



# BA and MA in Communication Studies

2016 Annual Implementation Report

Submitted by: Jonathan Finn

Date: May 10, 2016

**Recommendations from 2012-2013 Final Assessment Report**

<b>Recommendation: discuss resource implications of an expansion of the MA program and the establishment of a PhD program.</b>	
<b>Responsibility: Department, in consultation with the Dean of Arts and the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.</b>	<b>Implementation Date: September 2014</b>
<b>2013-2014 Actions</b>	
<p>Unit Response: The Department formed a committee in late Fall 2013 to produce a feasibility study around the prospect of a PhD program and/or the expansion of the MA program. Part of that study will include a full analysis of resource implications.</p> <p>FGPS Decanal Response: I look forward to receiving the results of this study and the decision of the program on whether to move forward with a doctoral program.</p> <p>PRS Comments: The committee looks forward to receiving an update on this in next year's report.</p>	
<b>2014-2015 Actions</b>	
<p>Unit Comments: At the close of the 2013-2014 academic year the department decided to suspend discussion of a PhD program pending the results of the IPRM and the new funding model being proposed by the University. Since that time the Department has been identified as an area of existing strength and of future growth in Laurier's Strategic Mandate Agreement and in the transform with additional resources category of the IPRM. The very brief rationale given in the IPRM report is that the department should seek out the option to develop a School of Communication with consultation with Brantford (specifically Journalism). Dr. Finn contacted the 2 Co-Chairs of the PTF and the 2 Co-Chairs of the APT for further explanation. 3 of 4 people responded and all noted that no further explanation or clarification of the IPRM's recommendation could be given.</p> <p>The Department remains interested in the potential of developing a School of Communication and this could include the development of a PhD program. However, proper resourcing for such a School would be essential and the Department is not confident that it would be resourced properly within the current budget climate. Communication Studies lost 3 Full-Time tenured/tenure-track faculty in 2014-2015, none of which were replaced. Further, the Department has been told that the Faculty of Arts should not expect new hires at any time in the near future. This makes the development of a School and / or PhD highly problematic if not impossible. The Department intends to use its 2015 summer retreat to explore the idea of a School including the undergraduate and graduate programs that would be offered.</p> <p>Arts Decanal Comments: As I read these comments, CS is saying that, while it came to the conclusion not to pursue an expansion of its graduate program given resource limitations,</p>	

IPRM results have nudged it to continue the conversation in a summer retreat, in the context of a broader discussion about a "School" of Communication Studies. The incoming Dean, I'm sure, will be interested in the results of that retreat.

FGPS Decanal Comments: I look forward to hearing about the results of the retreat. It would be useful to make a decision about a possible PhD program, one way or another.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the status of the School of Communication Studies and the results of the faculty retreat in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Comments: The Department continued to develop and strengthen its MA program over the 2015-2016 year and continued discussions around a School of Communication. In relation to the former, and under the leadership of the Graduate Program Coordinator Dr. Greig de Peuter, the CS Graduate Committee created a proposal for a Co-op Option as part of the MA program. This proposal included extensive consultation with the Co-op Office and the Deans of Arts and Graduate Studies. The proposal was approved by the Department and Graduate Studies. Pending Senate approval in May 2016, the Co-op Option will run for the first time in the 2016-2017 year. We see this as being a significant draw for the program and it has already proven to be a very positive recruitment tool.

The Department continued to discuss the possibility of forming a School at its summer 2015 retreat. Further discussions took place between Jonathan Finn, Kenneth Werbin (Digital Media and Journalism) and the Deans of Arts and Liberal Arts, Richard Nemesvari and Heidi Northwood on January 25, 2016. The issue was also discussed at a department meeting attended by Deb MacLatchy on February 26, 2016. The Department remains interested in the possibility of a School but notes the challenges of doing so with limited resources and with no clear governance model as precedent. On April 11, 2016 Jonathan Finn, Judith Nicholson, and Greig de Peuter from Communication Studies met with Kenneth Werbin, Sue Ferguson, and Abby Goodrum of the Digital Media and Journalism Program at Brantford. Several preliminary strategies for collaboration were discussed including: joint PR campaigns that stress a strength in Communication and Media Studies at WLU; possible affiliation of Brantford faculty into the CS MA program; and a cross-campus list-serve and speaker series to bring the two units into more formal and frequent conversations. If successful, these initiatives could serve as the basis for establishing a School or PhD program in Communication and Media Studies.

