

Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre

Annual Report 2016 / 2017

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Introduction

This document reports on the programming and different forms of academic support provided by the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (hereafter RGASC) between 01 May 2016 and 30 April 2017. It also provides a brief overview of the scholarship conducted at the RGASC that informs, advances, or assesses the efficacy of its programming.

The purpose of the Annual Report is to present RGASC stakeholders with the information they need to offer feedback on the kind of programming and academic support the Centre provides to the teaching and learning community at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). This document has not been written for the purposes of assessment or self-promotion.

The RGASC Advisory Committee¹ was struck in Fall 2015 with a dual mandate: to facilitate communication between the RGASC and its stakeholders, and to help ensure that the RGASC provides programming and support that genuinely respond to its stakeholders' needs. The Annual Report is intended to provide that Committee with the necessary information to fulfill the terms of its mandate. More generally, the Report is written to facilitate communication between the RGASC and all those members of the University of Toronto community for whom the Centre provides programs and services.

This year's Annual Report is organized into four sections: 1) General Undergraduate Support; 2) Core Focus Areas; 3) Programs; and 4) Collaborative Programming. Wherever possible, it offers both a quantification of the results of RGASC programming and qualitative feedback from our stakeholders. The qualitative data has been included at the request of last year's Advisory Committee. We hope this information will not only inform our stakeholders about the RGASC's activities over the past year, but also inspire a community-wide discussion about the reach, impact, relevance, sustainability, affordability, and scalability of RGASC programming more generally.

The RGASC greatly values feedback from all of its stakeholders. Comments about this Report can be forwarded via email or telephone using the contact information below; readers are also very welcome to drop by the RGASC in person to set up an appointment with an RGASC faculty or staff member.

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¹ The Terms of Reference for the RGASC Advisory Committee are posted on the RGASC website (<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/our-mission-0/rgasc-advisory-committee>). Information regarding this year's Committee membership is also included in Appendix A of this Report.

RGASC Mission

The RGASC is a hub for academic skills development on the University of Toronto Mississauga campus and has a dual mandate: to support instructors and teaching assistants in their efforts to implement best practices in teaching and learning, and to support students in their efforts to enhance their academic skills and increase their understanding of their disciplines.

The RGASC works collaboratively with faculty and teaching assistants to help create the best possible environment for learning in classes, labs, and tutorials. It also directly provides academic support to students through a variety of programming channels, including one-on-one appointments, co-curricular courses, workshops, and peer-facilitated study groups.

In order to fulfill its mandates, RGASC faculty and staff maintain active research programs, often by collaborating with disciplinary colleagues to assess the impact of an intervention in the classroom. All RGASC programming is informed by a number of areas of SoTL including Writing Across the Curriculum, Supplemental Instruction, Critical Thinking, Problem-Based Learning, Collaborative Learning, and Active Learning Classrooms.

Organizational Structure

As the Office of the Dean undergoes restructuring, the administrative structure of the RGASC continues to evolve. In July 2015, the position of Director, Teaching Learning Support and Innovation was divided into two positions: 1) Director of Teaching Support; and 2) Director of Teaching Innovation. The Director of Teaching Support was responsible for programs and staff based at the RGASC, while the Director of Teaching Innovation was responsible for teaching and learning initiatives external to the RGASC. Both positions reported directly to the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate.

In July 2016, the position of Director of Teaching Support was dissolved and replaced by the position of Director, RGASC held by Tyler Evans-Tokaryk. At the same time, Andrew Petersen (having returned from research leave) re-assumed his old role as the Director of Teaching and Learning Support and Innovation for one more year while the new organizational structure of the Office of the Dean was being established. It is assumed that the Director of Teaching Learning Support and Innovation role will be eliminated as of July 2017 and that this portfolio will be divided among the new positions in the Office of the Dean.

In January 2017, the new positions of Vice-Dean Teaching & Learning and Vice-Dean Academic Excellence were created in the Office of the Dean. As of that date, the Director, RGASC and the Director, Teaching and Learning Support and Innovation report directly to the Vice-Dean Teaching & Learning.

