

# FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

## PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW (PPR) Bachelor of Arts (Honours) In Geographic Analysis Faculty of Arts

In accordance with the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the undergraduate Geographic Analysis program. This report identifies the strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvements and enhancements, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

This report also includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the final assessment report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy, or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations, who will be responsible for leading those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations

## SUMMARY OF THE PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW OF GEOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Geographic Analysis is a full-time, four-year undergraduate program within the Faculty of Arts. Offered by the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, the program confers a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree. No formal degree specializations appear on the diploma, though four fields of study are used to organize the curriculum and advise students regarding the choice of electives .

The Geographic Analysis program enables students to develop a critical understanding of the spatial relationships within and between society and nature. Using analytical tools, such as statistics, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and remote sensing, students are trained to analyse and interpret geospatial data. They also learn to create maps and reports that inform decision-making in realms such as business intelligence, retail location, real estate development, urban growth, immigration, social policy, public health, crime prevention, climate change adaptation, environmental conservation, and many more. Since the program focuses on the application of geographic concepts to real-world problems, it provides experiential learning opportunities throughout the four years of study, including hands-on computer labs, field studies, a mandatory work placement, and other direct interactions with the public, private, and non profit sectors.

The BA (Hons) in Geographic Analysis degree requires completion of 41 single-term, three-hour course credits. Students take 23 professional, 12 professionally related, and 6 liberal studies courses, consistent with Ryerson's tri-partite curriculum and the Faculty of Arts Common Platform. With 23 required and elective program courses, the Geographic Analysis program would be called a "specialist" degree at other Ontario universities. Like most of Ryerson's programs, Geographic Analysis is not available as a Major (12-14 courses at other universities).

The majority of senior electives as well as the capstone courses taken by students in Years 3 and 4

achieve the program goals at the proficiency level. Examples include the third (optional) statistics course and the advanced remote sensing course (building upon the general GIS introduction courses).

As expected, the practicum course, one-week overseas field trip course, and the three capstone courses, of which each student takes two, achieve all program goals at the proficiency level. This level is not just achieved through progression to higher levels over time, but it reflects the knowledge integration and transfer of technical skills to new applications that take place in an undergraduate thesis, project-based capstone course, on a field trip, and at a work placement.

Over the last ten years, the Department's faculty complement has grown from a steady state of 15-17 to the current number of 21 tenure-track faculty. Faculty expertise in the Department spans the range of areas of inquiry within Geography, including the following areas and their combinations:

- Human and Economic Geography, with a strong urban focus and clusters in Retail Geography, Health Geography, and Immigration and Settlement Studies;
- Physical and Environmental Geography, with focus on both urban and Northern environments; and
- Geographic Information Science, with specific expertise in spatial statistics and in remote sensing.

Regional areas of interest include:

- Greater Toronto Area and Southern Ontario;
- Canadian Arctic;
- United States of America;
- China, India, and Southeast Asia; and
- Central, Southeastern, and Southwestern Europe.

Faculty members have reported many scholarly publications in the Canadian Association of Geographers (including books, book chapters, journal articles, conference papers, abstracts, and posters, and technical reports.)

This document comprises the Faculty of Arts (ARTS) Dean's response to the Peer Review Team (PRT) Report and the Program's response, in accordance with the directions of the 2020 Periodic Program Review (PPR) Manual and with Section 8.2 of Senate Policy 126, Periodic Program Review of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs. The site visit by the external PRT for the Periodic Program Review was carried out between November 21 and 22, 2019. The Geographic Analysis program submitted a list of potential Peer Review Team (PRT) candidates to the Office of the Dean who then selected Dr. Scott Mitchell, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Carleton University, and Dr. Joe Piwowar, Canada Research Chair in Geomatics and Sustainability, of the University of Regina.

The PRT Report was received and the program responded to this, submitted its report to the Dean of Arts on January 13, 2020. by the Dean's Office on July 14, 2022. The Dean's response to both the PRT and the Program was received by the VPA on November 9th, 2022.

The PRT Report provides a positive and encouraging review of the program. It states that although enrolment numbers are low, the program provides a strong academic and applied geographic programming and that opportunities for growth are accessible. The PRT also supports many of the program's recommendations and provides clear guidance towards opportunities of partnership with the

EUS program as well as other integrated learning opportunities and resource securing directives.

In addition to the 18 recommendations listed in the self-study, the PRT provided 22 total recommendations. The Decanal response clearly outlines the initial recommendations and provides comments and responses to all 22 PRT recommendations.

The Academic Standards Committee completed its assessment of the Geographic Analysis program on March 16, 2023. The Committee indicated that a thorough, analytical and self-critical program review was conducted. The program provided a detailed plan for future growth and support for development.

The Academic Standards Committee recommends that the program continue, as well as provide a one-year follow-up report, as follows:

1. The mandated One-Year Follow-up Report be submitted by June 30, 2022 to include:
  - a. Updated and reviewed Program Objectives
  - b. A new protocol for the review of Course Outlines;
  - c. Procedures that address the integration of EDI in the curriculum;
  - d. A report on Admission strategies with regards to retention and future student interest; and
  - e. A strategy to ensure compliance with internal and external regulations for the review of the program.

