

GRADUATE COLLEGE UNIT REVIEW

Summary Report

The Site Visit of the Unit Review Team for the Graduate College took place on February 20, 2018. The Unit Review Team consisted of:

Mark Vessey, University of British Columbia
Penny Pexman, University of Calgary

Following the Site Visit, the Unit Review Team prepared a written report containing comments and recommendations. The Graduate College subsequently provided responses to the recommendations. General comments and the recommendations and responses follow.

General Comments of the Unit Review Team

The University of Calgary Academic Plan 2012-17 calls for the development of “a plan for graduate student on-campus housing, including exploring the option of a graduate student residential college in Calgary.” Such a college was established as a three-year pilot project in 2015. The remit of this review was to consider progress to date and advise the University as it prepares to make decisions about the future of the College. The reviewers were provided with a comprehensive Unit Review Self-Assessment Document (with extensive appendices and links to relevant strategic documents) and had an opportunity to meet with stakeholders, including more than 30 current or recent Graduate Scholars of the College, during a full day of in-person, phone and Skype meetings on Tuesday, 20 February, 2018. We also received several written submissions. We wish to express our warm appreciation for the skill and efficiency of the Provost’s Office in setting up our meetings, for the engagement and commitment shown by all the groups and individuals with whom we met, and for the hospitality extended to us by the Head of the College, Dr. Robert I. Thompson, and by the College Scholars and “Alumni.”

We find that the College benefits its Scholars by the opportunities that it affords them for

- intellectual engagement with a multidisciplinary community, beyond their own discipline-specific graduate programs
- developing research ideas and scholarship through interactions with others, often leading to broad and innovative approaches to research topics
- sharpening research communication and knowledge mobilization skills in the course of explaining their work and their fields to each other and also to members of the broader university and local communities
- scholarly engagement with and meaningful participation in the broader campus and off-campus communities
- an enhanced sense of community, social support, and inspiration

We find, moreover, that the College benefits the University of Calgary and the City of Calgary by the opportunities that it affords

- for members of the broader Calgary community—including potential donors and other supporters—to participate in the intellectual activities of the university.
- for members of the broader Calgary community to engage with University scholars on shared questions and issues of fundamental and/or pressing importance

- for the University to demonstrate the role that it plays in meaningful service to the Calgary community
- for graduate programs to recruit, retain and advance the careers of high-quality students with talents for leadership and public service
- for the forging of enhanced connections between diverse faculties and campuses of the University of Calgary

In summary: we find that the pilot project for a graduate college at the University of Calgary is already adding significant value to the University and that it has created an opening for the University to develop a graduate scholars program that would be unique in Canada and the world, distinctive of the University in its relationship with the City of Calgary, and broadly beneficial to the education of graduate students across faculties, whether members of the College or not.

Our chief recommendation is that the University now move swiftly to establish and fund such a program, taking the necessary measures to ensure

- its full integration as *an autonomous academic and/or administrative unit* within the overall structure of the faculties and cross-faculty units of the University;
- its recognition as a strategically mandated micro-community of graduate students *in the service of* the general population of graduate students at the University; and
- its functionality as a distinctly *public-facing* organ of scientific research and of interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaboration at the University, operating in partnership with institutions and individuals in the wider local community of the City of Calgary and its hinterland.

Our specific recommendations (below) are made in the context of two discoveries that we consider critically important for all that will follow:

The *first* discovery is that the pioneer cohorts of the Graduate College, under the leadership of Dr. Thompson, have done considerably more than prove once again that a self-selecting and selected group of community-oriented graduate students from across a range of disciplines will, given the chance and (even minimal) resources, be highly creative in ways likely to benefit themselves and, if only by inadvertent spillover, others too. That point has been proved many times before in other places. What these students have done, in addition, is to have demonstrated that a community of such creative and mutually transforming individual academics can be constituted, motivated and shaped by a commitment to *public service*. In doing that, we believe, they have decisively shifted the model of such an 'ideal,' co-curricular graduate community from the ground on which Canadian graduate colleges such as those at the University of Toronto and UBC have been founded in the past.

