Hi folks,

Happy New Year and welcome back! I hope you had a relaxing and enjoyable break.

We’re now at the half-way point of the academic year. Over the past six months, it’s been a pleasure to see the many new initiatives and improvements in CTL, both small and large. We’ve been making tremendous progress on many different fronts. Given the large size of our department, I know that many people may not be aware of all the new developments taking place. So I thought it might be helpful to begin the new year with an update of our recent departmental initiatives and accomplishments:

**Department-Wide:**

- **Reduction of Faculty Supervision Load:** Tara Goldstein has spearheaded a movement to reduce the high thesis supervision loads experienced by many of our instructors. We have negotiated a 28% reduction in our Flex Ph.D targets this year (from 18 to 13) with the goal of further reducing our targets to 8 next year.

- **Faculty Supervision Load Concerns:** In an effort to further reduce faculty supervision load, Indigo Esmonde has resurrected the course *CTL1811H: Writing research – research writing: Moving from idea to reality*. Students can take this course to help them prepare for their Comprehensives requirement or their thesis work. Indigo offer the course this coming term and again next year to help reduce some of the load on faculty.

- **Admissions monitoring:** We have set up online tools to:
  - monitor the number of new individuals who visit our LLE and CSTD admissions sites each day;
  - determine whether the new visitors are exploring the M.Ed, MA, or Ph.D sites; and
  - examine how deeply into the web site they explore.
We will use this admissions data to track the effectiveness of different advertising campaigns that CTL will launch in the upcoming months.

• **Making our admissions more ethical:** In recent years, many faculty members have expressed concerns that we are advertising our funded MA and Ph.D programs to international applicants, who had virtually no chance of being accepted. At Julie Kerekes’ suggestion, we have modified our admissions web sites to: i) clearly state that we will NOT be taking full-time international applicants in our funded Masters programs this year; and ii) provide international Ph.D applicants with a more realistic sense of their chances.

• **Greater Budget Transparency:** Our new interim Dean, Glen Jones, has provided the Chairs with full copies of the OISE budget. In November, I presented a summary of the current OISE budget at a CTL Departmental Meeting. At the meeting, we looked at the sources of revenue and our expenses, and the impact of hitting our targets on OISE’s deficit.

• **CTL Faculty Policies Page:** In the past, departmental policies have been largely invisible. We have created a new faculty policies page where we can list departmental policies as we develop them: [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ctl/Faculty_Staff/Faculty_Policies.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ctl/Faculty_Staff/Faculty_Policies.html)

• **New Workload Agreement:** Our department discussed and finalized a new Workload Agreement, which was subsequently approved by the OISE Dean’s Office.

• **Budget Download Talks:** I have been in discussion with other Chairs and the Dean’s Office regarding downloading (parts of) the OISE budget to the departments. This will provide us with more autonomy over our use of funds and will produce incentives for departments to find efficiencies in their processes and reduce unnecessary costs (e.g., the unnecessary booking of rooms).

• **Writing:** Indigo Esmonde has introduced *Write-on-Site* sessions: an open invitation for faculty and students to come together to write quietly.

• **Improvements to the OISE web site:** In October and November, Terry Louisy and I convinced the Dean’s Office to make small changes to the OISE web site to make it easier for new applicants to view all available programs at OISE in one place. Previously, applicants needed to explore all four department web sites if they wanted to examine and compare all OISE M.Ed programs. Now, links to all OISE programs, and their descriptions, can be viewed together on a single web page.

• **New Wellness Initiative:** Indigo Esmonde has established Wellness Wednesdays in collaboration with the CTLSA. This new program consists of wellness activities for students, staff and faculty on the second Wednesday of each month.
• **OISE Learning Garden re-funded:** Hilary Inwood, Alysse and others continue to develop and care for the OISE Learning Garden and have renewed their funding from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation for another year.

• **CUS Funding Extension Proposal:** Tara Goldstein and Rob Simon have produced a strong proposal requesting the extension of centre funding to CUS, and providing a blueprint for future CUS activity.