Presented to Senate for Approval: **April 4, 2023**

Start date of next Periodic Program Review: **2025-26**

## **SUMMARY OF THE REVIEWERS' RECOMMENDATIONS WITH THE PROGRAM'S AND DEAN'S RESPONSES**

### **PRT Recommendation #1**

While we recognize that the GA and EUS programs are distinct, we suggest that there are strong but as yet unrealized benefits to greater integration and collaboration between the department's two undergraduate programs, which would be enhanced through more integrated program planning and development.

Program's Response: We agree with the value of exploring additional synergies between the GA and EUS programs. Curriculum planning is already integrated in the sense that the Department's curriculum committee handles both programs and many faculty members teach in both programs. Synergies around the physical geography stream in the GA program are already in place with shared courses and an effort will be made to identify additional opportunities for collaboration. Accentuating the distinctions between the two programs is another possible outcome of this recommendation. These efforts may impact or depend upon the ongoing EUS program review.

Dean's Response: The Office of the Dean of Arts fully agrees with the PRT and the Department that it will be useful to explore synergies beyond those that currently exist between the GA and EUS programs. As the Department mentions, such a review should also result in accentuating the distinctions between the two programs. In particular, recruitment is enhanced when students have a clear idea of the parameters, goals, learning objectives and career options of their chosen major.

## **PRT Recommendation #2**

The GA program should focus on the application of geospatial technologies to its departmental strengths: (i) retail analysis and (ii) environment and urban sustainability.

*Program's Response:* We strive to renew the Department's teaching and research capacity in applied retail analysis, the field in which many GA program alumni developed their careers. This also includes the adjacent field of real-estate analysis. The preservation of the Department's leadership in retail analysis requires the hiring of new faculty members to compensate for two recent resignations and the loss of a long-standing contract lecturer who together held much of that expertise.

In addition to the strengths in retail analysis and EUS highlighted by the PRT, it should be noted that the Department's expertise reaches far beyond these two areas. This includes research specialties and course offerings in physical geography and environmental science, critical urban geography, immigration and settlement studies, and health geography. We aim to continue teaching the transferability of geospatial technologies based on the program's existing fields of study: location analysis, urban analysis, and environmental analysis.

*Dean's Response:* The PPR self-study certainly demonstrates the Department's strength in the application of geospatial technologies in the GA program; for example, in support of applied retail analysis and the related field of real estate analysis. The Department indicates that this distinctive edge is best preserved by hiring new faculty members to compensate for the resignations of two faculty members and a longstanding contract lecturer who had specific expertise in retail analysis. However, the Department also points out their strengths in other areas such as physical geography and environmental science, critical urban geography, immigration and settlement studies, and health geography. As mentioned previously, the Department has the opportunity to make requests for new hires each year. In the Faculty of Arts, retirements and resignations do not automatically lead to replacements in a given department. There must be a rationale based on program needs and strategic priorities. Recent hires in the Department since the PRT met in 2019 have allowed growth in a number of areas, although geospatial technologies remain essential to the GA program.

## **PRT Recommendation #3**

The GA program should review the number of credits required for the Specialization, with respect to the Learning Objectives, and consider a broader range of program options which could meet those objectives for a more diverse student body. This includes the double major options highlighted in the self-study, and other options as appropriate in the Ryerson context.

*Program's Response:* We gratefully accept the PRT's recommendation to pursue double major options for GA students. The GA portion of a double major would reduce the program courses from 23 to just 13; therefore, it is expected that the reduced course load will focus on core analytical and geospatial

technology skills while much of the application of these skills will be obtained through the other major and additional courses taken according to the Arts and Ryerson curriculum frameworks. The university's move to open electives will also provide more program options to students, allowing for a greater degree of specialization as well as more variation in areas of application of geospatial technologies.

*Dean's Response:* This recommendation from the PRT coincides with the departmental self-study recommendations 5 (on double majors) and 6 (on strengthening curriculum), both of which are supported by the Office of the Dean of Arts. We also favour greater electivity for students, recognizing diverse student needs and goals, which is one of the justifications for allowing students to explore their curricular options in the first year of the Arts Common Platform. Furthermore, we encourage the Department to pursue the creation of double majors, in consultation with their students regarding the most appropriate and desirable options.

The Department notes that with the changes to the TMU tripartite curriculum brought into effect in the 2022-2023 calendar, there is an option to review the role of Open electives, which will increase student choice, allowing students to take more courses in their discipline or more electives outside their discipline. There are 6 Open elective slots in the GA program whereas the minimum number of Open electives in a 40 course program is 4, according to Policy 2. Faculty of Arts programs have 6-7 Open electives.

#### **PRT Recommendation #4**

The GA program should maintain its semester-long practicum and consider allowing strong second-year students to be considered for overflow practicum positions that were not claimed by the third-year cohort.

*Program's Response:* We appreciate the PRT's support for maintaining the 350-hour internship requirement that is equivalent to one co-op work term. A co-op stream was also developed as part of the corresponding Arts initiative and should be implemented after completion of this program review; the relationship between the regular stream (including internship) and the co-op stream will be monitored closely.

At present, students can already claim internship hours completed in second year. In addition, the course management for GEO 771 Practicum is currently being reviewed in terms of supporting students with finding, applying, and interviewing for placements and handling of out-of-phase students.

*Dean's Response:* The semester-long 350 hour mandatory internship is an attractive and beneficial feature of the GA program. The Department notes that students can already claim the internship hours completed in second year. There is a plan to strengthen student support for the GEO 771 Practicum in terms of job search skills. However, it should be noted again that the current GA program requires 41 courses compared to the standard 40 courses in the Faculty of Arts and elsewhere at TMU. The extra credit serves largely to accommodate the internship. It would be helpful for students if the Department could find a way to bring the program into TMU norms.

