**The Place of Graduate Units in the Evolving Tri-Campus University**
Graduate Unit Pillar Working Group, Tri-Campus Review
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One of the University of Toronto's most distinctive features is its tri-campus structure. The tri-campus structure provides the University with greater scale across its research and teaching activities, while also providing opportunities to create unique campus-based identities within research areas and educational offerings. Because the University of Toronto is a relatively decentralized institution, with considerable autonomy given to its Faculties and constituent academic units (e.g. Departments and Extra-Departmental Units), relationships between the campuses are multi-stranded and complex. Within each strand of the relationship, there may be forces that pull towards greater integration across the campuses, and others that push towards greater campus autonomy. Broadly, however, the University's current budget model and its campus-based method for organizing undergraduate and professional education have encouraged campuses to behave more autonomously, while doctoral-stream programs and research have been important drivers of increased tri-campus collaboration and integration.[1]

**Understanding Graduate Units**

The primary institutional vehicles for tri-campus collaboration and integration at the graduate level are graduate units, sometimes referred to as graduate departments. Graduate units are administrative entities, headed by graduate chairs appointed under the *Policy on the Appointment of Academic Administrators* (PAAA), composed of graduate faculty members, graduate students, and administrative staff. Graduate units serve as the institutional structures that house and support graduate programs. Unlike budgetary academic units, graduate units do not themselves hold faculty or staff lines, control space allocations, or set workload policies. For these resources they depend on contributions from budgetary academic units.

For graduate faculty members and graduate students, graduate units serve several important functions. It is membership in the graduate unit that determines whether or not faculty members are allowed to teach and supervise graduate students in that unit. As stated by the School of Graduate Studies: "At U of T, members of teaching staff do not automatically have supervisory privileges in graduate programs. Authority to teach or supervise graduate students is a separate layer of responsibility with specific criteria."[2] Graduate units also oversee graduate recruitment and admissions, graduate program curricula, graduate course offerings, graduate student academic progress, graduate academic integrity, and graduate funding. When students need help navigating their program requirements or are experiencing challenges in their program, it is the staff and academic leadership of the graduate unit that are usually the first points of contact for information and assistance.

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[1]While faculty members teaching in professional master's programs may be drawn from more than one campus, all professional master's programs are campus-based (mono-campus).
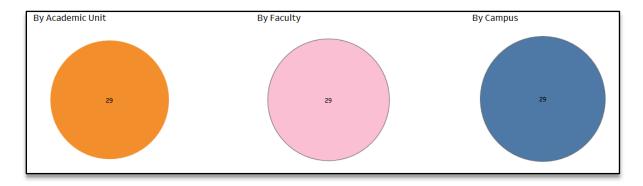[2] https://facultyandstaff.sgs.utoronto.ca/gfm/

More than this, graduate units are often a key locus for intellectual community. Faculty members' scholarly interests are not always perfectly aligned with their academic appointments, and are always evolving over time. As a result, many faculty members have membership in more than one graduate unit, allowing them to supervise students and teach courses in additional domains of scholarship. Similarly, students may have interests in mentorship, courses and extracurricular offerings beyond their own programs, which may bring them into contact with other graduate units. In these respects, graduate units are one of the features of U of T's academic structure that can facilitate evolving cross-disciplinary scholarly engagements.

**Varieties of Graduate Units**

Structurally, each graduate unit is attached to a budgetary academic unit (either a Faculty or a department within a Faculty) that provides it with space and administrative staff. This budgetary academic unit also provides the graduate unit with at least some of the faculty resources needed to deliver its graduate programs. Faculty resources may also flow from additional budgetary academic units, where other faculty members in the graduate unit hold their appointments. While this arrangement has the benefit of a more streamlined administrative structure overall, it can also present challenges. Since budgetary academic units are charged with being stewards of their own resources, contributions to graduate units may not always be a top priority. More commonly, challenges emerge in the area of coordination. Each budgetary academic unit has its own practices and expectations of graduate involvement, so when graduate units are comprised of faculty members from multiple budgetary academic units, they may face structural challenges to integrating their scholarly communities and organizing their work.
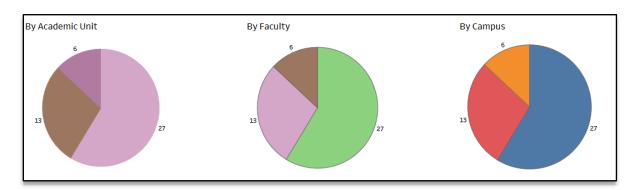
To better understand the structural challenges that a given graduate unit may face, it is helpful to look at the composition of its graduate faculty membership. Across the University there is considerable variation in how graduate units are composed. Some graduate units draw almost all their graduate faculty members from a single budgetary academic unit (see Figure 1 below). In units of this kind, the graduate unit becomes virtually indistinguishable from the budgetary academic unit that it overlays: the two are *homologous*. In such units, faculty members may view the notions of graduate unit and graduate chair as being superfluous, since these are in practice indistinguishable from their home budgetary academic unit and its chair. These units follow the integrated chair model, where the graduate chair also serves as the academic head of a participating budgetary academic unit.