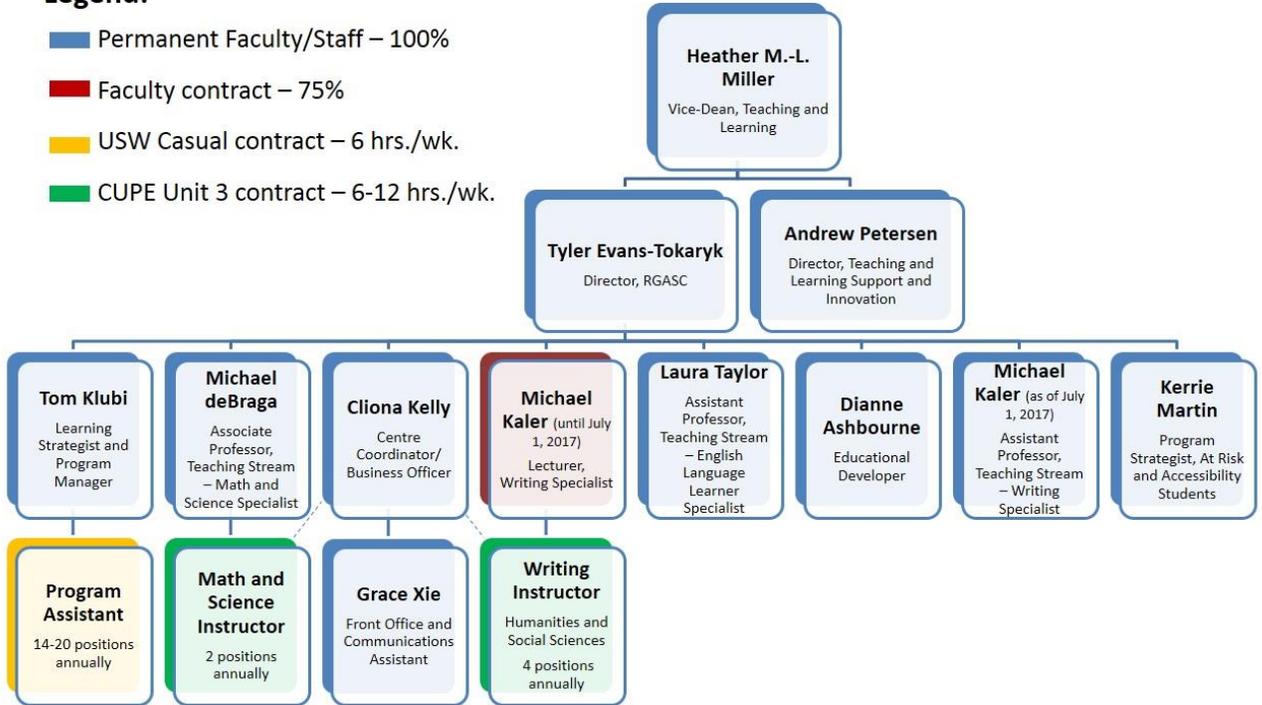
The following is an organizational chart of the RGASC, current as of April 2017:

The Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre

Organizational Structure

Legend:

- Permanent Faculty/Staff – 100%
- Faculty contract – 75%
- USW Casual contract – 6 hrs./wk.
- CUPE Unit 3 contract – 6-12 hrs./wk.



The Robert Gillespie
ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTRE

Part One: General Undergraduate Support

Face-to-face meetings and small group consultations are the most popular forms of academic support provided by the RGASC. In addition to support with written assignments (typical of a university Writing Centre), the RGASC also offers instruction in mathematics, scientific problem-solving, and general academic skills development (e.g., time management, note-taking, lecture-listening, multiple-choice test preparation, critical reading). The majority of face-to-face appointments at the RGASC are conducted one-on-one and are 30 minutes long, but an increasing number of appointments are shorter (ca. 15 minutes) drop-in appointments offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

