

Follow-Up Report on University College’s Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (November 2021)

Introduction and Purpose

This report provides an update on the status of the initiatives called for in [“University College Committee Responding to Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 6 November 2019,”](#) referred to in this report as the “UC Response to the TRC” (2019). Throughout this report, University College is abbreviated to UC. This report was prepared by UC’s Indigenous Initiatives Advisor in consultation with the different UC units and groups identified in the 2019 “UC Response to the TRC.”

Office of the Principal

In response to recommendation #1 of “UC Response to the TRC” (2019), in 2020, the Principal of UC contacted the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) and requested that the inscriptions on the two HSMBC plaques at the front of the main UC building be revised to include Indigenous acknowledgement and history. HSMBC has acknowledged the need for a review of the signage and agreed to do so, but was unable to provide a specific timeline. The Principal will follow up with HSMBC regularly to check the status of the signage review. UC will consider additional exterior signage to include information that is related to Indigenous communities and currently omitted from the HSMBC signage.

This recommendation also calls for the creation of signage within the main UC building that acknowledges the presence of Indigenous peoples and communities “on the lands and in the life of University College” (“UC Response to the TRC,” 2019, p. 6). UC is in the process of striking a committee to determine what next steps should be taken with respect to the creation and installation of indoor or exterior signage and to advise the Principal of UC accordingly.

Recommendation #2 of “UC Response to the TRC” (2019) addresses the creation of smudging space at UC. During the planning stage of the renovations to the Clark Reading Room and the Paul Cadario Conference Centre in Croft Chapter House, the creation of smudging space was considered; however, it was determined to be unfeasible due to the age and infrastructure of the main UC building. The possibility of creating smudging space will be considered as part of planning for any upcoming renovations to the UC Building and the UC Union.

The 2019 “UC Response to the TRC” also asked to consider transforming the former Sir Dan’s Porter’s Office “into a smudging space for Indigenous students” (recommendation #5, p. 8). While this space would add visibility due to its central location, it has drawbacks that led UC not to follow this recommendation: the room is not accessible and is too small for gatherings. The Office of the Dean of Students is exploring alternative locations at UC where it may be feasible to create smudging space for students.

Academic Advising and Registrar’s Office, formerly the Office of the Registrar

In response to recommendation #3 of “UC Response to the TRC” (2019), the Office of the Registrar, renamed in 2021 to the Academic Advising and Registrar’s Office (AARO), has worked to establish new scholarships and amend the terms of pre-existing scholarships to prioritize Indigenous students and, in some cases, both Indigenous and Black students (please see Appendix A for a list of these awards). The AARO has worked with the Office of Advancement to express to donors that there is a priority for supporting both Indigenous and Black students.

As of Summer 2021, the AARO has also started to offer financial outreach and support to Indigenous students for the Summer term. Registrarial staff have taken a proactive approach in reaching out to Indigenous students registered in the Summer session with an offer to review their financial situation and the various supports available to them and, if appropriate, provide summer financial assistance through need-based awards and scholarships.

Indigenous students who are completing part-time studies are included in the Fall/Winter grant assessment process for part-time students.

Next steps for the AARO include: (1) continuing to focus on financial initiatives and funding opportunities that can benefit students; and (2) meeting with the Office of the Dean of Students to discuss the process and feasibility of establishing a UC mentorship program for Indigenous students, keeping in mind that First-Year Learning Communities and many other mentorship programs are administered by the Faculty of Arts of Science.

Office of the Dean of Students

As per recommendations #4 and #5, the Office of the Dean of Students supports the development of programming that creates a welcoming and supportive environment for Indigenous students both in residences and in other College spaces. Because these recommendations pertain mainly to physical space and student residence, the COVID-19 pandemic has been identified as a factor that challenged the implementation of these recommendations during the 2020-21 academic year.

Initiatives that are currently being explored are the feasibility of establishing a UC mentorship program for Indigenous students and/or the development of an Indigenous Living Learning Community at UC. Additional initiatives and meaningful programming that are developed in consultation with First Nations House (such as orientation week activities) will also be considered.

University College Programs and Courses

Recommendations #6 to #10 (“UC Response to the TRC,” 2019, pp. 8–10) pertain to the academic programs and courses at UC.

Due to funding and feasibility challenges, HST309H1 (“Special Topics in Health Studies II: Indigenous Health and Healing in the Six Nations”) is no longer offered. In Winter 2021, a new special topics course was offered: HST309H1, “Special Topics in Health Studies II: Indigenous Health in Canada.” Select Indigenous Studies courses continue to be eligible to be counted towards the Health

Studies major or specialist programs, and students of the Health Studies Program are encouraged to consider taking these courses. They include INS200H1 (“Introduction to Indigenous Truth and Resilience”), INS205H1 (“Indigenous Worldviews, Spiritual and Healing Traditions”), INS340Y1 (“Indigenous Health Science”), and INS350H1 (“Indigenous Health Systems”).

Taking courses in Indigenous Studies is recommended to students in the Canadian Studies Program. The possibility of making a course in Indigenous Studies a required course for the Canadian Studies Program is under consideration. The Director of the Canadian Studies Program has reached out to the Centre for Indigenous Studies to discuss the potential for collaboration.