*Figure 1.* **Faculty Member Distribution - Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work[3]**



More commonly, however, graduate units have *distributed membership*, in that they draw their faculty members from more than one budgetary academic unit (Figure 2). There is great variety across the University in how graduate units with distributed membership are composed. For example, the relationships between a graduate unit and its contributing budgetary academic units may be quite "lumpy," in the sense that each budgetary academic unit is contributing several graduate faculty members to the graduate unit.[4]

*Figure 2.* **Faculty Member Distribution - Faculty of Information**
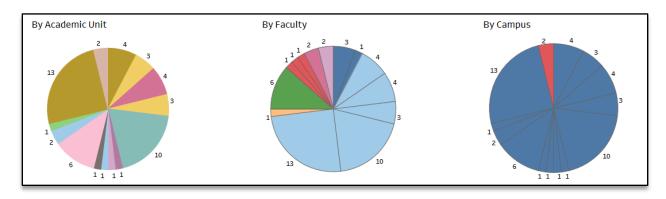


Alternatively, the relationships may be far more distributed, with the graduate unit being composed of graduate faculty members drawn in small numbers from several different budgetary academic units (Figure 3).

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[3] For the sake of simplicity, these charts only include tenured/tenure-stream faculty members. When other categories are added, the picture becomes more complex.

[4] Budgetary academic units may also have distributed membership in the sense that not all their faculty members hold their graduate appointments in the same graduate unit. For example, some faculty in the Department of Biology at UTM are graduate faculty members in the tri-campus graduate unit of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, while others are members of Cell and Systems Biology.
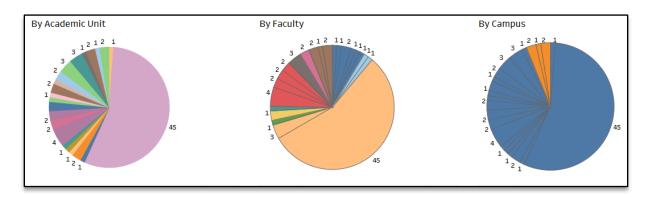
*Figure 3*. **Faculty Member Distribution – Graduate Department of Biomaterials & Biomedical Engineering**



Graduate units that have distributed membership face challenges of integration that homologous units do not. After all, they are composed of graduate faculty members who hold their salary lines in budgetary academic units that may have different workload expectations; different norms/expectations relative to annual assessment, review and promotion; different governance structures; and different levels of faculty support (e.g., professional development, start-up funding, etc.). While all faculty may be 'equal' members of the graduate unit, they are not all operating within the same constellation of constraints and opportunities *vis-à-vis* the unit that sets the core terms of their employment.

Such structural challenges to integration and cohesiveness are even more pronounced in units where memberships are drawn not just from across more than one budgetary academic unit, but also across more than one Faculty (or "division") (Figure 4). Faculties at U of T have considerable autonomy in decision making activities, such as managing their budgets, engaging in strategic planning, setting their workload policies, and allocating space. Relationships between Faculties are managed primarily by deans and their offices, so graduate chairs who are not also deans must engage a higher level of administration in efforts to work collaboratively across these boundaries.