As in previous years, appointment data for 2016/2017 will not be available until August, so they cannot be reported here. The most recent data available (see Chart 1, below) demonstrate, however, that overall demand for face-to-face appointments continues to rise and that the RGASC has increased the number of consultations it offers in an effort to meet this need. Over the last four years, the RGASC's total number of appointments has increased from 2090 to 3582. The number of unique students who visited the RGASC for face-to-face appointments has increased from 827 students in 2012 to 1207 in 2016 (see Chart 2, below). As well, the troubling trend of annual increases in the number of waitlisted students was reversed in 2014-2015 (see Table 1, below) and was down again in 2015/2016. We attribute the lower number of waitlisted students in large part to the increased number of hours of drop-in appointments offered this year, as well as to the improved marketing of these hours (through social media, Campus Media Screens, and conventional signage). While these waitlist data are encouraging, there were still 329 students in 2015/2016 who tried but were unable book an appointment with an instructor. We are also wary of providing and promoting "just-in-time" forms of support like drop-ins which do not offer students the same kind of instruction as longer, booked appointments.

Chart 1: Automated Booking System Data (2012-2016)

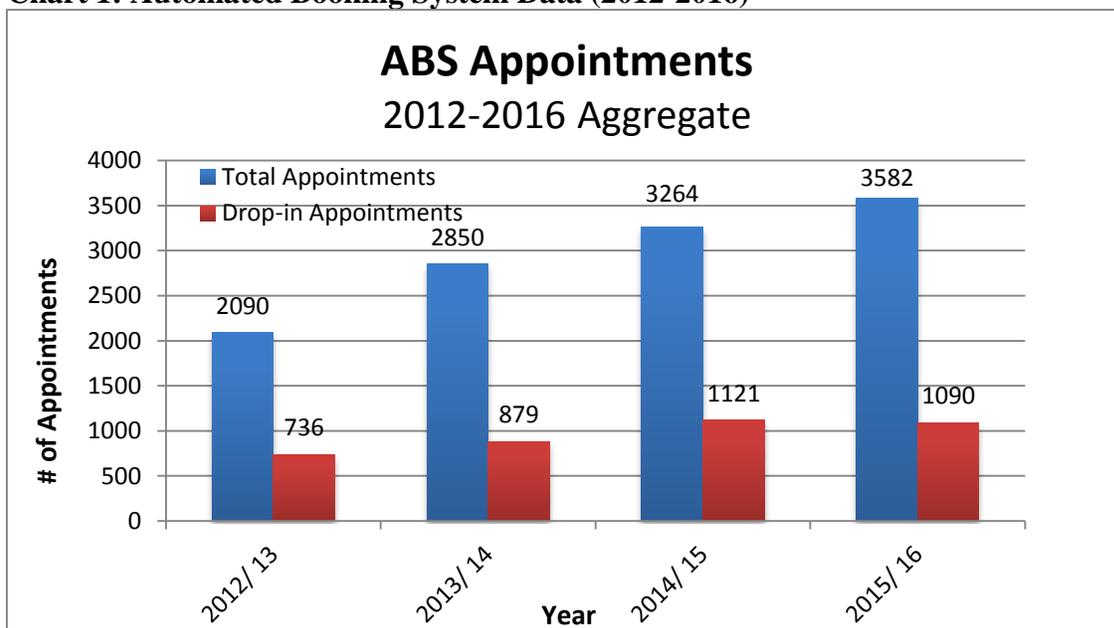


Chart 2: Total Unique Students (2012-2016)