FOA Decanal Comments: I would agree that the continuing exchange of ideas, and a more unified approach, between the Brantford Digital Media and Journalism Program and the Waterloo Communication Studies Department is beneficial to both. Whether this leads to a new program or school is less certain, since under the RCM budget model that would be in place by then a cost/benefit analysis would need to be significantly positive.

FGPS Decanal Comments: Under the leadership of the graduate coordinator, changes were made to strengthen the MA program, and increase its attractiveness to potential students. The co-op option is particularly noteworthy. The question of a new doctoral program remains unanswered, but useful multi-campus talks are continuing.

PRS Comments: The committee appreciates the thorough discussion that has been provided on the implementation of this recommendation and considers it to be completed. There is no need to report on it further.

**Recommendation: expand Department's multi-campus presence through discussions with Brantford programs, Journalism in particular.**

**Responsibility: Department**

**Implementation Date: June 2014**

**Additional Notes: Provide Dean of Arts with written account of discussions.**

**2013-2014 Actions**

Unit Response: We have yet to formally meet with representatives from Brantford. The Department is concerned with the development of programs in Brantford that have obvious overlaps with Communication studies, such as the switch from Journalism to Digital Media and Journalism and the newly proposed BFA program and advertisement for a tenured position in Game Design and Development. Dr. Jonathan Finn has arranged for meetings with Dr. Sue Ferguson, Coordinator of Digital Media and Journalism and Dr. Kathryn Carter, Inter-Faculty Associate Dean and author of the Game Design and Development proposal for May 2014. There is no written account of the discussions to the Dean at this stage.

Arts Decanal Response: There needs to be an explanation of why consultation has not as yet taken place. Also, the department needs to be clearer about the nature of its concerns. "Overlap" might be seen as an opportunity for collaboration- or might be the basis for a "protecting my turf" claim. Which is it here?

PRS Comments: The committee acknowledges that these consultations may have taken place since the submission of this report and looks forward to hearing the outcome of the consultations and any subsequent action taken in next year's report.

**2014-2015 Actions**

Unit Comments: Dr. Finn met with Dr. Ferguson and Dr. Werbin of the Digital Media and Journalism program in Winter 2014 to discuss potential collaboration. All parties were interested but couldn't see an easy, direct link between the programs. The primary problem was the geographic distance between campuses. Students could not realistically commute between campuses, making any collaborative degree complicated. It was noted that a joint graduate program could provide for such collaboration as the student numbers would be considerably smaller and there would be far fewer courses required.

Dr. Finn consulted with Dr. Ferguson again in Spring 2015 about forming a School of Communication and that topic will be the main issue for discussion at the Communication Studies summer retreat. Dr. Ferguson will communicate with Dr. Werbin (the incoming Chair of Digital Media and Journalism). It is hoped that the Department will emerge from Summer 2015 with a clear plan forward in terms of its undergraduate and graduate programs and their links to Brantford programs and to a proposed School of Communication.

Arts Decanal Comments: Clearly this recommendation, like the previous one, awaits decisions made during the 2015 summer retreat. Preparations will need to be made to ensure that the retreat covers all the key points.

FGPS Dean Comments: Multi-campus graduate programs are possible. Cultural Analysis and Social Theory has provided a good model. It would be useful to speak to the graduate coordinator for that program as to the challenges and opportunities. Again, I look forward to hearing about the results of the retreat.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on the progress made on this recommendation in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Comments: On January 25, 2016 Dr. Jonathan Finn met with the Chair of Digital Media and Journalism, Kenneth Werbin, and the Deans of Arts and Liberal Arts, Richard Nemesvari and Heidi Northwood, specifically to discuss this recommendation of the cyclical review. It was agreed that any collaborative programming at the undergraduate level was not possible due to the geographic distance between campuses and the lack of free, frequent transportation between campuses. Discussion instead focused on potential collaboration in the form of promoting the University's strength in the areas of Communication and Media more broadly. It was noted that Laurier has a particularly strong teaching and research expertise in Communication and Media, with unique foci offered at each of the Brantford and Waterloo campuses. It was agreed that faculty representatives from each of Communication Studies and Digital Media and Journalism would meet at a later date to discuss this idea further.

