



**BRIERCREST COLLEGE
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October 26, 2018

The Honourable Tina Beaudry-Mellor, M.L.A.
Minister of Advanced Education
Room 307, Legislative Building
2405 Legislative Drive
Regina, SK S4S 0B3

Dear Minister Beaudry-Mellor,

Re: Response to the External Review Report dated October 10, 2018

We first want to express our deep gratitude for Dr. Nicole Wyatt and Dr. Francesco Freddolini who prepared this constructive report sharing their experience and wisdom in higher education. During the site visit the reviewers conducted themselves very professionally and warmly, yet with thoroughness and diligence. We benefited by having them in our midst. After receiving the reviewers report, a meeting was held on October 17, 2018 that included the Dean of the College, the Dean of Arts and Science, and the Chairs of the Humanities and History departments to consider our response to the report. Overall, we take no exception to the report, the observations or recommendations. In our response we have nothing to contend in their analysis of our program and college. Our response includes an explanation of a few initiatives that are being undertaken and our future plans emerging from the recommendations.

Recommendations

1. Improvements in scholarly and pedagogical development for faculty

It is conceded that pedagogical development for mid and late career faculty has largely been the responsibility of individual faculty members. Currently, there is an annual assessment of individual faculty performance using student course evaluations, which are reviewed together with their respective Dean. Shortcomings are noted and addressed. There is also an annual peer classroom visitation in which faculty members are rotated into classrooms and

provide confidential feedback. These steps provide some accountability and assessment, however there could be more done to provide specific pedagogical learning and training. Certainly, Universal Course Design has a great deal to offer along with advances in blended learning activities and will be advocated. To directly address this recommendation, the Teaching and Learning Committee is meeting this month and will be tasked with addressing and formulating a plan to make improvements in this area. The self-funded research policy will be reviewed with faculty at our next Faculty Senate meeting to increase familiarization with this process.

2. Broadening the mandate of the Student Success Centre

In this past year, we have expanded the mandate and increased the resourcing to the Student Success Centre in hiring Erin Gordon to a new position as Director of Student Success. Erin was previously the Assistant to the Dean of the College and has sharp and detailed insight into the inner workings of our academic program. With her background as both a public and private school teacher (Master of Arts in Education), she comes well-trained in the key issues of education that will fuel her planning in the area of student success.

A larger overall goal for student success is the need to affect a culture shift around student accommodations and student success in general. We will develop clearer policies around accommodations, but more so, we need to create a culture change where all the services of the Student Success Centre become normative and accessible. As the reviewers noted, the current model is mostly reactive, a system and ethos that requires students to step forward and confess their weakness in order to get assistance. Rather, the ethos and process ought to be more natural, affirming, and valuable to students, and the offer of student support should be frontloaded rather than in reaction to a problem. This culture change will be encouraged and supported by the institutional leadership.

Beyond the ongoing mandate to provide student coaching and mentoring, there are two areas that will receive increased attention and development: Accommodation Policies and Early Intervention Strategies.

First, our Accommodations policy needs to be researched and updated. Along with this, faculty will need further training to identify deficiencies and assist students according to their particular needs.

The second initiative, that is related to the overall cultural shift, involves Early Intervention strategies as a way of more broadly assisting students and helping to identify academic issues before they become significant problems. Studies have clearly demonstrated that done well, early interventions will assist in student retention and graduation rates. Our Director of Student Success is working on a few pilot projects as well as policy development in this area.

- Study groups

In response to student concerns about the exam challenges, the Director of Student Success is working with students to form study groups. All students in both sections of the course were given the opportunity to sign up for a group if they so desired. Erin placed students in groups of 4-5 based on student availability. For each groups' first meeting, Erin met with the group to help them create a contract and to introduce them to learning activities that could be used during their sessions. Erin will monitor the participation rate this semester and quality of this initiative to assess its effectiveness.