Our *second* discovery is that, by successfully trialing a version of incentivized, small-scale graduate community and collaboration that is *not tied to residential living-in-common in a bespoke building*, this University of Calgary pilot project has been able to (A) recruit more abundant and more diverse talent *to the College* and (B) engage a wider spectrum of graduate student interests in the university *outside the College* than has typically been possible on the more traditional model referenced above. To be clear: without wishing in any way to devalue the residential component of a graduate community such as is envisaged here, we take the view that it should be regarded strictly as one component of the institution and not as defining it. For that reason, and so as to leave open the question of how best to name the

future unit, we refer from now on to the “Graduate Scholars Program” (GSP) and to “Graduate Scholars” rather than to the Graduate College or College Scholars.

With a few exceptions, our recommendations do not address matters of internal process with regard to the recruitment of Graduate Scholars, the organization of the graduate community, or the planning and execution of its public programming. We were very favourably impressed by the record-to-date of collective self-regulation and self-determination by the Graduate Scholars and consider it of the essence of a special unit like this that it not only be largely autonomous with respect to its supporting university institution but also be led from within by its student membership. We recognize and expect, as a corollary of that principle, that a GSP launched in continuity with the pilot phase of the Graduate College at the University of Calgary will be a unit in constant and lively evolution, as successive, overlapping cohorts of Graduate Scholars build on, learn from, adapt and extend the initiatives of their predecessors. That *versatility* is, in our view, a vital precondition for the continuing *utility* of the program over the years.

Our recommendations assume a program of approximately the size reached by the College in its third pilot year (60 students). We found general agreement that this was an optimal number and that any substantial increase beyond it in terms of the ongoing membership would be likely to create serious problems for internal communication and group coherence. As we see it, the small scale of the unit (1% of the total graduate student population) is one of the guarantees of its distinctiveness and visibility within the University, its financial viability, and—most important—its serviceableness to its wider constituencies (graduate-student, university, local). The main reason for having graduate colleges with larger numbers is to achieve economies of scale sufficient to support the maintenance of custom-designed, freestanding residential accommodation and (in all previous Canadian instances) an independent food service operation. We see no reason for the University of Calgary to aspire to such arrangements, let alone to the liabilities that typically come with them.

Reviewer Recommendations and Graduate College Response Follow-up

General statements by the reviewers

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- developing research ideas and scholarship through interactions with others, often leading to broad and innovative approaches to research topics
- sharpening research communication and knowledge mobilization skills in the course of explaining their work and their fields to each other and also to members of the broader university and local communities
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We find, moreover, that the College benefits the University of Calgary and the City of Calgary by the opportunities that it affords:

- for members of the broader Calgary community—including potential donors and other supporters—to participate in the intellectual activities of the university
- for members of the broader Calgary community to engage with University scholars on shared questions and issues of fundamental and/or pressing importance
- for the University to demonstrate the role that it plays in meaningful service to the Calgary community
- for graduate programs to recruit, retain and advance the careers of high-quality students with talents for leadership and public service
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Specific reviewer recommendations and college response:

The Reviewers' Report made 15 specific recommendations with respect to The Graduate College (*The College*) and two additional notes. This section provides an item by item response from the leadership of *The College* to each of these recommendations. These responses were initially prepared by the interim Head of College (R.I. Thompson) and the Vice-Chair of *The College's* Steering Committee (L. Young). The full Reviewers' Report along with the draft College Response was presented to *The College's* Steering Committee and Scholar Executive Co-Chairs for review, feedback, and endorsement of the response. This final document was reviewed and edited for length and clarity in consultation with the Provost and Deputy Provost.

Recommendations: Mandate, Reporting Structure and Endowment

- 1. Establish the GSP as an autonomous academic and/or administrative program/unit within the Faculty of Graduate Studies, with a dual reporting relationship from the Head of the Program to the Dean of Graduate Studies and to the Provost.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* recommends the establishment of *The College* as an autonomous unit within the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

- 2. Prioritize fundraising for a \$10-15m endowment, with possible naming rights for the Program or elements of it, the revenue to be applied to operational costs, ensuring in due course that the GSP is not a charge on the University's ordinary operating budget.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* endorses the recommendation of prioritizing fundraising to establish a College endowment, including the possibility of establishing naming rights for *The College*. *The College* will work with the development officer assigned by Development to create relevant proposals to facilitate this goal.

