

**Université d'Ottawa**  
**Comité consultatif du budget**  
**Commentaires de la communauté universitaire**

Expéditeur: Steve Perry

Faculté/Service : Dean, Faculty of Science

Dear Marc:

Below, please find some responses to your budget proposals. In addition, I am proposing a change in our program that may save the university considerable amounts of lost revenues (please see below).

**b) Expenses**

**i. Scholarships and financial aid: freeze or cut the spending envelope for scholarships (in comparison to 2013-2014 levels)**

I feel that cutting our scholarship budget would be a mistake and indeed it is even possible that the number of students we lose because of lowered scholarships may actually have a net negative impact on our financial situation. We must remain competitive with other universities in Ontario.

**ii. Salaries and benefits:**

- **Hiring freeze: freeze hiring in 2014-2015 for all regular and contract positions, except to hire full-time academic staff in compliance with terms agreed upon with APUO;**

Such a global strategy is ill-advised in my opinion. We must be cautious in our hiring plans but there may be situations where a faculty or service may need to hire.

- **Regularization: discontinue regularization of positions for 2014-2015**

I don't agree with such a reversal of our policy – there should be a limit on the numbers of years our support staff are allowed to work with only short-term contracts.

**iii. Construction and renovations: freeze or cut the building inventory improvement plan (PAPI) spending envelope;**

Ultimately, such an approach will only cost uOttawa more money in the long-term. Pay it now or pay it later but paying it later is inconsistent with Destination 2020 (student experience should continue to be the PAPI priority).

**iv. Travel: freeze or cut travel expense spending;**

No comment

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**v. Library acquisitions: freeze or cut expenses related to acquisitions.**

This could really hurt the research capacities of our faculties as well as negatively impacting on upper level undergraduate and graduate teaching. uOttawa is well-respected for its electronic library resources – we need to preserve this.

**What other measures should we consider to reduce expenses charged to the Operating Fund?**

The Advisory Committee will happily consider suggestions and comments on ways to balance the 2014-2015 budgets. We will also consider proposals that are likely to have significant long-term effects.

With course registrations coming at a close as of this past Friday, we currently have 247 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year students in a General Science program, 191 with full-time status, and 56 with part-time status. Whether in the first year of an Honours degree or a General degree, the amount of revenue received from the provincial government is the same. However, for the second year and beyond, the amount of revenue brought in by a General Science student is \$5442 less, annually, than that brought in by an Honours Science student. The most conservative of estimates of lost revenue would be the 191 full-time students taking their minimum 4 courses, and the 56 part-time students taking their minimum 1 course. This amounts to 820 courses this semester, and thus 164 FTE's this semester. On an annual basis, this amounts to \$892K in lost revenues. The services offered by the University to the student remain the same, whether in an Honours or in a General. The tuition paid by the student remains the same. This truly is a lost source of revenue, and an attempt should be made to recover it and improve the student experience.

It should be pointed out that some are in General Science by choice. However, the utility of a General degree has been heavily questioned in recent years by the Faculty. Our own University regulations state that a General degree cannot lead to graduate studies, and we doubt that a General degree places anyone in a competitive advantage on the job market. And even if there were any advantage whatsoever to a General degree, a student could invoke it upon graduation, as is often done by students admitted to medical school before the completion of their Honours degree. In short, housing students within a General program has little to no advantage to either the student or the University. And despite the above considerations for those voluntarily in the General degree program, the reality is the following: almost all 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year students in the General degree are there because they were demoted from an Honours program to a General program.

In the following proposal, by no means are we advocating lessening the requirements of a diploma for an Honours program. All requirements remain the same. Also, as we are advocating this only for students with a CGPA greater than 3.5, which is "good standing" for a General program, this will not in

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any way be used to retain students who would normally be asked to withdraw from the Faculty. We are therefore not lessening the quality of our Honours programs nor the quality of our student population.

After the Winter semester of 2013, 79 students with a CGPA greater than or equal to 3.5 were asked to withdraw from an Honours program within the Faculty of Science for having an insufficient CGPA for their Honours program (typically 4.5 after a period of probation). These 79 students had the option of registering within a General degree, and since they were at 3.5 or higher, they would be in "good standing" within their new program and thus would have all the rights and privileges of any Science student. Though this is anecdotal for our most recently completed Winter semester, a great deal of information can be gleaned by looking, one by one, at what happened to these 79 students in the following, just completed, Fall 2013 semester. Of the 79, 51 did register in a General Science program and continued to take courses as if they were still in an Honours program. Collectively, they completed 215 courses. This is 43 FTE's. On an annual basis, this amounts to \$234K of lost revenues for the University.

We propose the following. Rather than demoting students with a CGPA of 3.5 or higher to a General degree, we propose to extend the probationary period and keep the students registered within an Honours program. Extending probations is currently done for those students at 4.3 or 4.4 who are demonstrating good progress (these students are *not* included in the above count). We simply propose to extend this same service to all students with a CGPA over 3.5.

The \$234K mentioned above is an extremely conservative amount. We are ignoring students asked to remove themselves from an Honours program after the Spring/Summer and Fall semesters. They typically account for less than 20% of our students in this category. Furthermore, a student placed into a General after their 2<sup>nd</sup> year could remain in the General degree for years 3 and 4 (\$10,884 of lost revenue to the University, rather than the simple annualized amount of \$5,442 used in our estimate). Ironically, if they manage to raise their CGPA to above 4.5, they could ask to graduate within an Honours program, and it really becomes obvious that an unacceptably large amount of money has been needlessly lost by the University, with no savings to be had by the student either.