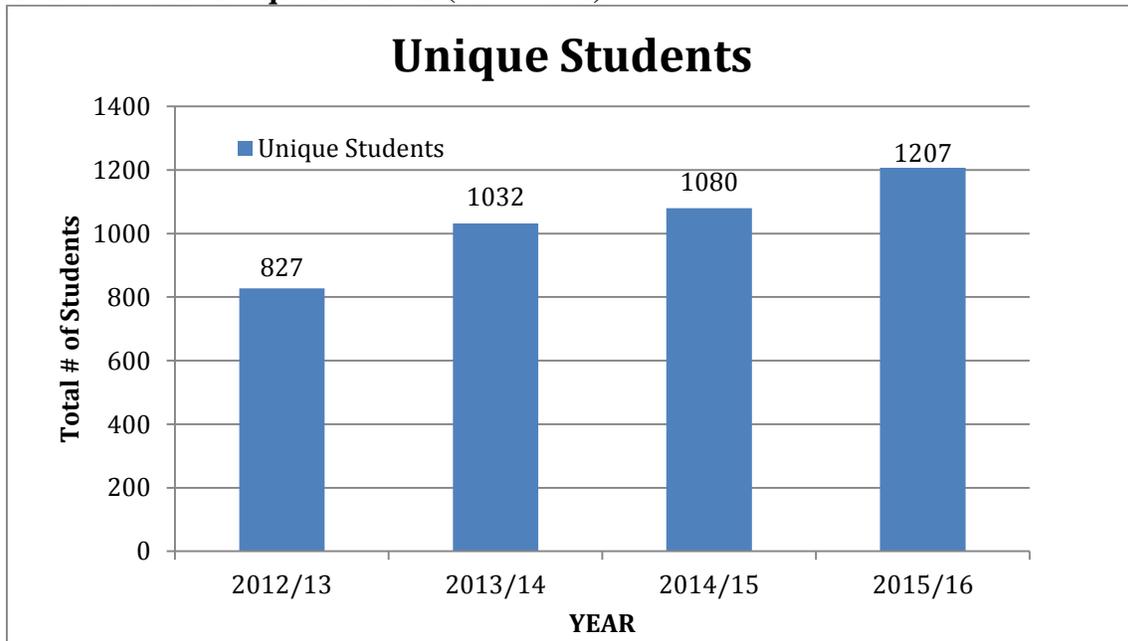


Table 1: Waitlist Data (2012-2016)

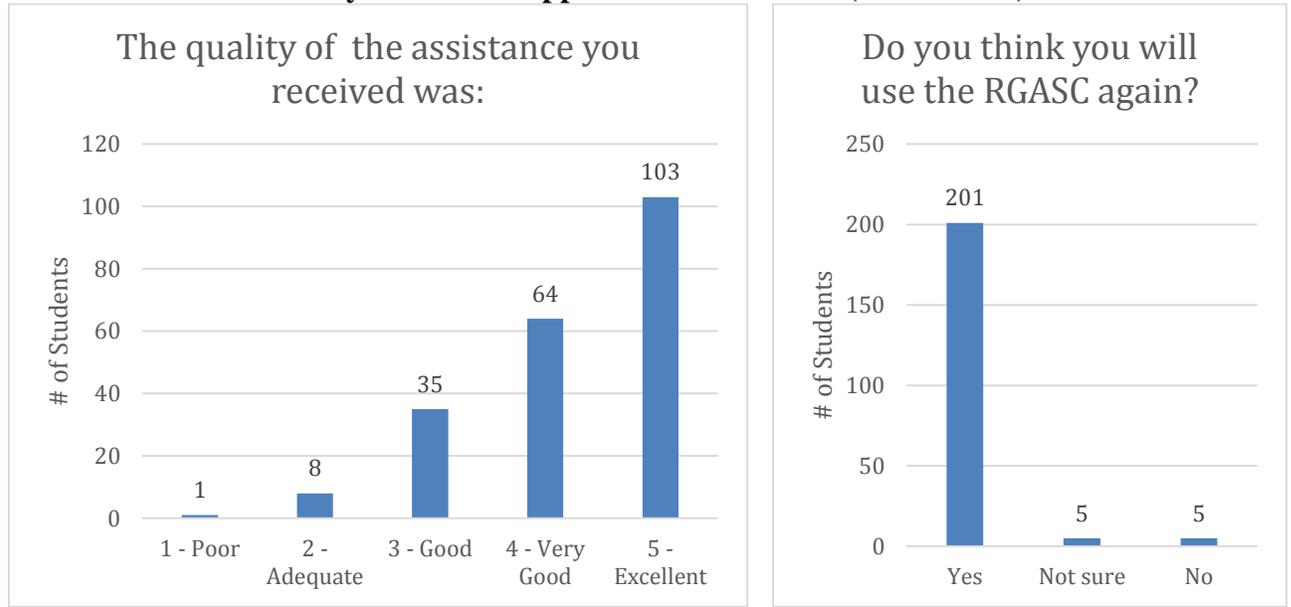
Year	Total Waitlisted Students	Waitlisted Students Booked
2012/ 13	1148	409
2013/ 14	1564	612
2014/ 15	651	236
2015/ 16	448	119