Within its own courses, the program has worked to include more Indigenous content, consulting with the Indigenous Teaching & Learning liaison in the Faculty of Arts and Science. The core courses in Canadian Studies – CDN267H1 (“Canadian Nationalisms”), CDN268H1 (“Canada and Globalization”), CDN367H1 (“Canadian Pluralism”), and CDN368H1 (“Canada's Borders”) – regularly incorporate Indigenous perspectives and feature materials on Indigenous topics and by Indigenous authors. A new course has been created, CDN385H1 (“Re-Imagining Canada: Creative Visions of Our Past, Present, and Futures”), which centers Indigenous cultural representations (e.g., fiction, films, visual and performance art) in its consideration of more equitable futures. Other courses worth noting that emphasize Indigenous topics include CDN197H1 (“Inventing Canada”), CDN198H1 (“Canada, Colonialism and Settler Relations”), CDN340H1 (“The History of Canadian-US Relations”) and CDN435Y1 (“Active Citizenship in a Canadian Context”), which has included experiential learning opportunities with Indigenous organizations.

The Canadian Studies Program also organizes, with assistance from the Office of Advancement, events highlighting Indigenous speakers and contributors, such as the February 2021 Barker Fairley panel event *Playing with Time* (presented by the Canadian Studies Program), which featured writers who self-

identify as women belonging to the BIPOC community, including Cherie Dimaline, author of *The Marrow Thieves*.

In the Cognitive Science Program, COG260H1 (“Data, Computation, and the Mind”) continues to include course content on the specificity of numeral systems in Indigenous cultures in Amazonian regions. In the upcoming months, the program will look at other ways to address the aims and objectives of the 2019 “UC Response to the TRC” report.

“UC Response to the TRC” (2019) references [“The Report of the Decanal Working Group on Indigenous Teaching and Learning”](#) (2018) Call to Action #16:

“Provide opportunities for students to experience land-based pedagogies so that they can learn within Indigenous worldviews on the land, with Indigenous knowledge experts. Land-based pedagogies include the study of the complex and sophisticated relationships with citified Indigenous territories, including Tkaronto.” (p. 27)

In response to this Call to Action, the inclusion of land-based pedagogies is being researched and considered, especially with respect to the UC One: Engaging Toronto (UC One) program which includes a significant experiential learning component. The four courses within the UC One program have also sought to include more Indigenous content, including: in course readings; Indigenous speakers often being invited to speak in courses and/or in UC One plenaries; and field trips in the city that have attended to Indigenous issues.

Office of Advancement

In response to recommendation #11 of “UC Response to the TRC” (2019), the Office of Advancement has included Indigenous initiatives among its development priorities, and “Indigenous Education” has been identified as one of four themes of the UC campaign priorities. To realize this priority, fundraising staff have been trained to emphasize that Indigenous students are included in needs and priorities when communicating with potential donors. Funding received so far has supported

several scholarships for Indigenous students (please see Appendix A for a list of these awards).

In addition to development and fundraising activities, the Office of Advancement has organized communications initiatives focused on Indigenous topics, engaging Indigenous writers and artists for content creation when possible. The Office of Advancement has also organized events featuring Indigenous speakers, including the March 2020 UC Alumni Salon Series event, *Community Engaged Learning: The Importance of the Indigenous Curriculum in all Ontario Classrooms*.

University College Library

Although the UC Library was not included in “UC Response to the TRC” (2019), there are ways in which the UC Library has participated in and can continue to engage in Indigenous initiatives. As part of collection development activities, the UC Library actively acquires books by Indigenous authors, including fiction and non-fiction titles. The UC Library is committed to continuing with this practice. Starting in the Fall of 2021, the UC Library has opted to purchase books from Indigenous booksellers when possible. The UC Library has also engaged in outreach activities to promote books in the UC Library collection by Indigenous authors and about Indigenous topics. The UC Library will continue to participate in outreach through a variety of means, including the use of the UC Library’s Twitter account, the curation of book displays within the UC Library, and the continued use of signage in the UC Library to highlight books on Indigenous topics.

Summary and Ongoing Initiatives

The recommendations outlined in the 2019 “UC Response to the TRC” provide a foundation for continuing and future initiatives. Additional initiatives that are ongoing include:

- In July 2021, UC organized, in partnership with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, “Reflecting on Land Acknowledgements,” a cultural competency

training workshop presented by the Office of Indigenous Initiatives for UC staff. UC commits to organizing future workshops on cultural competency training and strongly encourages UC staff and faculty to participate in this training.

- UC acknowledges that additional research is required to better understand the history of UC's relationship to Indigenous peoples and land, particularly at the time when UC was established and the main UC building was constructed. To address this need, a Postdoctoral Fellow has been conducting research on this topic; however, challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have delayed the research process. Work on this initiative is ongoing.

This report acknowledges that reconciliation is an ongoing process that requires respect, thoughtfulness, dedication, and action. It is recommended that a follow-up report outlining the status of the initiatives described in this report and any additional actions that have been taken be presented to UC Council in two years.

Appendix A: New and Amended Scholarships (that give preference to Indigenous Students)

New Scholarships:

1. [Arriba Travel Award for Cognitive Science](#)
2. [Indigenous Academic Excellence Award](#)
3. [Mary Elson Scholarship](#)
4. Fletcher-Clark Scholarships in Science and Economics (*Note: this scholarship is currently going through governance for approval, with the first award expected in 2022*)
5. Marjorie Reynolds Scholarship (*Note: this scholarship is currently going through governance for approval, with the first award expected in 2022*)
6. Elizabeth Ennis Award for Indigenous Students (*Note: draft agreement; in progress and pending approval*)

Amended Scholarship:

7. [Scott Mullin Bursary in Sexual Diversity Studies](#)