*Figure 4.* **Faculty Member Distribution – Graduate Department of Public Health Sciences**

By far the greatest challenges to integration and cohesiveness are found in distributed units that not only span Faculties, but also span more than one campus. Again, there is great variety among such units. Some distributed graduate units are much closer to being mono-campus, in that all their activities are on one campus and a small number of their members are drawn from academic units on another campus (Figure 5).
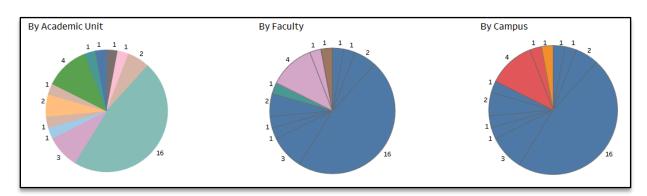
*Figure 5*. **Faculty Member Distribution – Graduate Department of Classics**



Others, including the Graduate Department of Anthropology (Figure 6 below), are heavily tri-campus in that support graduate research on more than one campus, and also have significant engagement from graduate faculty with budgetary appointments across the three campuses.
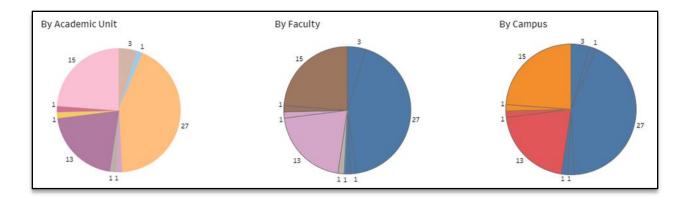
*Figure 6*. **Faculty Member Distribution – Tri-Campus Graduate Department of Anthropology**



Some tri-campus graduate units have sought to address their structural complexity by adopting the separate chair model where the person appointed to be the graduate chair does not also serve as the academic head of a participating budgetary academic unit.

Most tri-campus graduate units fall somewhere on a continuum between these two poles and most have retained the integrated chair model.

**Graduate Units in the Evolving Tri-Campus Context**

The composition of graduate units is not static but evolves over time, as new graduate faculty members are added and others leave. This change usually takes place slowly, since it tracks changes in faculty complement. However, sometimes it can take place more quickly, such as when new graduate programs are established or there is a significant increase in hiring within a particular area or within a Faculty.

In recent times, one of the most notable characteristics of faculty complement growth at U of T has been its uneven tri-campus distribution. For example, between 2007 and 2017, the Faculty of Arts & Science on the St. George campus saw an overall growth in faculty complement of just 4% (1,534 to 1,623); in the same period, by contrast, the growth in faculty complement at UTSC was 48% (163 to 242) and at UTM it was 39% (206 to 287). While the growth in faculty numbers at UTSC and UTM was mainly due to growth in undergraduate student numbers on those campuses, it had large impacts on many graduate units across the University. Each new tenure stream faculty member was expected to hold a graduate appointment, and the vast majority of these were in graduate units whose administrative home was on the St. George campus. As a result, the composition of many graduate units changed during this period as the relative proportion of UTSC and UTM faculty increased. For most graduate units this was also a period of significant expansion in graduate student numbers, so the added faculty complement from UTSC and UTM was critically important for effectively delivering their graduate programs and supervising their doctoral-stream students.

These changing tri-campus demographics have presented new opportunities and challenges for many graduate units at the University. The greatest opportunities have come with scale: building out areas of academic expertise that are not yet represented, thereby expanding research networks and intellectual horizons; expanding supervisory capacity, which can enable the recruitment of a broader range of top-tier students; providing students with opportunities to access new research infrastructure, such as lab spaces and equipment; and growing the amount of available graduate student funding through access to larger numbers of teaching assistantships and research assistantships. By contrast, the greatest challenges are largely administrative: ensuring that governance processes, decision-making, and communications are optimized to build a cohesive, inclusive, nimble, and forward-looking scholarly community for all graduate unit members, regardless of their campus of appointment or affiliation.

**The Graduate Units Working Group: Observations and Considerations**

Through its survey and consultations, the Graduate Units Working Group benefitted from a great deal of input from members of the graduate community about the challenges they experience in navigating the tri-campus relationship. As it reviewed the long list of these challenges, the Working Group was struck by how many of them were, fundamentally, not rooted in inter-campus relationships *per se*, but were in fact structural challenges of collaborating across *unit* and *divisional* boundaries. It is just that in the tri-campus context these

challenges were amplified by barriers of geographical distance and lack of mutual understanding about how each campus is currently organized.

The preponderance of structural challenges helps explain why so many of the recommendations arrived at by the Working Group apply to all graduate units, not just to those with activities across the tri-campus. While the latter units experience these challenges in a particularly pronounced way, the Working Group felt that in many cases all graduate units could benefit from its findings.

For instance, consultation feedback revealed a perceived lack of clarity in chair search processes, in the chair models available to units, and in the eligibility guidelines for undertaking a chair search under a particular model. The Working Group therefore recommended that where appropriate the decision about which chair model to follow should be *disarticulated* from the search process, that the process itself be clarified, and that a number of steps be identified in order to ensure transparency and clear communication throughout the process.