• **New online system for requesting leaves:** Morgan has developed a new online system for requesting six-month and full-year leaves.

• **New Connections with Main Campus:** Clare Brett, as Head of the SMT Centre, has been working to establish research partnerships between SMT and groups on main campus.

• **OISE Safety:** At the urging of many people inside and outside CTL, OISE is taking steps to make OISE a safer place. The Dean’s Office is introducing many new initiatives, including the training of volunteer fire wardens on each floor. OISE has recently struck an OISE safety and security committee that Bessie Giannikos is serving on.

**Master of Teaching:**

• **New CTL Partnership with UTS:** David Montemurro has established University Toronto Schools (UTS) as the home of the first official “school site” MT cohort. Students in that cohort take their classes at UTS and regularly visit the UTS high school classrooms to observe and study different aspects of secondary-level teaching.

• **New MT admissions web site:** Andrea Cuellar developed a new Master of Teaching admissions web site that is attractive, inviting, modern, and informative: [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/mt/Home.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/mt/Home.html)

• **MT Practicum Successes:** This fall, the MT program successfully placed 539 students in schools around the GTA. This is a record number of placements for the MT program. Anne Marie Chudleigh and her team handled the increased numbers smoothly and effectively. The MT Coordinators even used Google Maps to map out commute times for each teacher candidate to ensure that no one was placed in a school that was too far from home.

• **New MT Admissions Committee:** As our MT enrolments have increased, there has been a recognized need to expand and formalize the MT admissions committee. The new committee includes representatives from the Registrar’s Office, staff as well as increased faculty involvement. The RO has
also been working closely with the new admissions committee to ensure that our teacher education programs (MT & MA-CSE) attracts and admits teacher candidates who reflect the diversity of the GTA population.

• New MT Associate Teacher Recruitment Tool: This year, the MT program developed and introduced a new web-based tool that allows school principals to easily nominate teachers who wish to serve as Associate Teachers. These nominations are fed directly into the Practicum database. This new system provides our Practicum Coordinators with teacher recruitment information quickly, saving hundreds of hours of administrative time.

• New Combined Degree Programs: Doug McDougall is spearheading new combined degree programs that will funnel undergraduates into our MT programs. This year we finalized a combined degree program with the Music faculty. Now, we’re currently putting the final touches on combined degree programs with UT Scarborough Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Arts programs. Similar plans are being made with UofT Mississauga. Collectively, these programs will bring UT arts, sciences graduates and French graduates into the MT program.

• More Efficient Contract Generation: Christine Lowe has developed a new way to automatically generate contracts for teaching stipends and the Faculty Advisors that we hire for MT practica, saving many hours of manual work.

• New MT Course Leads Committee: Many MT courses now have 13 sections of the same course. A committee of MT Course Leads has been developed to provide leadership to promote course coherence, support new instructors and advise on program priorities.

• New financial awards for MT students: Michelle Pon has been working closely with Student Services to transfer awards from the discontinued Consecutive B.Ed program to the MT program. Seven of these awards have already been awarded to worthy MT candidates.

• MT Instructor Calendar: Nick Scarfo developed the idea of creating an online instructor-centered calendar for the MT program. This new calendar can be used in place of the current cohort-centered online calendar to more quickly review the teaching schedules of individual instructors.

• CTL playing a central organizing role for the PPC: With the departure of the Consecutive B.Ed program, CTL is now playing a key organizational role in the Professional Preparation Conference (PPC). Arlo Kempf, along with representatives from each teaching federation, has coordinated this annual December event in which teacher candidates learn about meet with school boards, school unions, and other educational organizations to lean about job opportunities, effective interview practices, resume-building, and so forth.
• **Strengthening of MT School Partnerships:** Anne Marie Chudleigh has been working to establish stronger ties between the Master of Teaching Program and our school partners. She has organized professional learning opportunities for our partners (Michael Fullan provided a wonderful talk in the fall; David Booth is scheduled for the second). She has also developed an online newsletter that is sent to all of our Associate Teachers and their Principals.