On April 11, 2016 a meeting was held between Jonathan Finn, Judith Nicholson, Greig de Peuter, Kenneth Werbin, Sue Ferguson, and Abby Goodrum. Following on the ideas from the January 25 meeting, the group discussed potential efforts to promote collaboration between campuses (CS and DMJ specifically). Three main action items resulted. First, a list-serve will be created for all faculty in CS and DMJ and cognate programs on the two campuses. The list-serve is intended as a site to keep faculty in communication with one another and to share announcements and events related to their teaching and research. Second, a subcommittee representing both programs and campuses was formed which will establish a

formal speaker series to bring students, staff, faculty, and alumni from the programs together in a more formal and frequent way. Third, the programs will explore the possibility of affiliating Brantford faculty with the Communication Studies MA program.

FOA Decanal Comments: The three action items described above demonstrate the potential effectiveness of continued collaboration. Both Dean Northwood and I believe that this model of communication can go a long way towards strengthening programs in the Faculty of Liberal Arts and the Faculty of Arts, and in particular towards ensuring beneficial cooperation rather than implicit competition.

FGPS Decanal Comments: Useful discussions have been ongoing among faculty at both campuses. Based on our experience with another multi-campus graduate program, it is a good idea to develop the processes thoughtfully and carefully.

PRS Comments: In reviewing this recommendation, it seemed to the committee that it was still in progress. Further discussion on the creation of affiliated faculty appointments for the MA program from related programs at the Brantford campus is encouraged. The committee would like an update on any progress made on this initiative in next year's report.

<b>Recommendation: discuss possible expansion of fund-raising initiatives.</b>	
<b>Responsibility: Department, in consultation with Development and Alumni Relations.</b>	<b>Implementation Date: June 2014</b>
<b>Additional Notes: Provide written report to the Dean of Arts.</b>	
<b>2013-2014 Actions</b>	
<p>Unit Response: The Department discussed this after the release of the cyclical review report and while we are happy to assist people from Development and Alumni, we will let their office take the lead in this area as we failed to find evidence that identifies fund-raising as part of our job. The written report to the Dean is attached to this document.</p> <p>Arts Decanal Response: The CA does not prohibit faculty from fund raising, and so of course the recommendation is legitimate. Generally, all departments need to take a more active role in fundraising and I would recommend that the Department be asked to report on their fund raising initiatives annually.</p> <p>PRS Comments: The committee encourages the Department to communicate directly with the Dean with regard to this recommendation. Please provide an update in next year's report.</p>	
<b>2014-2015 Actions</b>	
<p>Unit Comments: Dr. Finn met with Rob Donelson and Harry Froklage from Alumni and Development in the spring of 2015 to discuss this particular recommendation in the cyclical</p>	

review. All three agreed that the formation of a school would provide for a unique fund-raising opportunity such as the naming of such a school or financial support for building an undergraduate media lab. Smaller initiatives were also discussed such as seeking support for special 'capstone' classes in the 4<sup>th</sup> year. Dr. Finn agreed to work with Harry Froklage and go on some donor visits over the summer and / or fall.

It was also agreed that building contact with alumni is just as important as fund-raising and the three discussed examples of how this has been done in other programs and what might be done for Communication Studies. Dr. Finn left the meeting with a series of questions / ideas that will be taken up at the summer retreat in conjunction with the discussion of a School of Communication.

Arts Decanal Comments: On this topic Jonathan will be in close contact with Harry throughout the summer, working for the Faculty at large on Development issues. A report back in early Fall might be advised. Aggressive (and necessary) fundraising targets for CS, in my view, need not await a decision to possibly transform the department into a school. The possibility of creating a School of Communication Studies would have a significant impact on the rest of the Faculty. Should CS decide to proceed in this direction after its retreat, the next step would be discussions with other academic units in Arts, and the Dean. Given the complications, I would suggest disentangling some of the recommendations to some extent at least from the decision to form a School or not, since that decision will take some time in coming.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on any progress made toward the implementation of this recommendation in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Comments: Jonathan Finn worked with Harry Froklage over the summer of 2015 in assessing the fundraising needs and goals of the Faculty of Arts. Jonathan Finn met with Harry Froklage, the Dean of Arts and Tanis MacDonald (English) and Philippa Gates (Film Studies) on March 11, 2016 to discuss fundraising projects for Communication Studies and English and Film Studies. The results of that process helped to form the Arts-specific portion of the new CATALYST fundraising campaign. In terms of Communication Studies specifically, funds are being requested for an advanced computing lab to be shared with Film Studies. The Department is also interested in funding that could be used to 'top up' non-profit employers that wish to participate in the MA Co-op program but are unable to meet the minimum wage requirements.