The Department has expressed an interest in joining the three-term co-operative education program

launched in Fall 2021 as an option for four programs in the Faculty of Arts with a fifth program joining in Fall 2023. There are a number of advantages to the co-op, not the least of which is having the “co-operative education” designation on the TMU diploma. The Arts co-op program represents a collaboration with a team from the Career and Co-op Centre, including a Career Program Specialist, who provides considerable support for students. Because the internship is currently required in the GA program, adding the co-op would normally require a total of four work-terms instead of three. A number of options may be available for the Department to explore: required or optional internship, direct entry or second-year entry co-op, for example. The Department will consider these options in consultation with the Office of the Dean of Arts, the Vice-Provost Academic’s office and the Toronto Metropolitan University Career, Co-op and Student Success Centre. Given the professional focus of this program, the Department is determined to ensure that students participate in career-integrated learning opportunities. This will be of great benefit to the program and will no doubt enhance recruitment.

### **PRT Recommendation #5**

In order to deal with limitations of available lab space and other instructional resources, the department should consider reducing their dependence on in-lab hands-on instruction with more independent work-at-home assignments, particularly in their more senior classes.

*Program’s Response:* The 2020/21 emergency remote teaching situation has shown that GIS labs can be effectively taught in a work-from-home setting, which also reflects future workplace expectations. However, some students have struggled with the necessary computer or workplace setup, work routines, and most importantly, the lack of peer support in the lab. In senior classes, group work becomes even more important. Therefore, any move towards permanently reducing in-lab instruction will have to be carefully considered.

*Dean’s Response:* During the 2020/2021 pandemic, the Department was obliged to adapt its teaching by delivering GIS labs in virtual format. While this has benefited students by training them for the modern virtual workplace, the Department notes that it has also had a negative impact on many students who have struggled with the technology and the concepts as well as the isolation that comes with studying from home. The university prepares students for the workplace by developing not only technical skills but also skills in leadership and teamwork. The Department is aware that it needs to look for a balance between the benefits of in-lab hands-on learning and independent learning in a virtual format, drawing on faculty and student feedback on the emergency remote learning pandemic experience.

### **PRT Recommendation #6**

We recommend that GEO 772 be spread out over 2 semesters.

*Program’s Response:* We will explore expanding the scope of the individual research paper course and other options to provide additional research opportunities to GA students.

*Dean's Response:* The Department will consider this recommendation with the goal of improving research training and research opportunities for their students. This aligns with other recommendations on curricular development in the program, the usual task of curriculum committees. Most undergraduate independent research courses like GEO 772 are one-semester long. Students have the option of requesting an interim INP if more time is needed. In a program that currently has 41 credits instead of the usual 40, it is not clear to the Office of the Dean of Arts that making GEO 772 a two-semester course would be of great benefit to students, but this is a matter for the Department to decide.

### **PRT Recommendation #7**

We recommend that GEO 241: Cartographic Principles and Practice (currently offered in second year) be swapped with one of the first year Common Platform courses.

*Program's Response:* We will explore the possibility of moving GEO 241 to first year in order to enhance retention and spread out the workload from lab-based courses in second year.

*Dean's Response:* In response to this recommendation, the Department will consider moving GEO 241 to first year to enhance retention, while consulting with the Office of the Dean of Arts, since this change would be a deviation from the Common Platform model. While discussion is always welcome, we consider that there are strong reasons for not increasing the number of program-specific courses in the first year common platform. As noted previously, the first year Common Platform serves to allow students to explore their options at university while having the advantage of getting started on their major of choice, whereas most Canadian universities require students to select their major at the end of first year. It should be noted that the GA program already requires 3 GEO courses in the first year whereas most programs on the Common Platform require 2 core courses in the discipline at the most and, for transfer purposes, often only require one first year course and one recommended course in the major. It is not clear to the Office of the Dean of Arts that having 4 core courses in the major discipline in first year is of benefit to students as they transition to university, since it reduces the flexibility of the first year Common Platform for students. We note as well that this recommendation from the PRT seems to be in contradiction with their [previous recommendation], which favours greater electivity and a broader range of courses to suit a diverse group of students.

As mentioned earlier, the Office of the Dean of Arts considers that students should be making a free and positive choice of majors rather than finding themselves in a program with limited transfer options. It is up to the Department to determine which first year courses are most likely to inspire students to remain and thrive in their program.



### **PRT Recommendation #8**

Acknowledging that effective writing is an essential part of a university education, we encourage the Geography and Environmental Studies Department to replace SSH 205 with another course that focusses more on technical writing. Alternatively, the program should consider moving SSH 205 into its second year so that students are more prepared to take it.

*Program's Response:* We will explore the implications of moving SSH 205 to second year, possibly in exchange with GEO 241, or replacing SSH 205 with a program- or department-specific writing course.