Student feedback regarding the support they received from RGASC Writing Instructors was very positive. Of the 211 students who responded to the 2016/2017 Appointment Feedback Survey, 202 students indicated the “Quality of the Assistance” they received at the RGASC was either “good”, “very good” or “excellent” (see Chart 3 below). Perhaps most importantly, the vast majority of respondents answered “yes” when asked whether they would use the RGASC again (see Chart 4, below). When asked what they found “most helpful” in their appointment, students mentioned discussions with instructors on a wide range of topics covering everything from “understanding the assignment” to “note-taking strategies” and “grammar.” The most common form of support students found helpful, however, seemed to be the help they received in understanding assignment instructions and their professor’s expectations. For example, one student noted that “the instructors did not give me answers but guided me in the right direction which lead me to gaining a better understanding of my assignment”; another student observed that the writing instructor “helped me think a lot deeper into the assignment, and allowed me to unravel the complicated layers of my assignment topic.”

When asked to “provide suggestions for improvement,” students overwhelmingly asked for “more appointments,” “longer appointments,” and “more online appointments.” Other common responses included requests for directed and specific feedback (e.g., editing)

rather than advice on how to improve the students’ writing in general. One student, for example, advised the RGASC Writing Instructors “to go more into detail about how to receive a 4.0 in the assignment / essay instead of overall generic improvement.” Another observed that “more specific advice would be helpful so that there is some reference point that student can use to understand what went wrong.”

Charts 3 and 4: Summary of Student Appointment Feedback (2016 – 2017)



General Undergraduate Support: Recent Changes

In an effort to improve accessibility and reduce the number of waitlisted students, the RGASC made three changes in 2015/2016 to the way it offered face-to-face consultations: we extended operating hours on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, we introduced online appointments, and we increased the number of hours dedicated to drop-in appointments. All of these innovations have been continued and/or expanded this year: we offered a similar number of evening appointments, increased the number of online appointments available to students, and increased the number of drop-in appointment sessions available to students.

Writing Retreats

Weekly Writing Retreats were introduced in 2016/2017 in an effort not only to provide students with a different way of interacting with a writing instructor, but also to create a relaxed, supportive environment where students could sit down and do some actual writing. We piloted the Writing Retreats in Fall term, offering a two-hour session every Friday afternoon in a classroom in the Instructional Building, and then expanded this form of support to the Residences in the Winter term, offering an additional two-hour session in a Residence seminar room every Monday evening.

An RGASC Writing Instructor facilitated each Retreat session, providing feedback on writing in progress and encouraging students to stay and write for as long as they liked. In an effort to create a welcoming, comfortable environment, we provided snacks to attendees. A total of 133 students attended the 25 Writing Retreats held between September 30 and April 7, with an average of 5 or 6 attending each session. Many of the students participated in the Retreats on a regular basis. Feedback on the Writing Retreats has been very positive; one student noted that “writing retreats are amazing” and suggested that we “hold a couple more during the weekdays.” Another characterized them as “awesome.” We received no negative feedback about the Writing Retreats.

