadership in the field. Ideally, the list of strategic and academic goals should be short and should be briefly articulated.

#### *The University of Toronto context and Towards 2030 Framework*

*Towards 2030* sets out the long term strategic aims and overarching goals for the University. Academic divisions should take account of the larger university environment in relation to their own unit, indicating how their academic plan fits in with the principles of *Towards 2030*. Among the matters that the division should consider are:

- Its contributions to our research-intensive culture, the academic rigor of our educational offerings at all levels, and the excellence of faculty, staff and students
- How its enrolment strategies fit with strengths in research and scholarship, and graduate and second entry professional education provincially, nationally and internationally.
- Student recruitment and experience.
- How its research advantages are enriching undergraduate, as well as graduate education

#### *Considering the Future*

In order to define the goals, the following questions should be considered. For multi-departmental faculties, the goals of its individual units can be highlighted:

- What leadership can the division exercise in relation to the larger intellectual landscape?
- What will be the academic directions for the division?
- What teaching programs might it establish? Relinquish?

- What are its most promising research directions? What lines of research have played themselves out, or have become much less important than they once seemed?
- What do these new directions mean for the way in which the division:
  - Deploys its faculty and staff resources?
  - Relates to other research and teaching programs at the University of Toronto?
  - Configures its undergraduate curriculum?
  - Constructs its graduate programs?

## **2. Strategies Related to Each of the Academic Goals**

Goals set out the “what” of our plans for the next years. Strategies set out the “how” of realizing those goals. In describing its strategies, an academic plan should indicate the time-frame within which they can be initiated, what resources will be required for their implementation, and where these resources will be found. Emphasis should be placed on the redistribution of resources as well as the question of sustainability. The core issues that should be addressed are as follows:

- tenure stream and teaching stream complement plan;
- enrolment (undergraduate and graduate) plan;
- staff plan;
- budget plan, including a revenue strategy and strategies for improving efficiency;
- program offerings and delivery;
- research foci and programs;
- space utilization: current and anticipated needs, strategies for optimizing current space;
- IT strategy for both academic and administrative purposes and consideration of how technology will be renewed and supported.

## **3. Measuring Achievement of the Academic Goals**

Academic plans should also speak to how we can measure our success. While some of these benchmarks may be qualitative (e.g., exit interviews with departing staff and faculty, or interviews to determine student satisfaction with a new program), it is important that we also include quantitative metrics among our benchmarks. **The University is not prescribing the metrics which all academic divisions must use but instead urges a careful choice of suitable metrics suitable.** A list of potential benchmarks is available in the Appendix. Divisions should judiciously select metrics that are relevant to it and, its constituent units when those units are engaged in planning.

## **4. Correcting Course and Making Contingency Plans**

Planning horizons within universities are long ones. The best academic plans will have given some thought to risk and opportunity and will have a clear idea of alternate courses of action in the face of both. The annual process of divisional budget planning allows for such adjustments and a division’s academic plan should speak to any adjustments that it can foresee. Plans should be flexible enough to seize opportunity when it presents itself and to regroup when faced with unwelcome circumstances.

## Potential benchmarks for academic plans of units, programs and divisions

In order to prepare self-studies and academic plans and in order to assess the extent to which they are achieving their goals, academic units will want to choose metrics that are comparative and appropriate to their programs of teaching and research. These will vary among faculties and divisions.

**It is not expected that a faculty or division use more than a judiciously chosen selection of metrics as relevant.** In many instances, the metrics might most usefully be applied as a five-year rolling average. Data requested from University offices may take time to prepare, so a month's lead time, at least, is required before delivery of the data can be expected.

### I Academic Programs – Undergraduate first- and second-entry

- Frequency distribution of entering OAC averages (Undergraduate first entry programs)
  - Applications/Offers/Yield rates
  - Full-time fall intake: Arts and Science and second entry programs
  - Full-time year 1 enrolment
  - Total enrolment, fall headcount and FTE
  - Year to year retention rates (Note: not cohort retention)
  - Graduation rates
  - International: country of citizenship; Domestic: geographic origin (GTA, other Ontario, other Canada)
  - Student engagement/satisfaction National Student Engagement Survey (NSSE) data
  - Number of undergraduate research experience credits offered
  - Placement of graduates by employment sector
  - Measures of interdisciplinarity: involvement of faculty in programs offered by other units in the current year; percentage of courses cross-listed, etc.
  - Distribution of class size and number of large courses with sections, tutorials or laboratories
  - Level of financial support available per FTE student
  - Student support by type and by source of funds for the current academic year
  - Availability and utilization of financial counseling
  - Amount of teaching done by tenured and teaching stream faculty members
  - Proportion of courses/students taught in the unit by contract faculty
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- Has there been a recent curriculum review and revision? How extensive was it? What changes resulted?
  - How is the process of linking program learning objectives to the degree level expectations proceeding?
  - What steps has the unit taken to introduce in a meaningful way into its curriculum the use of information technology, undergraduate research experiences, writing requirements, student internships or co-op experiences, or international experience? How has it measured the success of these efforts and how successful have they been?
  - How have accreditation and external reviews evaluated the undergraduate programs? What changes have resulted from these reviews?