*Dean's Response:* As noted in response to the Department's Recommendation 3, SSH 205 Academic Writing and Research is currently being reviewed to make it more effective as a "Writing across the curriculum course". This is a core competency course for a well-rounded university education. While students are enrolled in the course in first year, it is possible for students to wait before taking the course and many do so. It may be a matter of student advising to suggest to certain students that they would do well to wait until second year to take the course. The fact that a certain group of students find a course particularly challenging is not a reason to abandon the course itself. Academic writing and research skills are essential for success in most undergraduate courses. It would be more helpful to find better ways of supporting students in academic writing and research, such as those recommended in the response to the Department's Recommendation 3, rather than to assume that GA students have greater need of skills in technical writing than in academic writing. Again, this will be a matter for the departmental curriculum committee to debate as they consider the role of SSH 205.

### **PRT Recommendation #9**

Actively promote minors in Business Essentials, Criminology, Computer Science, and other programs to GA students. Conversely, actively market the GA Minor to students in Business, Criminology, Computer Science, and other programs. Further, we recommend that options to develop double majors between GA and Business, Criminology, Computer Science be explored.

*Program's Repsonse:* We will more actively promote these and other suitable minor options to GA students as well as advertise the GA minor to students in affiliated programs across the university. We are working on a double major curriculum and will explore partner programs both within and beyond the Faculty of Arts.

*Dean's Response:* The Office of the Dean of Arts is firmly in favour of giving students the opportunity to adapt their education to their own goals by selecting minors, majors, concentrations and double majors. The Department may wish to promote their own minors to other programs and promote other minors as particularly well-suited to their students but ultimately, minors are optional and a matter of student choice. As mentioned previously, although the Faculty of Arts houses a number of double majors, there are logistical challenges to creating double majors with programs outside of the Faculty of Arts. These may not be insurmountable but there is a strong possibility that such programs would be considered completely new programs requiring approvals external to the university.



### **PRT Recommendation #10**

In light of the fact that Geography faculty are under increasing pressure to deliver instruction to interdisciplinary programs, to other professionally-related courses, and to general Liberal Studies courses in the Faculty of Arts, we recommend that the university give the GA program additional faculty resources to meet these commitments.

*Program's Response:* We will continue to work with the Dean and the university on expanding the GA-related faculty complement in order to secure the viability of the program and the Department's service teaching.

*Dean's Response:* All Departments in the Faculty of Arts must balance program teaching and service teaching, particularly Liberal Studies courses, as the Faculty of Arts teaches by far the greatest number of Liberal Studies of any other Faculty at TMU. As mentioned previously, requests for additional faculty hires may be submitted annually. The Department has developed a 5-year faculty hiring plan that it intends to update for this purpose. However, part of the rationale for new hires is based on increasing enrolments whereas enrolments have been a challenge for the GA program, especially in recent years. The Department would be well-advised to focus on enhancing the curriculum and improving student recruitment in order to increase enrolments, which would strengthen their case for additional faculty resources. Fortunately, there are many useful strategies laid out in the recommendations that will help make such improvements possible.

### **PRT Recommendation #11**

That in all future hiring activities, the department strongly consider its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

*Program's Response:* We have recently made considerable progress in hiring diverse faculty members and are committed to working within Faculty and university hiring policies and priorities around EDI. A departmental EDI Committee is being created by Department Council to develop specific procedures and practices with respect to EDI.

*Dean's Response:* The Office of the Dean of Arts has a very strong commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to diversify faculty and curricular offerings in order to provide a more inclusive curriculum that welcomes students and faculty from diverse backgrounds, particularly traditionally under-represented, racialized groups including Black and Indigenous scholars. Notably, there have been 11 Indigenous hires in the Faculty of Arts since 2018. Recent hires in the Department of Geography and Environment Studies reflect this emphasis on EDI, including the hire of 1 Black scholar and 2 Indigenous scholars. While there is always improvement to be made in this area, we note that the Department is "committed to working within Faculty and university hiring policies and priorities around EDI". The Departmental Council is currently working to create a departmental EDI Committee, which is an important step forward.

### **PRT Recommendation #12**

Given the technology dependency of the GA program, we recommend that POD-346 and POD-348 remain dedicated for Department of Geography and Environmental Studies' exclusive use.

*Program's Response:* We appreciate the PRT's support of the need for exclusive, specialized computer labs for teaching and student work.

*Dean's Response:* The Office of the Dean of Arts supports the need for specialized computer labs to facilitate teaching and student work in the GA program, which offers students the opportunity to focus on geospatial technologies, as well as other areas of study in human and physical geography. The Department also appreciates the PRT's support of the need for exclusive, specialized computer labs for teaching and student work. They will monitor availability and management of the existing labs POD-346 and 348, as well as access to the Arts Lab POD 351.

### **PRT Recommendation #13**

We recommend that there be an open and transparent review of Chang School's use of the GA resources, the revenue it generates, and the subsequent fund transfers to Geography and Environmental Studies.

*Program's Response:* We are working towards a more transparent and consistent resource sharing between the Department and the Chang School's related offerings. Possible synergies between the daytime and evening course offerings will also be examined.

*Dean's Response:* The Faculty of Arts has a collaborative relationship with the Chang School and welcomes openness and transparency with regard to finances, certificates and course offerings. The Department offers three very successful certificates in the Chang School, including the recently added Certificate in Crime Analytics. We support the Department in their goal of working toward a more transparent and consistent resource sharing between the Department and the Chang School's related offerings. The Department is also committed to looking at possible synergies between daytime and evening course offerings. This is an important goal for all departments in the Faculty of Arts and is ensured by consistent coordination between the Chang School, the Departmental Academic Coordinator, the Department Chair and the curriculum committee.