Recommendations: Internal Relations: Governance Structure and Integration with the University

- 3. Set up an Advisory Board to the Head of the GSP, to be chaired by an experienced member of the university or alumni community, with ex officio (non-voting) positions for the Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies or their deputies and for the Head of College, and voting positions, in the first instance, for: AVP Research, AVP Development, the Deans (or their representatives) of at least four other faculties at a time (on a rolling basis so that all faculties have regular senior representation on the Board), other member(s) of the GFC, representative(s) of the GSA, at least one GSP Faculty Member Associate (see below for this category), College/Graduate Scholar Executive Co-Chairs, two or more Community Senate Members or other representatives of the Calgary community. The Board to meet once a term, and at other times as needed.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* agrees with the necessity of creation of a formal governance structure for *The College*. The establishment of such a structure will form part of a formal proposal to GFC in the Fall for establishment of the unit. The membership described by the Reviewers will be taken under advisement in development of the full proposal. Of note, the structure described above is similar to what currently exists for *The College*.

- 4. In each of the faculties, assign a responsibility within the appropriate associate-decanal or other portfolio for ongoing GSP Liaison and Faculty Mentorship and to ensure effective recruitment of Graduate Scholars through and for the faculties.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* understands that the value of this recommendation is to implement effective procedures to expand the reach of, and breadth of participation in, *The College*. It will address this recommendation in the formal proposal, likely through stronger integration with FGS and an ex officio seat on FGS Council for the College Head.

- 5. Appoint a Full Professor as Head (or Principal or Director) of the GSP for the standard term of a unit headship at the University, renewable once, with appropriate release from other duties, and a stipend. As soon as possible, fund the position from the GSP endowment and combine the headship with a (named) chair in, e.g., Interdisciplinary Scholarship and Public Engagement.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* appreciates that there must be formal recognition of the leadership role of *The College* and will develop a description and structure of the role into the full proposal. The leadership of *The College* is intrigued by the idea of combining *The College* Headship with an interdisciplinary chair, but views this as a longer term proposal for consideration in the future.

- 6. Appoint two (early) mid-career faculty members from distinct fields as Deputy Heads, to assist—and, as needed, represent—the Head in all functions, and to co-ordinate the roles of GSP Faculty Member Associates (see below) and other personnel in support of the public programming activities of the Graduate Scholars.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* will take this proposal under advisement in development of the full proposal. The leadership of *The College* recognizes that a mature College would have some form of leadership team.

- 7. Establish principles and processes for the recruitment and renewal of a cadre of Faculty Member Associates (by that or any other name) of the GSP.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* fully supports the addition of Senior Scholars or Faculty Member Associates as a vital component of moving the College to the next level of operation once it is established as a University Unit.

8. Explore possibilities for the GSP to co-host high-profile visitors to the University.

Response: The leadership of *The College* fully supports the potential to co-host high-profile visitors to the University. The leadership of *The College* views such programs as a key role for *The College* to play.

Recommendations: External Relations

9. Create terms of reference and a nomination process for individual and corporate Community Partners (by whatever name) of the GSP, and proceed with appointments to that status.

Response: The leadership of *The College* has previously identified the value of, and fully supports the concept of, appointing Community partners to The College. The leadership of *The College* views this as a tremendous potential opportunity for our scholars, the unit, the University, and in fact the broader Calgary community.

10. Continue to develop the alumni organization (The Monocle Society)

Response: The leadership of *The College* plans to continue to develop The Monocle Society as the alumni organization for *The College*. The leadership of *The College* is open to working with relevant groups on campus in the development of this program, such as The Alumni Association and/or Alumni Relations.