We wish to make this "extension of probation" part of a major initiative to improve the student experience. Of the \$234K, we hope to set aside \$100K in a pilot project. Of the \$100K, we propose that \$45K come from the Faculty of Science, and \$55K from the University, in line with the 45/55 revenue sharing currently in place. The cost should not be borne by the Faculty alone. These students will take courses in other faculties, and as such, it is clear that the Faculty of Science will not recoup the "faculty" share of the revenues. Furthermore, the University has just as much to gain, actually 10% more, from this pilot project in terms of new revenues that could be invested in other initiatives.

For all students benefitting from this "extension of probation" pilot project, the Faculty of Science proposes the following services:

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- 1) With existing staff in the Faculty of Science Undergraduate Office, students benefitting from an “extension of probation” will be required to attend a mandatory information session where we will give pointers on how to improve their academic record. However, the main message will be the following: “You are being allowed to stay in the Honours program, but if you do not raise your CGPA to 4.5 (and DGPA to 5.0) by the end of your studies, you will graduate from the General program.” Students who do not attend these sessions will not be allowed to benefit from this program. We firmly believe that near 100% compliance will be achieved as students in this situation often plead to remain in their Honours programs.
- 2) The \$100K set aside for the pilot project will be used to pay for 5000 hours of tutoring at \$20/hour. We propose establishing a “tutor bank” where students with a CGPA of 7.0 or higher and a mark of A- or higher in a given course will be allowed to tutor for that course. This resource will be limited to our most important 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 3<sup>rd</sup> year courses (those with enrolments over 100, combined for both official languages). We propose limiting ourselves to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year courses as DGD’s and Help Centres already do an excellent job for 1000 level courses, and quality control becomes an issue at the 4<sup>th</sup> year level as it will be nearly impossible to ensure the A- criterion for 4000-level courses and have an adequate pool of tutors within the “tutor bank”.
- 3) In the initial phase of this pilot project, we propose limiting tutoring services to Science students with a CGPA of 5.0 or lower or a mark lower of C or lower in the course’s prerequisite (or an average of C or lower if multiple prerequisites exist).
- 4) Students in the program will be limited to a total of 15 hours of tutoring in a semester. If they choose to have more services, an agreement outside of the scope of this pilot project can be struck between the student and the tutor. The 15 hours may be dedicated to a single course or split over a maximum of three courses.
- 5) Prior to being connected to a tutor, the student must visit our Faculty of Science mentoring service (“Your Science Buddies”) to receive general advice on their academic studies and the best way to make use of the tutoring services. The mentors will also then be responsible for providing the contact information to the student on their tutor or tutors.
- 6) If demand for tutoring services outstrips our financial resources, the Fall semester will be limited to 3000 hours of service on a first come, first served, basis. The requirements for the Winter semester will then be tightened (reduction to a maximum of 10 hours per semester) with first priority going to students who placed themselves on a waitlist in the Fall semester. After that, first come, first served, will again be imposed if necessary.

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- 7) Tutors will be reimbursed for their services when we receive an invoice signed by both the tutor and the student confirming that the services were rendered.

Naturally, our focus is on the students receiving these tutoring services. However, having our better students engaged working as tutors for the Faculty will increase their own student experience and impart a greater sense of belonging to the Faculty and the University. In fact, whether or not a student participated as a tutor or teaching assistant is a question on the NSSE survey. Though it is not the main point of this proposal, these last points should not be overlooked.

Once approved, we propose the following timeline for this pilot project:

- 1) in mid-March, we send out a targeted e-mail to all of our Science students with a CGPA of 7.0 or higher asking them if they wish to be a tutor (and to list which courses they wish to tutor...staff within the Undergraduate Office will confirm they have the requisite A- in said courses)
- 2) in late May, when we perform the required Academic Standing, all students in an Honours program with a CGPA of 3.5 or higher who would normally be asked to change programs from an Honours program will be allowed to stay in their Honours program with an "extension of probation"
- 3) in early September, multiple information sessions will be held for students who received an "extension of probation" ....failure to attend any session at all will result in a transfer to a General program as soon as possible (after the Fall semester)
- 4) in early September, the "tutor bank" will be selectively advertised, by e-mail, to 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> year Science students with a CGPA of 5.0 or lower (posters near the Undergraduate Office will advertise the service to those with a C or lower in course pre-requisites)
- 5) in mid-September, once the course registrations are finalized, the mentoring and tutoring services will be opened to students qualifying for these services

The success of this program, financially, will be judged by the amount of "lost" revenue, and this will be easily calculated by looking at the number of students registered in a General B.Sc. We hope to significantly cut into this current amount of \$892K/year. Academically, the success of the program will be judged by the percentage of students with a CGPA of 4.5 or lower. We hope to cut into this percentage by a significant amount. Though the pilot project is funded by revenues generated by "extension of probation" to students under 4.5, students who never have, and never will, fall under a CGPA of 4.5 can equally benefit from the tutoring services. Finally, no student will be forced to remain in an Honours program: they may willingly go into the General (or into another faculty altogether) if that is ultimately their choice. Also, no student will be forced to make use of personalized tutoring. Our ability to make full use of our 5000 hours of tutoring services will show that the demand for such a service does indeed exist.

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We hope that the University will endorse and support this pilot project. Unlike many proposals put forward, this one has the distinct advantage that its fundamental premise, "extension of probation", easily pays for the entire pilot project with well over 50% of the remaining revenues available for reinvestment in other Faculty and University priorities to also further enhance the student experience. Also, the University may choose to allocate their \$55K within the framework of their exiting Work/Study program if they feel it is to their advantage. And this is funded in an extremely student-friendly manner: student wishing to remain in the Honours program, at no extra cost, rather than being demoted to a General program.

This truly is the ultimate win/win proposal for the entire University population.