### **PRT Recommendation #14**

To ensure continuity of support, we recommend that "extensive knowledge of geospatial data, analysis methods, and infrastructure" be added to the job description of the Arts IT Manager.

*Program's Response:* The Arts IT Team is of critical importance to the successful delivery of the GA program and we appreciate the PRT's recommendation in this regard.

*Dean's Response:* The Faculty of Arts has long benefited from support from the Arts IT team, which has traditionally had very strong ties with the Department of Geography and Environment Studies. The Department has committed to sharing a description of their HR requirements for the Arts IT team to the Office of the Dean of Arts. We look forward to discussions concerning the role of Arts IT team members in relation to the needs of the Department and the Faculty in general.

### **PRT Recommendation #15**

With wide-spread use of ArcGIS across the university, and across industry and government, we recommend that this software be licensed institution-wide and paid for centrally and not out of the Geography and Environmental Studies department budget.

*Program's Response:* The Esri (ArcGIS) campus license is of critical importance to the successful delivery of the GA program. An ad-hoc cost-sharing agreement is in place with several other users across campus, but we support the PRT's recommendation to centralize the annual license cost.

*Dean's Response:* The Dean of Arts is in agreement with the Department's intent to discuss centralization of the cost of the Esri (ArcGIS) campus license, which is currently supported through an ad-hoc cost-sharing agreement with other stakeholders at the university. The Department is committed to discussing campus license payments with Dean, Provost, Library, Chang, and CCS, among others.

### **PRT Recommendation #16**

That the current level of RULA support given to the GA program be maintained.

*Program's Response:* Ryerson University Library and Archives services are of critical importance to the successful delivery of the GA program and we appreciate the PRT's recommendation to sustain RULA support including but not limited to the services housed in the Geospatial Map and Data Centre.

*Dean's Response:* The Office of the Dean of Arts is highly supportive of the library and aware of its importance for studies in the Social Sciences and Humanities. Need for technological expertise is guaranteed to increase and we wish to provide our students with the best possible support, including that offered through RULA. The Department notes that the Geospatial Map and Data Centre is of critical importance for the GA program and the Dean of Arts is in agreement with the necessity of maintaining this resource for students and faculty.

### **PRT Recommendation #17**

Recruitment efforts should build in, where possible, efforts to monitor the effectiveness of specific strategies, recognizing that there are limits to what can be directly measured.

*Program's Response:* We will continue to monitor the effectiveness of student recruitment activities to the amount possible with limited staff resources and privacy regulations.

*Dean's Response:* All Faculty of Arts programs work with the Office of Student Recruitment to meet with potential incoming students during events such as Open House in Fall and Winter and the Ontario University Fair in September. We also provide materials to Student Recruitment to assist them in their recruitment drives in the GTA and beyond. The Department engages directly with high schools, which is of great importance given the misconceptions surrounding the study of Geography. The university is currently focusing on international recruitment, an area where the GA and EUS programs could attract more students, possibly through articulation agreements with international institutions. The Department agrees with the PRT on the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of student recruitment activities to every reasonable extent. We all recognize how difficult it is to measure the impact of our recruiting efforts but hopefully, this can be done in collaboration with the Student Recruitment Office itself.

### **PRT Recommendation #18 and #19**

The department should continue its impressive effort to develop and expand diverse strategies to promote recruitment, but aim to accomplish this with ongoing personnel.

Develop and secure resources for a more sustainable recruitment effort, including dedicated staff resources.

*Program's Response:* We concur with the PRT's position that sustainable student recruitment efforts require the support of a dedicated staff person. We will explore the possibility of creating such a position with the Dean.

*Dean's Responses:* The Department agrees with the PRT that a dedicated staff person for recruitment is important to improve recruitment. They intend to develop a description of this role for discussion with the Office of the Dean of Arts. While the Dean of Arts is always open to discussion, it should be noted that no other department in the Faculty of Arts has an equivalent position, although student recruitment is a priority across the Faculty. In general, the Chair, Undergraduate Program Director and Undergraduate Program Administrator work together with the Office of Student Recruitment to promote programs. It is a matter of debate whether having a dedicated staff person for recruitment would be the most effective solution. As the Department implements many of the recommendations that arise from the PPR, they will be able to emphasize the benefits of innovations in course content, design and delivery, a potential co-op option, hands-on lab and SRC experience – all initiatives that should attract students. This recommendation is an extension (of the previous recommendation). The Department will need to establish the effectiveness of dedicated staff resources for recruitment purposes. It is not obvious to the Office of the Dean of Arts that this is the best solution to the current recruitment issues.

### **PRT Recommendation #20**

Develop and maintain a modern, comprehensive, inviting web presence, and associated revisit of course names and descriptions.

*Program's Response:* We have converted the Department web site to Ryerson's responsive templates and completed a significant update to the GA program's subpages in early 2021. We will review and revise course titles and descriptions for the next calendar cycle.

*Dean's Response:* The Department points out that it has updated its website using TMU's responsive templates. They updated the materials on the GA program's web pages in early 2021. They will review course names and descriptions for the following calendar year. The Office of the Dean of Arts

observes that the renewal of course titles and descriptions is an ongoing process in all departments.

### **PRT Recommendation #21**

Improve coordination between recruitment activities and messaging at university and departmental levels.

*Program's Response:* We will continue the close collaboration between the GA program and Undergraduate Admissions and Recruitment started in the winter 2021, and continue to request dedicated recruitment support from UAR and other relevant units.

