

Internal Academic Review Committee Interim Report on the Review of Queen's Theological College

Background:

The Queen's Theological College (QTC) had been scheduled to undergo an academic review in the 2003-04 cycle. However, the timing of the review has caused a challenge, as it is not in phase with the accreditation process for the programs in the unit.

In 2000-01, the QTC completed a self-study exercise and an external accreditation process conducted by the Commission of Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools of the United States and Canada (ATS). The ATS accreditation process is designed to ensure agreed-upon standards of educational quality at the institution under review. Upon completion of this process, Queen's Theological College received full reaffirmation of accreditation for a 10-year period (to 2011) by the Commission.

The IARC, following an examination of the process already completed by the QTC, concluded that the Queen's IAR process and the ATS Accreditation process, have the same general goal of assessing the quality and suitability of the academic endeavours of the units being evaluated and that to repeat the exercise would be an unnecessary duplication of efforts. The IARC decided to carry out an abridged IAR process that would involve constituting an Internal Review Team who would be charged with reviewing the documentation, including any update since the accreditation process. Upon further reflection, though, it viewed the exercise as not particularly useful since the review team would not have the opportunity to meet with external consultants and while they could meet with the Unit, they would be discussing material that was already several years old.

The IARC thus proposes to submit an interim IARC report on Queen's Theological College based on the findings of the accreditation as part of the 2003-04 cycle and, in consultation with the Principal of Queen's Theological College, schedule a full IAR that would fit the accreditation cycle of the Unit.

Findings of the Accreditation:

The reports of the ATS Commission on Accrediting and the ATS Evaluation Team are unanimous in their praise of the programs offered by the College and the excellent relationship that exists between QTC, the Department of Religious Studies and Queen's University. In addition, the Commission commended the strong, enthusiastic and productive faculty and the Unit's efforts in planning and evaluation. In particular, the Commission took notice of the vision and clarity of the mission statement and strategy document *Queen's Theological College: Into the 21st Century*. While the Commission report included Library resources (collections and staff) as strength of the Unit, it also recommended addressing the lack of theologically trained staff members at the University Libraries. Other areas on which the Commission encouraged attention included recruitment of Board members with experience in academic life and additional efforts in the area of student recruitment.

Conclusions:

The IARC is satisfied that the ATS accreditation process meets the need of the internal academic review process until a full IAR, in phase with the accreditation cycle, can be scheduled. The IARC notes the statement that concludes the ATS Evaluation Team report, "*This is a place where people of remarkable integrity enjoy their work and enjoy working together, and where scarcities in resources are taken as challenges rather than excuses.*"

Recommendation:

that Senate approve the interim IARC report on Queen's Theological College.

Outcomes of the Review

Response submitted by the Principal of Queen's Theological College.

Outcomes of the Interim Internal Academic Review of Queen's Theological College Response from Queen's Theological College

As a result of the Association of Theological Schools' External Visiting Team's Report and its review by the Commission on Accrediting, and the subsequent review of the IARC, three recommendations were made. Responses to these recommendations have been on-going since 2001 and the ways they are being addressed are reported briefly as follows:

Recommendation 1: Lack of Theologically Trained Staff Members at University Libraries

Queen's Theological College's library resources are located in Stauffer Library, and as such, all library services are those provided by Queen's University Library staff. As a result of this recommendation, Queen's Theological College sought the voluntary commitment of Diane Cooke, QU Librarian, to enroll in a Master of Theological Studies Program by taking courses on a part-time basis. In addition, the Faculty Board of the Theological College appointed two faculty representatives, one from the Department of Religious Studies and one from Theology, to serve as library liaisons with Ms. Cooke. This step has improved communication with our units regarding library collection and has facilitated regular review of theological and religious studies collection policies and services.

Recommendation 2: Recruitment of Board Members

The charter of Queen's Theological College provides for a Board of Management. The Commission on Accrediting of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada recommended that we seek more governing board members "with experience in academic life." As Board members' terms expire or unanticipated vacancies occur, the Nominating Committee of the Board is intentionally seeking nominees with experience in higher education. Of five recent appointments, three hold advanced degrees at the Master's or Doctoral level. One serves as Professor Emeritus within another Ontario theological college, another has served as President of the Coalition for Public Education, while another has taught and administered in the Ontario secondary school system for over 37 years.

In June 2004, the Parliament of Canada approved changes to our charter. These changes will give the Board's Nominating Committee greater flexibility in securing nominees whose competencies reflect established criteria for Board membership, which lists "experience in higher education" as an asset.

Recommendation 3: Additional Efforts in Student Recruitment

The Theological College's recruitment efforts are taking place within the context of broad-based declining enrolments for Master of Divinity programs (professional ministry). Several actions have been taken to address the College's need to strengthen recruitment efforts. A five-year strategic recruitment plan, including increased enrolment targets, was developed and adopted. External funding was sought and obtained for a new three-year contract position in Recruitment and Development (hired August 2004). New fields of study were developed to diversify theology programs and increase student enrolment. Two new fields of study are being implemented in 2005 and a new Certificate Program will begin in the fall of 2006. Development efforts generated a new bursary to assist recruitment for international students from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Through the Board of Management's Strategic Planning Committee, the Theological College will continue to monitor recruitment activities and take steps as necessary to continue to address this concern.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place in the annual meetings between the Principal of Queen's Theological College and the Vice-Principal (Academic).