Math Drop-Ins

Between 2014 and 2016, the utilization rates for Math and Science appointments were quite low. Many appointments were either not booked or not used appropriately (i.e., students booked them in hopes of getting writing or general academic support). The RGASC addressed this trend in 2016/2017 by allocating fewer hours to regularly booked Math and Science appointments and hiring instead a math instructor who offered weekly “Math Drop-In” sessions. These sessions were designed to promote a deeper understanding of foundational material including but not limited to algebraic formulation, basic statistical methods, pre-calculus, and advanced functions. In essence, the sessions targeted high-school mathematical skills rather than concepts included in university level calculus or formal statistics course. Between September 2016 and April 2017, the RGASC conducted 147 appointments during these new Math Drop-In Sessions. For more information on the Math Drop-In innovation, see the report on Numeracy & Scientific Literacy below.

Part Two: Core Focus Areas

In addition to offering individualized support for undergraduate students in writing, numeracy, and general academic skills, the RGASC has five core focus areas for its programming and service delivery: 1) Writing Support; 2) Numeracy Support; 3) English Language Learner Support; 4) Graduate Student Support; and 5) Faculty Support. The following pages offer a brief overview of each of these core areas of focus.

1) Writing Support

Writing Development Initiative (WDI)

The largest single writing-related project that the RGASC supports is the Dean's Writing Development Initiative (WDI), which provides financial and organizational support for departments to enhance the writing components in their courses. Departments submit proposals for courses and interventions to improve the development of writing in their programs. Typically, proposals to the WDI involve a combination of extra writing assignments (often scaffolded), writing-focused tutorials, additional instruction in disciplinary writing practices, and enhanced formative feedback on written assignments. In 2016-2017, 23 courses across the campus with total enrolments of over 5000 students were directly supported; as well, an additional 20 courses in Historical Studies receive WDI support that enabled Teaching Assistants to provide feedback on outlines of student essays.

If a given project is successful and has attained a reasonably stable form, the WDI Committee may recommend that its costs be transferred into the departmental base budget: this option develops the WDI, shifting it from something that simply deals with proposals to a mechanism through which innovative uses of writing instruction and instruction through writing can be supported as they manifest in the form of permanent projects.

This development highlights the increasing importance of assessment, and a new approach to assessment is, in fact, the single largest change that has arisen in our reconceptualization and reorganization of the WDI over the past year. Assessment is pivotal for many reasons: it helps to develop and refine the program or course and its preferred writing pedagogy (i.e., assessment as feed-forward); it enables instructors to improve student learning and student writing; it supports the professional development of TAs and faculty; and it helps to build a community of scholars who will contribute to the ongoing effectiveness of the WDI, and writing pedagogy at UTM more generally.

In light of these benefits, the office of the Dean has provided the RGASC with the resources to design, administer and run a "basic assessment" package involving pre- and post-assessment of a) student writing (focusing on skills targeted by the funded interventions) and b) student views on the interventions and their own writing, as well as interviews with instructor and TAs. Should they so desire, instructors will also be able to develop their own means of assessment, in collaboration with the WDI's Writing

Specialist. Given the scale of the WDI, taking on these new assessment-related responsibilities will be its biggest new challenge in the year to come.

As part of the WDI's support of innovative writing-related teaching and research, the upcoming school year will see the creation of a Writing Fellowship: recipients of this fellowship will be granted a 0.5 FCE release to give them an opportunity to work with the Writing Specialist and the RGASC community as they conduct research into writing pedagogy and/or redesign courses to incorporate more writing.

TA Training

In order to support the writing initiatives of WDI-funded courses, the RGASC works closely with TAs, a group that is often underappreciated in the development of course initiatives. At the start of both the fall and winter terms, we offered 10-hour Writing TA Training Sessions, at which TAs (and instructors who wish to attend) learned about the benefits of enhanced focus on disciplinarily relevant aspects of writing in their courses, and were given tools for, and training in, creating writing-focused environments. Three hours of this training dealt explicitly with grammar and sentence level issues, with research-based guidance on best practices for teaching, and giving feedback on, this level of student writing. In 2016/2017, the Writing TA Training Sessions were attended by 29 TAs from across the disciplines, and in several cases, the TAs attending were "head" or "writing" TAs, passing their training on to the other course TAs. TAs found the sessions to be rewarding, noting for example that "I learned about and now have access to an abundance of resources that are personally applicable to my career goals" and "I loved all the material about 'write to learn' and 'learn to write' topic. It made me think deeper about my approach and it was very useful when I had to decide on the kind of exercises I want to include in my tutorials." In addition to these training sessions, the RGASC provides ongoing support to TAs during the term as they design, deliver and assess writing work.