## B. Academic Programs – Graduate

- Domestic and international total enrolment
- BIU-eligible vs. ineligible domestic enrolment
- Domestic and international intake
- Time to completion
- Graduation Rates and median time to Ph.D
- PhDs granted, with comparison to Canadian and AAU peer programs (Canadian System data for comparison (2000))
- Placement of graduates by employment sector
- Percentage of doctoral students with NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC or international fellowships
- Student satisfaction Graduate and Professional Student Survey (GPSS) data
- Professional masters: full time 3-term intake
- Level of financial support available per FTE student
- Student support by type and by source of funds for the current academic year
- availability and utilization of financial counseling
- Amount of teaching or supervision done by faculty
  
- How have external reviews and/or accreditation evaluated the graduate programs? What changes have resulted from these reviews?
- Discursive comments on GPSS survey of graduate student satisfaction
- Of students who accepted our offer of admission, where else did they apply, broken down by sub-areas of the discipline, and what is the standing of the schools they applied to compared to the University of Toronto department

## C. Faculty and teaching staff

- Total number of faculty FTE
- Number of faculty FTE broken down by sub-discipline
- Number of jointly appointed faculty
- Number of contract teaching staff
- Demographics of faculty by age and rank (including senior lecturers and part-time faculty)
- Data from the University of Toronto Faculty and Staff Experience Survey (UTFSES)
- Ratios: staff to faculty FTE
- Student FTE to faculty FTE
- Student credit hours to faculty FTE; senior lecturer FTE to tenure-stream faculty FTE
- Percentage of faculty who are under-represented in the discipline; percentage of new tenure-stream and lecturer appointments who belong to these groups and trends in this data
- Use of IT in program deployment
- Interdisciplinarity: Cross-appointments of faculty, faculty who do interdisciplinary work
  
- Acceptance rate on offers for faculty positions
- Number of named Chairs and Professorships, Canada Research Chairs
- Percentage faculty (normalized to those eligible) who are fellows of the Royal Society of Canada, the Royal Society of London, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and equivalent honorific societies, and/or who are on the list of *ISI Highly Cited Researchers*
- Number of faculty invited to sit on committees of the federal granting councils
- Percentage of total graduate funding guarantee that is supported by faculty research grants
- Number of faculty in the unit who have received University teaching awards (i.e. awards open to faculty from all departments and programs in the university, 3M Teaching awards or other external teaching awards
- External review assessments of faculty expertise in relation to the discipline

- Discursive comments on student surveys such as the GPSS about the quality of faculty
- Extent and efficacy of programs to mentor new faculty
- Number of faculty invited to give keynote talks at national and international conferences and symposia
- Percentage/numbers of faculty who hold executive positions in professional societies
- Percentage/numbers of faculty seconded to government task forces, commissions etc.

## **D. Research**

In this area in particular, there will be variation across academic units as to the appropriate measures. Each unit should comment upon the level of activity in research and scholarship.

- Total external grant funding, including contract research, hospital-funded research, and research funded by international foundations and councils, expressed as levels and trends
- Research yield: the ratio of the unit's share of SSHRC, NSERC and/or MRC funding (# of awards and overall \$ amount) to the unit's national share of eligible faculty
- Ratio of research funding to graduate students and to postdoctoral fellows
- Percentage of tenure-stream faculty who are externally funded
- Publication in lead journals and by major university presses as appropriate to the discipline
- Citation counts
- Average size of lab groups in the unit (and as compared to peer departments)
- Number of invention disclosures held by the unit
- Number of active spin-off companies begun in the unit or by faculty members in the unit
- Number of faculty contributing to participatory action research with community foundations, agencies, governments
- Number of faculty commissioned to write major government reports
- Assessment of quality of research in unit by external reviewers
- Special notice by outstanding review publications
- Importance of venues in which faculty are invited to give keynote talks, undertake major review articles etc.

## **E. Staff**

- Number of staff per tenured and per total instructional FTE
- Ratios of staff to undergraduate and graduate FTE
- Data from the University of Toronto Faculty and Staff Experience Survey (UTFSES)
- Number and percentage of staff who are aboriginal, visible minority, disabled, men and women
- Numbers of technical research staff per research faculty
- Ratio of grant funding to numbers of FTE-equivalent staff engaged in research support
- Average number of training hours per year per staff member and trends
- Rate of staff turnover
- Numbers of staff receiving Faculty or University awards for service
- Exit interviews with departing staff

## **F. Governance and organization**

- Publication of clear governance by-laws for the unit; regular publication of minutes of meetings
- Participation of junior faculty, staff, and students in governance processes
- Administrative and governance structure for effective functioning.

## **G. Financial resources and development**

- Divisional budget information as contained in the annual academic review package
- Inventions and innovations revenue
- Continuing education and other programmatic income
- Average annual alumni giving to the unit
- Annual expendable donations raised
- Trends in annual giving
- Size of endowment, expressed as a number and as a trend
- Appropriateness of the level and distribution of financial resources in support of the quality of academic programs and research activities, and the capacity for flexibility and re-allocation within existing resources.

## **H. Infrastructure**

The adequacy of the infrastructure available to support its activities, including the capacity for re-allocation of space and other resources.

- Actual vs. COU Recommended Space, by category: faculty offices, graduate student space, administrative offices, teaching laboratories where relevant
- Access to IT support services at levels appropriate to numbers of faculty, research personnel, desktop users, etc.
- Access to instructional technology and equipment
- Research equipment

## **I. Outreach**

- Number of community participatory action research projects in which the unit is engaged
- Number of outreach educational activities in which the unit is engaged
- Extent of continuing education programs, expressed in student hours
- Student evaluations of continuing education programs
- Number of students placed in internships and work co-op positions
- Number of non-academic registrants from the community, business or government at symposia, workshops and conferences sponsored by the unit
- Number of collaborative research projects with industry and government agencies
- Percentage of research funding for partnerships with research and industry as a proportion of the envelope awarded by relevant granting councils and government departments
- Response of business, industry, government, community organizations to activities undertaken collaboratively with the university
- Reviews of work co-op and internship programs