



MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Committee of Faculty Council (November 29, 2018)
Faculty Council (December 18, 2018)

From: Professor Jason Foster
Chair, Admissions Committee

Date: November 18, 2018

Re: **Admissions Committee Goals for the 2018-19 Academic Year**

REPORT CLASSIFICATION

This is a routine or minor policy matter that will be considered by the Executive Committee for approving and forwarding to Faculty Council for information.

PROGRESS ON GOALS FROM 2017-18

1. *Improved international decision-making*

In an effort to improve the quality, timeliness and diversity of offers to international students, the Admissions Committee will be instituting a series of rounds for making international decisions. The new process will allow the Committee to make decisions as a whole, thereby helping to ensure that offers to international students meet both Faculty and departmental objectives.

The series of international rounds was piloted successfully in 2017-18 and is now standard practice for the Committee. The Faculty has international students from a greater number of countries and has decreased reliance on China as the major source of international students, while continuing to admit top students from all regions. For 2019, international students will be required to make a tuition deposit by May 1st, which will allow the Admissions Office to better predict the yield on this group and a final round of offers can be made, if needed, after this date to ensure that the Faculty meet international targets. Improved metrics within the system for 2019 will allow better tracking regarding timeliness of offers (see below).

2. Improved process for transfer applicants

The Admissions Committee will attempt to streamline the process of decision making for transfer applicants, to arrive at more timely decisions made with greater transparency. The Committee will work towards developing a more standardized process for awarding transfer credits.

Some steps were taken to support this goal, but more work needs to be done. The Discover Engineering website has been improved to give greater clarity to transfer applicants about the process. For 2019, transfer applicants will be given better communication regarding the timing and the next steps of their application.

The process of deciding transfer credits is departmental and continues to be the primary cause of delay among this population. There would be value in identifying an individual at the Faculty level who could be tasked with evaluating transfer credits for first year courses in the Core 8 programs as this would streamline the process for applicants, departments and the admissions office; given the importance of transfer credit assessment to CEAB accreditation a more common transfer credit process is warranted.

3. Broad-based Admissions

The Committee will continue to review the guiding principles underlying, and the current practice of, Broad-Based Admissions. It will consider ways that the information gathered through the Online Student Profile should factor into the admissions process.

Broad-based Admissions continues to play a key role in the applicant experience. The contract with Kira Talent has been extended and their role has increased to include managing the assessment process. Updated questions – and associated videos – were developed and deployed for the current admissions cycle.

Prior to the 2015-16 admissions cycle, applicants were required to submit a brief written statement as part of their online Student Profile. With the implementation of Broad-Based Admissions, this requirement was removed. This year, a written question has been re-introduced to the online Student Profile in response to Committee member concerns that the Personal Profile scores, while valuable, did not replace the awareness of the applicant and their communication skills that this written sample allowed.

4. Implementation of the new admissions system

The new admissions system was successfully implemented for the 2017 round of Ontario admissions. The 2016-17 Committee advised on the usability of the initial design. The applicant-facing portal has now also been developed and is in use for the 2018 admissions process. The 2017-18 Committee will use the system for all decision making.

The Admissions Portal was the only Committee-facing system used for the 2017-18 admissions cycle. The Admissions office was successful in insulating the Committee members from the vast majority of technical issues, and in effecting some immediate changes in response to user feedback.

The Admissions Portal continues to be developed and revised with the primary goals for 2019 including better communication with applicants, improved workflow to reduce overhead within the admissions office, improved ease of use for Committee members and a recruitment interface that will support central U of T recruitment efforts on the Faculty's behalf. Developments will also allow for better process-level metrics (e.g. time in queue; time to respond) and better applicant cohort information to improve decision making by departments.

5. Development of Admissions Manual

A first version of an Admissions Manual was developed and shared with the Admissions Committee in 2017. An updated version is currently being created to reflect changes resulting from the new admissions system. It will also be updated to reflect the changes in process for international applicants mentioned above.

The Admissions Manual continues to evolve in parallel with changes to the admissions system and to the admissions process. The current iteration was shared with the Committee at the inaugural meeting for this academic year.

Of note is that each Department and Division uses the same systems, Faculty-level process, and admission requirements, but makes their decisions according to their own values and heuristics. The Faculty does not have (e.g.) a common set of criteria – or weights applied to such criteria – and instead allows each Unit to exercise its own judgment using the methods and data that they privilege.

GOALS FOR 2018-19

1. Updating the report templates for Executive Committee and Faculty Council

The reports submitted to Executive Committee and Faculty Council are based on templates that are over twenty (20) years old. Although information has been added over time, the templates do not capture or present a rich picture of the applicant pool and admitted study body. In keeping with the maxim “you get what you measure” the admissions metrics should align with the Faculty goals.

The University has recently updated its database infrastructure to support additional capabilities for its users, which will include the Admissions Office. This update presents an opportunity for the Admissions Office and Committee to develop a new set of queries

and reports that better capture the Faculty's goals. Examples of the types of data and analyses that are not being captured or presented include:

- The proportion of applicants who are above cutoffs
- Improved information regarding the make-up of the applicant pool compared with registered students (region of origin, education background, recruitment of underrepresented populations).

2. Developing reports for Committee members interested in data analytics

Changes to the Committee membership have resulted in requests for both changes to the admissions system (e.g. to support more querying and finer "slicing" of the applicant data) and for data that individual members can use to run their own analyses. Currently those requests are met through ad-hoc reports generated by the Admissions Office. The Committee intends to develop a standard set of reports to allow Committee members to undertake their own analysis.

3. Assessing and modifying the Admissions Process to promote equity

Representatives from the Admissions Committee and Office have already met with the Black Inclusion Steering Committee (BISC), and the Engineering Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Group (EEDIAG) to discuss the current state of the admissions process from the perspective of equity.

Starting in 2017-2018, applicants are given the opportunity to self-identify as indigenous on the online Student Profile and this information is used to award Faculty scholarships to recruit and support access for indigenous students.

The Committee intends to explore, and as appropriate, update the admissions process with the goal of promoting equity.

PROPOSAL/MOTION

For information.