• **Online Practicum Reports:** The MT Program designed and developed a new web-based system that allows their Associate Teachers to enter their Summative Reports online and feed the results directly into the MT practicum database. When finished, the reports become immediately available to students. This innovation saves hundreds of hours of work for the practicum team each year.

• **New Designs for the Master of Teaching Research Project:** Angela Macdonald and the MTRP committee have been exploring new ideas for the MTRP assignment. The committee’s recommendations have been forwarded to the MT Program Committee for review and approval. The new MTRP assignment, if approved, will engage students in a detailed analysis of the academic literature, educational curriculum, and educational policy.

• **UTS Cleanup and Safety Inspection:** Our UTS facilities have been horribly neglected by OISE for the last decade or so, leaving many of its facilities in a state of extreme disrepair. Bessie Giannakos has successfully pushed OISE to remove some immediate hazards, conduct a formal safety inspection, and begin the process of making repairs and improvements.

• **New MT Program Committee:** At Kathy Bickmore’s suggestion, we have introduced an MT Program Committee. The mandate of this committee includes initial approval of new program features, courses, schedules, and policies.

• **New discussions with other departments regarding participation in the MT program:** David Montemurro and I are working with SJE, APAH and LHAE to involve other faculty members in the teaching of MT students. This will include offering new and existing courses as electives for 350 MT Year Two students in 2016-17.

**Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development:**

• **New CSTD web site:** Terry Louisy and I used Andrea’s MT web site design to create three similar new admissions web sites for the CSTD program:
  
  [http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/cstdmed/Home.html](http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/cstdmed/Home.html)
  
  [http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/cstdma/Home.html](http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/cstdma/Home.html)
• **New advertising campaign for the CSTD M.Ed program:** For the first time, the department is actively advertising its M.Ed programs. On December 13, we sent M.Ed email advertisements to approximately 540 fall teacher partners in the MT program. On December 18, we began a three-day M.Ed advertising campaign on Facebook. Both efforts significantly increased the number of visitors to the CSTD admissions web sites. With Michelle’s help, we will track our numbers carefully to see if these efforts have an impact on our application counts.

• **CSTD Comps:** A committee has been established to i) solicit thoughts and reactions to the current CSTD Comprehensive Examination; ii) explore alternative Comprehensive formats across OISE and other leading faculties of education, and iii) to bring back a set of ideas and recommendations to the CSTD faculty.

• **CSTD: M.Ed to M.A transfers:** Indigo Esmonde, Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez and CSTD have developed a way to more fairly assess student requests to transfer from the M.Ed to M.A program in CSTD.

**Language and Literacies Education:**

• **New LLE web site:** Terry Louisy and I used Andrea’s MT web site design to create three similar new admissions web sites for the LLE program:
  - [http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/llemed/Home.html](http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/llemed/Home.html)
  - [http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/llema/Home.html](http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/llema/Home.html)
  - [http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/llephd/Home.html](http://cmsnew.oise.utoronto.ca/llephd/Home.html)

• **New LLE/MT position:** Our search committee has struck a short list of two new candidates for the Literacy position.

• **CERLL and LLE hosted a successful symposium in November entitled, Future Directions for Language Education in Ontario.**

I apologize for other new initiatives that I may have missed here. By providing this list, I don’t want to diminish the tremendous work performed by our faculty and staff on scheduling, admissions, awards, finance, student support, grant support and the many other tasks that we need to perform daily as part of our ongoing operations. The intent of this list is simply to highlight the changes and innovations that are taking place.
As we look ahead, some of our biggest challenges appear to be:

1. How can we further improve the MT program’s reputation as a truly unique, research-centered initial teacher education program?
2. How can we respond to significant declines in applications to our M.Ed programs? Do we need to re-package or restructure these programs to make them more attractive?
3. How can we continue to reduce faculty workload and streamline our operations?

We have many exciting things going on in CTL. Thank you everyone for your ideas, your initiative and for all your hard work.

Jim