- Early Alert Systems (EAS)

Erin has conducted research on EAS utilized by other colleges and universities, looking to uncover the most effective strategies and apply them to our own unique context. As the research has revealed that cooperation across departments is needed for an effective EAS, Erin will be chairing a committee with input across various departments (faculty, academic advisers, athletics, Student Development, and the Counselling Department) to work through key considerations for an EAS at Briercrest. Further research will need to be done in navigating the issue of student privacy.

- In-time Workshops

Before the semester began, the Director of Student Success contacted faculty teaching 100-level and/or core curriculum courses about the timing of major assignments and exams. In response, she is developing a series of workshops on writing a research paper. The initiative is being monitored to determine how to maximize attendance and benefit for students.

Concerning support for faculty in program design, we feel this falls more naturally to the Teaching and Learning Committee (a standing committee of the Faculty Senate) as part of the program of pedagogy training. The Teaching and Learning Committee is being tasked with liaising with the Student Success Centre (and Indigenous Affairs) to provide more training and direction for faculty on program and course design.

In this next year, Erin will evaluate the effectiveness of our current enhancements and make further adjustments. In sum, we have already begun to provide more support to Student Success and expanded their mandate. We anticipate these enhancements and more to come over the next few years.

3. Hiring of a historian specializing in North American History

This recommendation for Humanities coincides with the official authorization of the BA History/BA History Honours program only a month ago. One of the conditions of this authorization was to increase the faculty strength in History over time. Consequently, we do intend to add additional faculty strength beginning in the fall of 2019 both in terms of permanent faculty strength and adjunct capacity.

4. Further development of the existing 3-year academic planning cycle

While we do have a course rotation developed we have not published this for students. However, we have created the kind of document described by the reviewers that give students general expectations for course planning (this document is currently under review and once refined will be provided to students). Nonetheless, the advantage of smaller schools is that students regularly benefit from access to faculty for Independent Studies. This is very common as students get near the end of their program when they have the opportunity to work closely with a faculty member on areas of interest to the student.

5. Suggestions for program development

- Visual and media literacy – Currently, one of our English faculty members, Matthew Zantingh is on sabbatical in Ontario and is auditing a Film Studies course at Wilfred Laurier University with the purpose of developing a similar course at Briercrest. Consequently, we have scheduled FILM 200 for the fall of 2019 and it will become part of our regular rotation. The department will also consider further development of Visual and Media courses for future delivery and perhaps use adjunct faculty as needed.
- Indigenous content – This has been an ongoing discussion amongst our faculty. The Indigenous Affairs committee in conjunction with our Indigenous Director have been assigned the task of providing training and encouragement at an upcoming Faculty Senate meeting.
- Portfolio – The portfolio is a capstone learning interview conducted by two faculty members with each BA graduate. While each year we adjust the portfolio process, the Faculty Senate has approved an ad hoc committee to make significant revisions. The committee includes: faculty members, Student Success personnel, Student Development, and a recent graduate. It is expected to take a full year to affect change as multiple issues are being addressed along with an earlier introduction to the students and the use of Canvas.
- Service learning – The Teaching and Learning Committee is being tasked with reviewing the current policy related to Service Learning and the information from this report will be passed to them. The Humanities department found it difficult to conceptualize what specific types of community service would be most relevant to the Humanities program. Further consideration will be given to this notion by the committee.

- More interdisciplinary courses – This program review has sparked a discussion in the Humanities department that considers the specific courses that would be suitable to be topical or interdisciplinary. In our context, it is felt that these courses would have to be carefully planned to make sure they are not overlapping with other courses. Sweeping changes are not being considered here, but modest consideration will be given to the possibility of adding more interdisciplinary courses.
- Graduate Attributes – The Humanities department will research and produce a list of attributes and have them posted on our website for the benefit of prospective students and parents to think more specifically about employability.

In closing, we are grateful for the work of the External Review Committee and benefited from their astute observations and prudent recommendations. Though there were no specific immediate calls to action or program shortfalls, we have already put some of their recommendations into action for the betterment of our program.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Don" and the last name "Taylor" written in a single, connected stroke.

Dr. Don Taylor
Dean of the College