FOA Decanal Comments: Harry Froklage and I continue to work at establishing alumni connections that may lead to funding in general for the Faculty of Arts, and potentially to funding for particular units. It is important, however, to ensure that such efforts remain coordinated with any attempts by individual units to fundraise on their own. The Catalyst Campaign provides such coordination, but in all cases the Development Office needs to be

informed about any separate efforts to support individual programs or departments. No such efforts should be made unilaterally.

PRS Comments: The committee considered this recommendation to be completed. There is no need to report on it further.

**Recommendation: revise undergraduate orientation materials and expand initiatives in the areas of marketing and recruitment for the graduate program.**

**Responsibility: Department, in consultation with Recruitment and Admissions and FGPS.**

**Implementation Date: June 2014**

**Additional Notes: Provide written report to the Dean of Arts.**

**Recommendation completed (2015).**

**Recommendation: develop at least two online courses per year for the next three years.**

**Responsibility: Department, in consultation with the Dean of Arts.**

**Implementation Date: September 2014**

**Additional Notes: Some courses should be courses required for CS majors. Interim report on progress to Dean of Arts by June 2014.**

**2013-2014 Actions**

Unit Response: In a follow-up meeting with Dean Carroll, it was agreed that the Department should work towards developing one on-line course during the 2013-2014 year. Dr. Jeremy Hunsinger has been developing this course as a 300-level course on Internet Studies. That course will go through the formal curriculum committees of the Department, Faculty and Senate during the 2014-2015 year. The Interim report is attached to this document.

Arts Decanal Response: My recollection is a bit different. I did say that if two courses/year was too much of a jump, we could slow things down for now and develop 1 course/yr for the first few years. I did expect, though, that one course would have been developed and finished in 2013-14 (and so by now) and that another would be underway by Fall 2014. I recommend that the department embrace a renewed commitment to online learning and commit to have 2 online courses developed and approved in time for Fall 2015, and another 1 or 2 developed and approved in time for Fall 2016.

PRS Comments: We look forward to an update on the progress made on this recommendation in next year's report.

**2014-2015 Actions**

Unit Comments: Dr. Jeremy Hunsinger has developed CS 353 Internet Studies as identified in last year's report. That course was passed by Senate this year and Dr. Hunsinger will

teach it as an in-class course in 2015-2016 and intends to develop it as an on-line course after that. In addition, Dr. Hunsinger plans to develop two on-line courses for Cultural Studies (KS215 Game Cultures and KS220 Networked and Digital Cultures) that will be available to Communication Studies majors. Due to the merger with Cultural Studies, Communication Studies students are now encouraged (and incentivized) to take the existing (KS 205) and future (KS 215, KS 220) on-line course in Cultural Studies. These courses are included as core courses in the new Options proposed by the department (see above response) but that are awaiting SAPC approval. Together with CS 353, the Cultural Studies courses will add 4 new on-line courses to the Communication Studies curriculum. We expect this process to be complete by the end of 2016-2017.

Arts Decanal Comments: Good progress. I don't understand why a full-time faculty member needs to be assigned to develop these courses—other departments hire sessional instructors, who have the support of two faculty advisors—and why the department can't be developing a wide range of online courses, including some of its required courses. But having been in two Arts departments where the introduction of online courses was initially controversial, I can guess at the reasons. Like the previous Dean, I would encourage swifter movement on this front, if at all possible.

PRS Comments: Please provide an update on online course offerings in next year's report.

2015-2016 Progress (check one):

Completed

In Progress

Other (please explain):

Unit Comments: Dr. Hunsinger continues to develop KS215 and KS220 as on-line courses and is scheduled to teach CS 353 as an on-line course in the 2016-2017 academic year.

Dr. Finn met with Sandy Hughes and Lisa Fanjoy on November 3, 2015 to discuss the development of on-line courses, specifically the potential of offering CAS members the ability to design and teach on-line courses for the department. The topic was then discussed at a department meeting with input from CAS members. However, any further discussion or development of online courses has been put on hold pending the results of two recently formed University-level committees on online learning: Course Development and Delivery; and Intellectual Property. It is our understanding that the work of these committees will likely have substantial impact on the future of online learning at Laurier and we look forward to reading the results of the committees' work.