*Dean's Response:* The Department concurs with the PRT and will continue their close collaboration with Undergraduate Admissions and Recruitment. As previously mentioned, they will also seek dedicated recruitment support. The Office of the Dean of Arts notes that recruitment efforts in the last two years were negatively affected by the pandemic, with the cancellation of the Ontario University Fair, as one example. The Open House webinar and virtual drop-in formats used during the pandemic were not particularly effective, especially for smaller programs. We look forward to improving recruitment efforts as the Student Recruitment team resumes some of its usual programming in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts departments. We also encourage the Department to contact TMU International, along with Dr. Amy Peng, Associate-Dean, Innovation in Teaching and Learning, to discuss international recruitment with the director Dr. Isaac Sitton-Garcia, particularly the possibility of articulation agreements with overseas institutions.

### **PRT Recommendation #22**

Permanent base funding be allocated to the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies for a GA Program Coordinator.

*Program's Response:* In conjunction with previous Recommendations/ Responses, we will explore the possibility of a full time staff position dedicated to high school liaison, student recruitment, alumni contacts, field trip logistics, and practicum coordination.

*Dean's Response:* The Department concurs with the PRT recommendations 8.2, 8.3 and 8.6, and will explore the possibility of a full time staff position dedicated to high school liaison, student recruitment, alumni contacts, field trip logistics, and practicum coordination. The Office of the Dean of Arts notes that the current staffing structure in the Department of Geography and Environment Studies includes a Departmental Administrator, 2 Undergraduate Program Administrators and 1 Graduate Program Administrator, which is not unusual for a department of its size, with 2 undergraduate programs and 1 MA program. However, we do recognize that the responsibilities of a GA Program Coordinator as indicated above go beyond the role of recruitment to include specific needs such as field trip logistics and practicum coordination. While the Dean of Arts is open to discussion on this matter in consultation with our Senior Human Resources Partner, the Department needs to provide a strong and convincing rationale for greater funding for staffing support.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

**Priority Recommendation # 1-1 Curriculum Development and Renewal - Co-op:** *Develop a proposal for a GA co-op 5yr stream as the primary student program pathway while maintaining the current 4yr internship stream for those who opt out of co-op.*

**Rationale:** *The strength of the program's career focus, particularly through its unique mandatory 350-hour internship has been noted in the PPR. In 2021 the Faculty of Arts launched its co-operative education program. Consultations with many of our internship partners have shown a desire for increased student employment through co-operative education. With the current enrolment levels, all incoming students, could be supported in a co-op program. We would maintain the internship for students who opt out. Maintaining the internship option ensures the career focus and experiential component for all GA students. Offering enhanced experiential learning through co-op is anticipated to increase entrance averages and student recruitment.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Review current curriculum scheduling*
- *Explore work/school scheduling based on required job skills*
- *GEO771 is currently GA's 41st credit, Develop local co-op/job skills prep course (SSH104 equivalent)*
- *Prepare proposal*
- *Present to Department Council*
- *Submit Proposal for Approval for Fall 2024-2025 admission*

**Timeline:** *Winter 2023 term with proposal presented to Department Council by April 2023*

**Responsibility for**

- **Initiative Lead:** *Department Chair and Curriculum Committee*
- **Proposal assistance:** *Career, Co-op and Student Success Office*
- **Approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*

**Priority Recommendation #1-2 Curriculum Development and Renewal - Capstone Course**

**Review:** *The program requires a review and refinement of the three Geographic Analysis capstone courses with the goal of improving undergraduate research training and opportunities, professional training, leadership, and entrepreneurship.*

**Rationale:** *Geographic Analysis has always highlighted the importance of career-integrated learning. Three capstone courses, of which two are required, include GEO772 - Individual Research Paper, GEO871 - The Professional Geographer, and GEO873 Geographic Entrepreneurship and Consulting offer GA student's several options in their career path. Three courses are challenging with student enrollment and faculty loadings. Additionally, overlap in courses has been noted. A review of current course descriptions and recent outlines may provide opportunities to streamline offerings and deepen student experience.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Review current course outlines*
- *Review recent course enrollments and faculty loadings*
- *Align courses with program outcomes*
- *Examine sequencing of courses with co-op proposal*
- *Discuss course offering options with faculty*
- *Propose course changes to Department Council*

**Timeline:** *Winter 2023 term with proposal presented to Department Council by April 2023 - Required for development of co-op stream*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Curriculum Committee - as part of overall co-op proposal preparation*
- **proposal review:** *Department Faculty and Department Council*
- **approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*

**Priority Recommendation #1-3 Curriculum Development and Renewal: General Curriculum Review** - *Curriculum development and review is an iterative process. GA is in need of a thorough review of our current curriculum and course offerings following the completion of the PPR.*

**Rationale:** *GA has several courses that were developed for specific programs that are no longer required courses for those programs (i.e. Real Estate). GA needs to review how to reduce course offerings and offer them in a more efficient manner. Additionally, this is required to ensure that we are remaining attractive to secondary school students. The move to the new unified tripartite curriculum in the Fall of 2022 has expedited the process of reviewing prerequisites and anti-requisites. This review will also be required to streamline the GA program for the implementation of a co-op program.*