As it looked more closely at the composition of various graduate units, the Working Group made another important observation: some of the greatest challenges to building a strong and effective graduate unit were being experienced in those units that had not historically seen themselves as being tri-campus, but by virtue of changing faculty demographics had found themselves to have significant tri-campus involvement. In these units, faculty from different campuses can have quite divergent expectations for how their graduate unit should function, and it was not always clear to senior administrators how the unit should fit into governance processes. The Working Group thus determined that it was important to bring greater *transparency* and *intentionality* to tri-campus relationships. These relationships should be openly discussed and they should be a part of ongoing academic planning. While this is true for all units with tri-campus participation, it is especially important for units that were not historically constituted as tri-campus graduate units, but have undergone significant demographic rebalancing to become so.

The Working Group also came to the view that a clear decision-point should be instituted, making it evident to all stakeholders whether a unit is formally recognized as being a *tri-campus graduate unit*, or whether it is fundamentally a mono-campus unit with some tri-campus engagement. The Working Group concluded that this decision should involve members of the graduate unit as well as deans, and that it should be made on a case-by-case basis in a manner that is informed but not determined by metrics of tri-campus involvement. Moreover, while recent years have seen an overall trend towards greater tri-campus graduate engagement at U of T, this trend cannot be expected to continue indefinitely. Demographics could move in the other direction, or campuses might seek greater autonomy at the graduate level. The Working Group therefore felt that it was important that the aforementioned decision-point also be available in the opposite direction, allowing for the possibility that a given tri-campus graduate unit might at some point move to become mono-campus.

The Working Group recognized that tri-campus graduate units do indeed face unique challenges. As considerable feedback from the consultations addressed concerns around transportation and mobility between campuses, it became clear that this issue must be studied further to ensure a shared and comprehensive understanding of the options available. Consultations also identified space planning, communications, and the scheduling of curricular and extra-curricular activities as key tri-campus challenges. The Working Group therefore recommended several strategies to support tri-campus engagement: developing a tri-campus space planning resource for chairs to schedule meetings and activities; ensuring all constituent units in a tri-campus graduate unit have access to reliable videoconferencing technologies; and scheduling graduate activities through a tri-campus lens, considering such factors as travel time and graduate teaching responsibilities.

Finally, the Working Group determined that units formally designated as tri-campus should be clearly differentiated in certain governance processes (as they currently are in some areas) and should receive, or be eligible for, some additional supports. Such investments of University time and resources will help these units overcome challenges more effectively and will recognize their contribution to the overall University goal of achieving "one University, three campuses."

**Conclusion**

U of T has a history of periodically revisiting its tri-campus relationships, reassessing where we are at as an institution, and modernizing our vision, policies and practices to bring them into line with our current aspirations. This was the case in 2002 with the development of the *Tri-Campus Framework* which, in anticipation of enrollment expansion, posed the question of how to strike the balance between "the need to allow each campus to maintain and develop a distinct identity and the need to recognize that each is an integral part of the University of Toronto."[5] It happened again in 2008 with the development of *Towards 2030*, which emphasized the need for administrative streamlining and the pursuit of a model that avoids duplication through "interlocking" graduate departments, and encouraging campuses to differentiate by developing their own areas of strength.[6] And it happened again in 2012 with *Towards 2030: A View from 2012* which, in the midst of a long period of graduate expansion, recognized that "inter-campus movement is both inevitable and desirable" and that faculty should seek to strengthen the overall university community even as they pursue their own individual academic interests.[7]

The recommendations of the Graduate Units Working Group are consistent with these earlier statements, which underlie and inform the fundamental principle of "One University, Three Campuses." What the Graduate Units Working Group settled on at this historical juncture—a time when student enrollments and faculty complement are likely to stabilize somewhat after

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[5] https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/committees/tri-campus-review-one-university-three-campuses/tri-campus-framework/
[6] http://www.towards2030.utoronto.ca
[7] https://www.provost.utoronto.ca/planning-policy/towards-2030-view-from-2012-framework/

an extended period of overall growth and campus rebalancing—was the need to collectively take stock of where each of our graduate units is now in regards to its tri-campus relationships, to bring a greater degree of intentionality to these relationships, and to put in place practical mechanisms to facilitate inter-campus collaboration and community.