



Algonquin College
College Academic Council
Annual Report 2014-2015

First and foremost, I would like to thank all of the Council representatives equally for their participation, insight and expertise throughout the year. Additional thanks go to Nancy Makila, for preparing all of the materials and ensuring that we were “energized” by food and coffee.

The effort put forward by the representatives to contribute to the discussions, give feedback following presentations, and submit items for the agenda resulted in both informative and worthwhile meetings. Chairing the Council was a valuable learning experience and I look forward to continuing this year as Past Chair.

The College Academic Council meetings were held once a month from September 2014 to May 2015. During the first meeting on September 29th, the new College President, Cheryl Jensen, attended to introduce and welcome the members. Leslie Wyman was elected for the Chair position and the Executive Committee was determined.

The Executive Committee, responsible for reporting to the President and for following up on Council recommendations in 2014-2015 included:

Leslie Wyman, Chair

Kenneth Hill, Past Chair

Jeffrey Ross, Algonquin Centre for Construction Excellence, Academic Representative

Jim Kyte, Dean School of Hospitality and Tourism, Administrative Representative

Deborah Buck, Support Staff Representative

Steven Gutknecht, Director Students’ Association, Student Representative

To prepare for the year, it was agreed that Council members would survey their colleagues before the meeting in November to determine the issues to be addressed, in accordance to the parameters identified. These include pedagogy, course and program evaluation, teaching methodology and standards, evaluation and promotion policies, standards of student conduct and discipline, admission policies and practices, student awards and scholarships, and academic equivalencies.

Members submitted a list of issues from their respective Schools and presented the items in October to be considered by Council as a priority. The consistent themes overall were related to etext (technical and ethical issues), CSD Mental Health issues (how to handle increase in classrooms), Academic Dishonesty & Plagiarism (clarity of policies), Admissions Testing (need to introduce in some programs), Academic Equivalencies (standardized system), Student Course Feedback (process), and Hybrid vs Face-2-Face delivery (success rates).

Following a vote on November 3rd, the priorities identified for the 2014-2015 academic year were:

- 1: Etext initiative
- 2: Course delivery format (Hybrid vs F2F)
3. CSD Mental Health Services
4. Academic Dishonesty / Plagiarism
5. Student Course Feedback

First Priority - eText

Presentations and discussions about the results and issues surrounding the initiative were held during both the December and January meetings. Initially, the eText item was brought forward by Health and Community Studies, Media & Design, Police and Public Safety, Perth and the Library. Some of the concerns mentioned were related to the suitability of eTexts in a lab setting, the negative effect on group work in the classroom, problematic navigation, and the impact on program quality standards.

Glenn MacDougall presented the eText Initiative Summary report in December and was invited to return in January with Larry Weatherdon to provide an update on the Winter 2015 eText roll-out. Larry Weatherdon provided a demonstration of the Digital Resource Portal which gives students access to program specific information about etext and BYOD as well as access to software. The Students' Association representatives expressed their support for the initiative.

In an effort for efficiency and time management, members submitted specific questions to Glenn to review prior to the meetings, which he then provided responses for.

There were requests for tracking data for success rates, and clarification of the message that any "required" resource for a course must be in an eText format. The late access date for faculty to access the materials was challenging in the Fall, so members inquired about the possibility of an earlier access date for 2015. Other requests included reviews of the print on demand option, the length of time students own the materials, the process for students to opt for hardcover and streamlining of the ordering system.

Some highlights of the feedback from Glenn included the fact that eText ownership is forever and students can print on demand; eText may not suit all learning environments and faculty in consultation with their Program Coordinator and Manager can decide if another resource is more suitable; the

process to opt out by students needs to be better communicated; if an etext is part of a bundle, it is not possible to swap it for a hard copy; and there is a need to ensure weaker students are not at a disadvantage.

Second Priority - Course Delivery Format

The General Arts and Science & Health and Community Studies departments requested clarification of the “hybrid” definition and how to distinguish an online hour from homework. Concerns were also raised about the 20% target for each program to be converted to hybrid.

Jo-Ann Aubut, Harpreet Singh-Sonu and Glenn MacDougall attended the January 2015 meeting to address the ongoing conversation. Jo-Ann Aubut indicated that the online hour of a hybrid course is strictly for online activity. It is not for homework and it is not for students to be engaged in field placement or volunteer work or interviews. Course outlines would include the expectations and programs need to determine how best to teach the students how to do the work.

Glenn MacDougall noted that some courses might not be suitable to offer as hybrid, for example Level 01 courses, and that the 20% target is not a requirement for programs. From 2003 to 2009, analysis showed that the success rate for the hybrid model “outperformed” the F2F model. Now that half of all courses are hybrid, the quality of the courses needs to be reviewed. Curriculum Services has developed the Hybrid and Online Quality Standards (HOQAS) which is available to assist faculty with course development. The Quality Matters (QM) framework was selected as the foundation for the College’s HOQAS.

More specifically in relation to course delivery format, the question was raised about the one-year moratorium on the introduction of all new full-time, online programs. Claude Brulé noted that the issue was around the alignment between the delivery types. Many faculty have been told by the Chair of their department that online courses will be taught only by part-time staff and concerns were identified that this could create a divide when many full-time faculty would like the opportunity to teach online. Claude Brulé responded that he would investigate and again invited Council members to participate in the development of the Digital Strategy 2.0. **This issue was raised in later meetings and Council requested follow-up in the Fall when the CAC meetings recommence in 2015-2016.**

Third Priority – CSD Mental Health Issues

T. Connolly and S. McCormick participated in the March meeting to discuss the concerns from the School of Hospitality and Tourism, General Arts and Science and Academic Upgrading about the increase in the number of students with anxiety and depression in the classrooms. Faculty sought direction and guidance on how to cope with and handle some of the situations that are more and more prevalent.