Recommendations: Management Staffing

11. Hire a full-time Program Manager for the GSP, with responsibility to assist the leadership team (Head and Deputy Heads) and to provide support to the Graduate Scholars and Faculty Member Associates in all their activities, including budgeting, event management, communications and publicity (website, social media, etc.). As needs dictate and resources permit, also hire a part- or full-time Program Assistant.

Response: An administrative structure necessary to support College activities will be developed as part of the formal proposal for The College, to be presented to GFC in the Fall. Budget sustainability will be considered as a core factor in all decisions related to administrative team planning.

Recommendations: Facilities

12. Provide office, meeting and social space for the GSP at the ground-floor level of Crowsnest Hall (or in suitable alternative space) and provide custom-designed frontage for the Program that makes it clearly visible, accessible and welcoming to all-comers.

Response: The leadership of *The College* supports these recommendations, but acknowledges that space requirements will need to be negotiated with the relevant on-campus units. The leadership of *The College* notes that the plan for College facilities will be an important part of the full proposal coming forward in the fall.

- 13. Allocate space for up to 30 resident Graduate Scholars in accommodation as close as possible to the Program Office and customize additional Common Room space on those residence floors for use by both resident and nonresident Graduate Scholars, and ensure that streamlined and robust administrative processes are in place to facilitate residency for those Scholars who desire it.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* endorses this recommendation and notes that 95% is already in place thanks to the outstanding collaboration we have received from Residence Services. The leadership of *The College* also acknowledges that this aspect will need to be negotiated as part of the full proposal to be presented in the fall.

Recommendations: Community Activity and Strategic Planning

- 14. The newly-mandated Program should continue to develop the community activities pioneered by the first three cohorts of Graduate Scholars, including the highly successful monthly dinners that bring together members of the University and City of Calgary communities.**

Response: The leadership of *The College* endorses this recommendation, and supports the value placed on the College Dinner experience. The leadership of *The College* plans to continue its spectrum of public event programs established in its 3-year pilot project, including:

- Graduate College Speaker Series
- Documentary and Discussion Series
- Multidisciplinary Conference (e.g. Interlock 2018)
- Capstone Event
- Community Service Activities

Further details of College community activities and goals for these activities will be provided in the full proposal to be presented to GFC in the fall.

- 15. The newly-mandated Program should be encouraged to develop a mission statement and 5-year strategic plan, laying out its goals and how it means to achieve them and clarifying, for example, the purpose of its flagship “grand challenge” events.**

Response: Strategic planning will be an important aspect of the development of the full College proposal to be brought forward in the Fall. Strategic planning will be an important part of ongoing College operations once it is established as a unit.

Additional Notes from the Reviewers

Additional note: Beyond the reference (above) to GSA representation on the Advisory Board, we would also stress the need for further careful consideration to be given to ways by which the interests of the 99% of the graduate student body outside the GSP can be represented to, engaged and advanced by the Graduate

Scholars. We were pleased to see how clearly that need was already identified by spokespersons for both parties.

Response: The leadership of *The College* thanks the Reviewers for this valuable input and will take it under advisement in the development of full College proposal to come to GFC in the Fall.

Additional budget note: It was not at all clear to us from the testimony that we received that the financial award made annually to Graduate Scholars was necessary either for their financial well-being or for their sense of the distinction entailed by membership of the College/Program. We are also concerned that this award may, however insensibly, create a barrier to the full co-operation of graduate students from outside the Program with those within it. Without wishing in any way to prejudice future determinations in so sensitive an area, we raise the question of whether the funds currently allocated directly to students as Graduate Scholars might not usefully be redirected, selectively, to incentivizing and enabling collaborative work between Scholars and Faculty Member Associates.

Response: The leadership of *The College* thanks the Reviewers for this valuable input and will take it under advisement in the development of full College proposal to come to GFC in the Fall.

Follow-up

In consultation with the provost, the graduate college will develop and implement an action plan to address the review team's recommendations. If appropriate, the graduate college will prepare a mid-point review report that addresses key findings and recommendations from the review report and progress made to date. The report will be submitted to the provost's office in August 2020.