Our work with TAs extends beyond the WDI: in addition to the WDI-related training session mentioned above, in 2016/17, we ran 14 writing-focused training sessions (typically 2-3 hours in length), many tightly integrated with specific course demands; we also finalized our work with TATP on the creation of an online, one hour training module for writing TAs (or TAs in writing-intensive courses). A goal for the year to come involves building more robust online resources for both faculty and TAs, so as to create a bank of easily accessible and relevant materials dealing with writing instruction and work with writing.

Faculty and instructor assistance

In addition to the WDI, the RGASC also offers support to faculty and instructors for course or assignment design. With regard specifically to writing support, in 2016/2017 we were able to directly contribute to the creation, integration and execution of writing-based tasks in 22 courses across the disciplinary spectrum ((ANT102, ANT204, ANT313, BIO152, BIO153, BIO203, BIO434, CCT383, CIN101, CLA230, ECO400, FAH101, HIS393, HIS395, LIN203, POL208, POL368, RLG101, SSM1050, SSM1100, SSM1110, WGS367); this figure is in addition to courses receiving support through the WDI. These

contributions often included assisting with development of assessment criteria (and associated rubrics) that help improve feedback, consulting on creating scaffolded assignment structures, and helping develop tools to assess the efficacy of writing instruction, such as student surveys and analyses of student writing. One of the broader goals of this faculty support is to encourage the development of a writing pedagogy community at UTM; to this end, the RGASC hosted and facilitated a Writing Round Table for in May 2016, gathering instructors interested in writing from across the disciplines.

Direct student assistance

In addition to face-to-face meetings, discussed elsewhere in this report, our direct contact with students takes place in course-specific drop-in sessions focused around specific assignments, presentations and workshops in classes, and integration in special events. In 2016-2017, we ran drop-in sessions for the following courses: BIO152, CCT109, CCT110, CCT208, CCT383, CIN101, CLA230, DRE121, ECO320, ECO373, HIS101, HIS393, PHY137, POL208, PSY290, SOC208, WGS366, and WGS367. These drop-ins are included in the total number of appointments reported above in Chart 1: Automated Booking System Data (2012-2016). These sessions involve short (ca. 10 minute) meeting with students to discuss a specific assignment: they enable us to assist students by addressing focused, immediately relevant issues. In addition to providing support with regard to specific assignments, these drop-in sessions raise student awareness of the RGASC, bringing significant numbers of students from the relevant courses to our face-to-face and online sessions.

We also gave 78 presentations or workshops in credit-bearing courses focused on developing writing skills this year, both in regular courses from across the disciplines and in such programs as ACE and utmONE. The presentations and workshops covered topics such as academic integrity, paragraph structure, thesis statements, critical reading and thinking, and exam writing.

Two other initiatives should be noted here: First, we created a new Workshop Series, the Elements of Academic Writing, consisting of 8 two hour workshops scheduled so as to align with student writing needs as the term progressed (from understanding the assignment through to proofreading). These were run in both Fall and Winter terms, with attendances ranging from 6-11 students in fall, and 3-4 students in winter: they were completed by 8 and 3 students respectively, Student feedback on this new initiative was overwhelmingly positive: for example, one student wrote as follows in her final reflection piece: “After being at the low 70s barrel for the first semester, I was surprised to get an 80 back on English test. I can only thank the workshop for the vast improvement. The workshop taught me how to plan and make a rough outline before I exploded my thoughts onto the paper. The workshop also helped me read over what I wrote both quickly and efficiently. I learned when to actually use a comma versus a period or other punctuation.”