There are many health and wellness strategies being put in place at the College, for example, the “Starting the Conversation” module that is available for faculty online and the “Top 10 Student Service Resources” hand-out. It was reiterated that there are many tools and strategies available to help the

students and that the staff in the Counselling, Health Services and Mental Health departments are all available to assist. It was suggested that if faculty have concerns, to have a conversation with the student and they are also encouraged to talk with the counsellor identified on the LoA. In a situation requiring immediate attention, faculty are encouraged to call 7300 – SSS Distress Hotline, 7200 – Counselling, 7222 – Mental Health Support, or if there is no answer at any of the above numbers, to call Security.

Fourth Priority - Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

Discussion at CAC brought forward concerns and highlighted the need for clarity regarding the perceived overlap between [AA18 Academic Dishonesty and Discipline](#) and [AA20 Plagiarism](#), procedural considerations for online students, and the use of academic integrity courses as sanctions. A working group was convened to explore the issues at the request of Claude Brulé, Senior Vice President Academic (SVPA), and a discussion was held with Academic Area Council in April regarding the issues.

In May, Jo-Ann Aubut, who was part of the working group, updated members on the discussion undertaken to date with Academic Administrators and sought CAC representation for another working group that was tasked with moving recommendations forward to enhance the policies. Further revisions were made to address the concerns regarding the clarity between the two policies, timelines and the student attestation form. **College Academic Council approved the proposed revisions to the two policies.** In addition to the other amendments, a concern was previously raised regarding policy AA18 Academic Dishonesty that it does not speak to the online environment when there is a request for a “meeting”. Deans were consulted and it was agreed that the policy include clarification as to how a meeting can be held to accommodate online students. Following discussion, the motion passed to amend policy AA18 to reference online meeting options.

Fifth Priority - Student Course Feedback

Robyn Heaton and Pat Lychak returned to Council to present the results of the F14 Student Course Feedback Survey and were pleased to report that the response rate improved year-over-year across all academic departments by over 15,000 responses for a 15 percentage-point increase in participation, from 20% in 13F to 35% in 14F. The next steps were for Chairs/Deans to review the survey results with the intent to identify best practices from the top 10 and to identify the issues that inform the lowest 10 so that the Chair can work with the professors to address. Chairs will be discussing the survey results with their faculty in the near future. The reporting process was still being finalized.

For continuing improvement of the response rate, it was discussed that the SCF period should be promoted in the Spring/Summer term with increased communication, and an extended time period to complete the survey. Also, faculty are encouraged to allow time in class to complete the survey.

Additional Item – Evaluation of Student Learning/Student Exam Procedures

The final item that was discussed by Council in May was **Policy AA13 Evaluation of Student Learning /Student Exam Procedures**. Jo-Ann Aubut spoke to actions taken and suggested updates to the policy terms in response to Jack Wilson’s concern regarding procedures for final assessment week and mid-terms vis-à-vis religious headwear, headwear in general, and earbuds. She noted that discussions had been held with Deans and that departmental/ school procedures have been reviewed. Council recommended that “must” be added to the need to notify the professor of the requirement for a female presence one week in advance (rather than “whenever possible”). It was also noted that students need to be aware of this procedure and that it should be added to the course outlines under College Information. **Recommended amendments to the policy were approved as presented recognizing that J. Aubut will follow up on the suggestions made.**

Other Presentations:

In addition to the priorities for the year, there were other presentations and updates given to Council.

Jeff Macnab, Registrar, provided details about **the new MTCU Tuition Fee Policy** for the non-refundable \$500 deposit requirement which went into effect for 2015-2016.

Krishna Stanton, Project Manager, presented updates on **2 automation projects**. The Bursary Automation Project uses Fluid Ware to process bursaries automatically and deposit funds directly to a student account which also includes awards and scholarships. The other project, the Conduct Manager involves software purchased by the Students’ Association to automate the process where there is a case regarding conduct as per Policy SA07 Student Conduct that will provide a single database which will allow for the automated management of tracking documents and produce reports and view statistical trends on the academic conduct issues.

Laura Stanbra and Krishna Stanton indicated to the Council that one of the main objectives of the project was to centralize all student disbursements to ensure a timely, fair and consistent process by placing responsibility with the financial experts within the Financial Aid office. **Council endorsed the proposed recommendations** that the Financial Aid Office’s name be changed to the Financial Aid and Student Award Office and that the changes to Directive SA 05- Bursaries, Awards and Scholarships and to Directive SA 10- Secured and Unsecured Loans, as well as the addition of good academic standing being added to above mentioned policies.

Marie Theriault, Manager, Scheduling, provided a demonstration of the **Automated Exemption process** which is improved and faster. A question about the process to be considered was the planning and follow-up during the summer months when Coordinators are not available.

Rebecca Volk and Cathy Kenney presented the details about the **new Development/Orientation Program for New Faculty** being implemented in August 2015. The development process aims to reflect provincial standards in program development through the utilization of environmental scans, literature review, advisory committee, surveys of Deans, Chairs, faculty and students. Council indicated their support for the program, but agreed that the college also needed to provide additional support for part-time faculty.

Leah-Ann Brown provided an overview of the **Faculty Performance Development program** that all faculty are expected to participate in once within a 3-year cycle. The program will be practiced following the four guiding principles to align with the Colleges core values, support student success, assist faculty in the pursuit of lifelong learning and professional growth, and ensure transparency throughout the program. The pilot was extended to June 2015 with a College-wide launch in Fall 2015. **Council requested that an update be given when meetings recommence 2015-2016.**

In closing, I wish the next Chair and all Council Representatives a successful year.

Leslie Wyman,
2014-2015 Chair,
College Academic Council