**Implementation Actions:**

- Review current courses and sort based on themes and requirements
- Examine course offerings and structure for more efficient delivery, particularly GIS offerings for non-GA students.
- Discuss course offerings with program partners
- Prepare course changes or eliminations proposals for department and council review

**Timeline:** *Winter 2023 term with proposal presented to Department Council by April 2023 - Required for development of co-op stream*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Curriculum Committee - as part of overall co-op proposal preparation*
- **theme Review:** *Curriculum cluster groups - various faculty*
- **proposal review:** *Department Faculty and Department Council*
- **approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*

**Priority Recommendation #2--1 Program Development - Remotely-Piloted Aircraft Data**

**Analysis and Training** - *RPA (Drones) are a new and developing technology that is now very accessible to faculty and students. It does require specialized training for flight certification and a firm understanding of data acquisition and analysis techniques. The development of courses focusing on this within the GA program would be beneficial to enrolment and retention.*

**Rationale:** *With the advancement in remotely-piloted aircraft (RPA) for the acquisition of spatial data it has become feasible to incorporate this technology and data analysis into the GA program. A recent course offering of GEO643 - Field Methods for Spatial Data explored RPA training and the introduction of aerial image analysis. The ability to train students in this new technology will greatly enhance the skill sets of students and increase potential recruitment and retention of students. The department will also examine partnerships with external RPA pilot training for student certification.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Review and evaluate GEO643 F22 offering*
- *Investigate options for RPA certification of Basic and Advanced flight training.*
- *Decide on training objectives and determine course and training sequencing*
- *Plan for GEO643 for Winter 2024 in partnership with flight training certification*
- *Develop advanced RPA course of 2024-2025*

**Timeline:**

*Spring 2023 term will explore how best to structure data analysis with pilot training. Discussion for external training organization already underway. 2023-2024 academic year will offer GEO643 and separate pilot training. For full implementation in 2024-2025*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Dr. David Atkinson with Dr. Andrew Millward and Dr. Tor Oiamo*
- **assisting initiative:** *Library Collaboratory - Librarian Dan Jakubek and Jimmy Tran*
- **proposal review:** *Department Faculty and Department Council*
- **approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*

**Priority Recommendation #2-2 Program Development - Common Early Program Course.** - *It has been noted that students may be deficient in some skill sets or face challenges in upper year courses. Suggestions to alter, or removal from, the common platform for GA is not desired. We feel that we can address these deficiencies with existing courses and the development of a second year course.*

**Rationale:** *It has been noted that students seem to be deficient in some skill sets or face challenges with certain skills in their upper years. The PPR noted issues with technical writing, GIS skills, and use of spreadsheets for data analysis. This is not a unique problem to GA and has also been evident in our EUS program. Currently GA has an extra course in the first-year common platform, GEO141. There is potential to use this course to help address those skills challenges opposed to developing a new course. This course could be a common departmental course to address common skills. The current course will be reviewed. Additionally, joining the co-op program currently requires students to take SSH104. Developing a department level course that is equivalent to SSH104 could also address some deficiencies.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Review current curriculum and examine student deficiencies in writing, GIS and use of data analysis tools.*
- *Determine if GEO141 can accommodate addressing these deficiencies*
- *Determine how to address deficiencies through other required courses*
- *Prepare calendar changes to course descriptions and course outlines*

**Timeline:**

*Winter 2023 term with proposal presented to Department Council by April 2023 - Required for development of co-op stream*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Curriculum Committee - as part of overall co-op proposal preparation*
- **Proposal review:** *Department Faculty and Department Council*
- **approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*

**Priority Recommendation #3 Recruitment Strategy Development** - *The department needs to examine current trends in secondary school applications and develop more pro-active strategies to attract students.*

**Rationale:** *Student enrolment has been declining. There are longer term plans such as co-op and remotely piloted aircraft data and analysis that will shift the characteristics of students. Those will not be fully implemented until 2024-2025. In the near term a recruitment strategy to engage potential secondary students is required. Themes of geography are found in multiple secondary school subjects beyond the traditional geography class. Students in business, science, and other social science classes can be targeted. Additionally, education of teachers and guidance counsellors will better direct students to the GA program. Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM) programs are also a potential route to reach secondary school students. An improved social media outreach program can also be implemented. Campus visits have historically been popular but with changing patterns have declined. The use of remote laboratory connections should be explored.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Development of a Liasson committee through department council responsible for student outreach programing and policy.*
- *Development of a social media and Web Committee through department council responsible to social media engagement.*
- *Develop prepared demonstrations and presentation material for remote and in-person visits.*
- *Explore SHSM requirements for GIS certification and GPS/Surveying Certification with the goal or outreach program material*

**Timeline:** *Winter 2023 new department council committees can be created and bylaws amended to reflect new initiatives. Summer 2023 and Fall 2023 committee will begin development of policy and materials. Explore the hosing of teachers and guidance counselors early fall 2023 for a program day.*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Department Council Chair*
- **initiative development:** *Council Committees*
- **approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*

**Priority Recommendation #4 Program Development - Double Major** - *There is a strong connection between Geographic Analysis and Environment and Urban Sustainability. Skill sets from both programs would great benefit students. The development of a double major would allow the combination of those skills.*