FOA Decanal Comments: As the current Dean my position would be that establishing artificial targets for online courses ("at least...two per year") is counterproductive. It is especially important that any such courses demonstrate not just attractiveness to students, but attractiveness to students outside of our already-enrolled, on-campus cohort. In other words, they should match the Strategic Academic Plan's focus on outreach to under-represented potential learners. Thus quality is more important than quantity, and under RCM in particular the vetting process for on-line offerings will need to be significantly internalized within the Faculty of Arts.

PRS Comments: The committee agreed with the FOA decanal comments that it is counterproductive to develop online courses arbitrarily. An update on the department's strategy for online course development going forward would be appreciated in next year's report.

<b>Recommendation: review of elective courses offerings.</b>	
<b>Responsibility: Department</b>	<b>Implementation Date: June 2014</b>
<b>Additional Notes: Provide written report to the Dean of Arts.</b>	
<b>Recommendation completed (2015).</b>	

<b>Recommendation: discuss establishment of a peer mentoring program.</b>	
<b>Responsibility: Department</b>	<b>Implementation Date: June 2014</b>
<b>Additional Notes: Provide summary of conversations to the Dean of Arts.</b>	
<b>Recommendation completed (2015).</b>	

**Additional Comments (Unit):** The Department of Communication Studies has made many improvements to its undergraduate and graduate curricula over the 2015-2016 year with an eye to further strengthening the program and to larger faculty and university goals regarding recruitment and retention. At the graduate level, and as outlined above, we have proposed a new Co-op Option which is unique at Laurier and one of a few such programs across the country. The ability of MA students to gain meaningful experience through paid employment as part of their degree is truly innovative and has already proven to be a very strong recruitment tool -- we will welcome our largest-ever cohort of graduate students in the 2016-2017 year. At the undergraduate level, we have streamlined our program by removing program electives and have developed six new concentrations that reflect the unique strengths of the department: Media and Communication History; Digital Media Studies; Visual Communication; Cultural and Creative Industries; Global Communication; and Media and Cultural Theory. These concentrations reflect the research and teaching expertise of the department and also student demand and so will aid in solidifying the department's significant reputation in the field of Communication Studies in Canada.

The Department was awarded a tenure-track position for July 1, 2016. This means that for the 2016-2017 academic year we will have 16 full-time faculty, which includes one undergraduate advisor, for approximately 1100 majors. This yields a student:faculty ratio of 69:1. As such, adequate staffing remains a primary issue for the Department. The extra administrative and day-to-day work in dealing with that number of students truly sets Communication Studies apart from other units in the Faculty and at the University. As well, our very large number of majors and relatively small faculty complement effectively negates our ability to offer service teaching for the University, which is especially unfortunate given the popularity and importance of communication and media studies in the twenty-first

century. Therefore our substantial, ongoing efforts to innovate, grow, develop and / or expand are necessarily tempered by the realities of our day-to-day working environment. The difficulty of this situation was noted by the external reviewers in their 2013 assessment of the department:

*"The excellence and commitment of Communication faculty members does not override the fact that they are currently expected to perform administrative and planning tasks beyond a reasonable proportion of their time. They also perform teaching and research at a high level with barely adequate support. While the university benefits from the esprit de corps of this group, which can be accounted for by a strong departmental peer culture of equity and mentorship, retention may become an issue if the impact of other deficiencies is not mitigated.*

*Roughly 55 percent of courses are delivered by Contract Academic Staff and Limited Term instructors (per requested report from the department to the External Reviewers received June 4, 2013). This proportion should be a concern for the university and increases in the faculty complement should be considered alongside other strategic areas for future development (which are discussed under Recommendations)."*

The Department stresses that our full-time faculty complement has decreased since the time of the 2013 review while our student numbers have increased slightly. We therefore request that the University take seriously the reviewers' comments on the impact on recruitment and retention—not just of students but also of faculty and staff—of continually operating at a student:faculty ratio nearly three times the level agreed-upon in the Collective Agreement (25:1 as per Article 18.2.3.1).

**Additional Comments (Dean(s)):** FOA Decanal Comments: As noted, Communication Studies was provided with a tenure-track position for the 2016-2017 academic year. Requests for resources are wide-spread across the Faculty of Arts, with some Programs and Departments are in very precarious situations. Strategic decisions going forward will need to be based on multiple considerations, and while enrollments are obviously important, they cannot in the end be the single determinant for such choices.

**Additional Comments (PRS):** The PRS appreciates the thoroughness of the updates provided by the department in this year's report. Two of the four outstanding recommendations were considered to now be completed, but the committee would appreciate an update on the two outstanding ones in next year's report.