**Rationale:** *A double major in Geographical Analysis and Environment and Urban Sustainability was identified in the PPR as a program development that students would find beneficial. The Common Platform allows the Faculty of Arts to adapt and combine existing majors without creating entirely new programs. There has been a strong desire among students in both programs to gain skills from the other. A review of the required courses to create a double major would be required. Currently GA has a 41-course credit requirement. With the development of the co-op program this could change to a 40-credit program and be better suited for a double major.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Investigate change from 41 to 40 credit program with implementation of co-op*
- *Review course requirements to develop GA and EUS double major*
- *Develop course plan and proposal*
- *Review and approve proposal*

**Timeline:** *Fall 2023 - Winter 2024 - This will allow the department to move forward with the implementation of the co-op program this year and align us to begin work on a proposal for a double major.*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Curriculum Committee*
- **proposal review:** *Department Faculty and Department Council*
- **program consultation** *Vice-Provost Academic and the University Planning Office*
- **approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*

**Priority Recommendation #5 Program Development - National/International Field Trips - GEO773** - *Field Studies has been not offered for a number of years due to course management challenges and the pandemic. It is a popular course that helps attract students to the program. It has the potential to be a premier experiential learning experience.*

**Rationale:** *GEO773 has not been offered for several years. It was previously operated as a international field course. Destinations have included Iceland, Netherlands, China, and Europe. The course requires to be re-examined with the lens of EDI as well as in how to run it economically and accessibly for students. Course management challenges include establishing best practices for experiential learning, student supervision, and risk management.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Review best practices for field courses with TMU International*
- *Discuss Faculty of Arts experiential learning and field trip policy*
- *Develop advanced course planning for optimal student and faculty planning*
- *Develop Faculty/Departmental policy on field based courses.*
- *Review with Departmental Council for approval*

**Timeline:** *Winter 2023 - discussions have already been initiated with the Faculty of Arts, TMU International and the Department Chair. Fall 2023 Curriculum committee will propose policy for how field studies will operate within the department. GEO773 will be planned to be offered in 2024-2025 academic year.*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Department Chair*
- **policy consultation:** *TMU International and Arts Associate Dean UG and Experiential Learning*
- **policy development:** *Curriculum Committee and Field Studies Committee*
- **approving recommendation, and overall monitoring:** *Faculty Dean*

**Priority Recommendation #6 Departmental Governance - Committee Redevelopment:**

*Departmental Council has not had a review of its by-laws and committees in a number of years. Some committee structures are no longer efficient or effective. A review of by-laws and committees is required.*

**Rationale:** *The department has not had a periodic review of its departmental council committees and by-laws in a number of years. The goal of this review is to develop a better culture of service within the department. Some committees have extensive workloads, while others have minimal work, a balance is required. A committee who is responsible for Periodic Program Review and the implementation of recommendations is required to allow for future PPR's to be completed in a timely manner. Additionally, committees to review department EDI, social media and outreach, and other initiatives should be examined.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Review current bylaws and committee structure*
- *Recommend changes and the creation of new committees*
- *Review proposed changes with students and faculty*
- *Consult with Faculty Dean*
- *Submit for departmental approval*
- *Submit for senate approval*

**Timeline:**

*Fall 2023 will begin the review with the final proposal for review by the end of winter 2024*

**Responsibility for**

- **leading initiative:** *Department Council Chair*
- **initiative assistance:** *Department Chair*
- **bylaw and committee consultation** *Faculty Dean*
- **departmental review and approval:** *Departmental Council*

**Priority Recommendation #7 Physical Resources - Physical Geography Teaching Labs and Lab Renewal:**

*Experiential learning and hands on applications have been a strong component of the Geographic Analysis program. Lab based learning for data analysis has been a pedagogical priority. Unlike geography programs across the country we do not have a Physical and Environmental Analysis undergraduate teaching lab. Our unique position as an Urban university would make us unique to specialize in Urban physical and environmental geography lab courses.*

**Rationale:** *Currently our students do not get sufficient experience in the collection and analysis of field based samples. With faculty growth in the areas of hydrology, soil science, and vegetation analysis, we have the faculty experience and skills to better develop our environmental and physical geography courses. Our faculty are experts in Urban Physical and Environmental Geography. Experiential learning for this not only requires field sampling but also lab based sample processing and analysis. A teaching lab would require sufficient lab bench space for students to prepare and process samples. The lab would require chemical storage, fume hoods, drying ovens, furnaces, and appropriate lab equipment. Access to a teaching lab such as this could allow us to expand and develop our urban geography focus, particularly in terms of urban water, soils, and vegetation. A teaching lab for geography would be similar to a chemistry/Biology teaching lab. Such a lab would also directly benefit the EUS program as well.*

**Implementation Actions:**

- *Examine current courses that could develop experiential lab based learning*
- *Develop a lab proposal, outlining space and equipment needs.*
- *Initiate discussion with the faculty of science to see if lab sharing of existing labs could be arranged.*
- *Discuss with Faculty of Arts and UPO for future space needs.*

**Timeline:**

*Winter 2023 initial course reviews can begin to develop a list of needs for lab based experiential learning. Fall 2023 a proposal for a teaching lab can be developed. Winter 2024 discussion with the Faculty of Arts and UPO to initiate future planning*

**Responsibility for**

**leading initiative:** *Physical and Environmental Teaching Cluster - Dr. Oswald, Dr. Wellen, Dr. Atkinson, Dr. Millward, Dr. Oiamo*

**lab partnership:** *Faculty of Science*

**approving recommendation, providing resources, and overall monitoring:** *Faculty Dean, UPO*