Second, as noted in the General Undergraduate Support section above, we set up and staffed two series of “Writing Retreats” (one in residence on Monday evenings, one in IB on Friday afternoons), creating writing spaces on campus where students could work with the support of RGASC staff as needed.

To encourage student enthusiasm about, and pride in, their writing, we have also set up the More Than Marks writing contest: students who have used our services are invited to submit their best writing, with winners receiving gift cards and mention on our website and in our media.

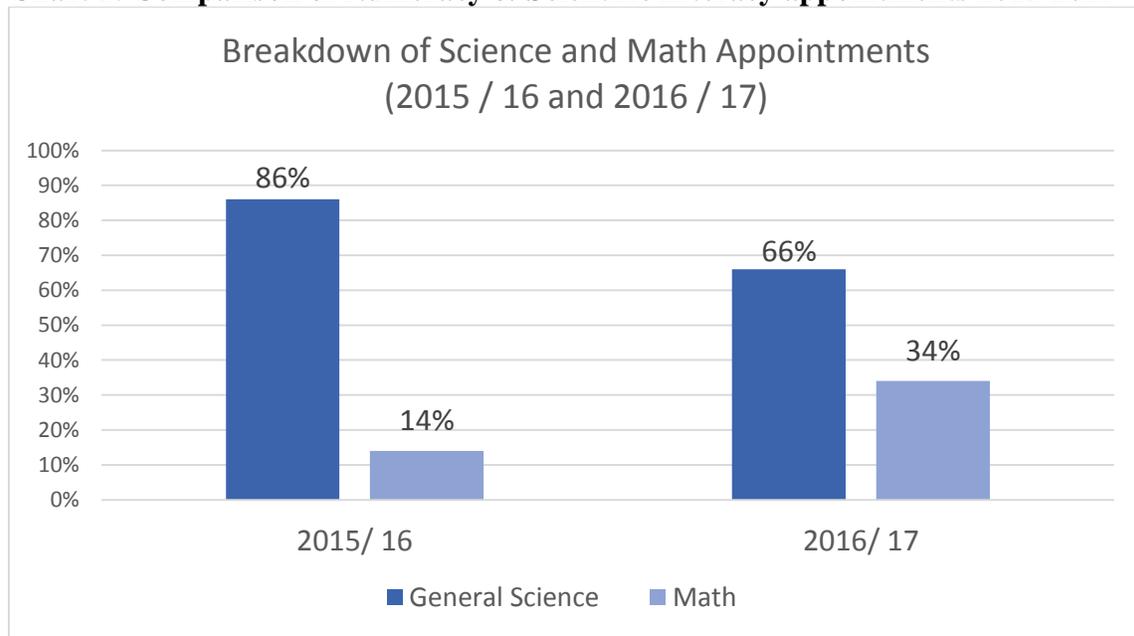
Research Contributions

Through its research and outreach work, the RGASC contributes to the ongoing development of writing pedagogy: this year, particular areas of focus in writing research have included writing program assessment, feedback on writing, and English as an International Language (EIL). We put this research to work for UTM not only in our own teaching, counselling and training, but also through the projects we organize (such as PASS, discussed below) and/or support—for instance, this year we finalized our work with TATP on a TA training module and with the Office of Student Transition on an assignment calculator to guide students through the writing process.

2) Numeracy and Scientific Literacy Support

The RGASC’s support in this area has been revised for the 2016/17 academic year by separating our programming into math-specific support and general scientific literacy support. This section will present the nature of the support in these two areas by highlighting the key attributes associated with the each option.

Chart 5: Comparison of Numeracy & Scientific Literacy appointments 2015-2017



Numeracy Support

Beginning in Fall 2016, the RGASC’s numeracy support has been enhanced through the introduction of “Math Drop-in” support, which responded to a challenge in support coverage caused by the face-to-face booking system. Due to its design, this system focuses on planned sessions to help students work through course assignments, essays, etc., encouraging students to come for primarily writing related support. Thus, it implicitly targets science-specific courses and is less likely to be utilized by students who are seeking more math-specific support. “Math Drop-in” support has been brought in so as to provide students with the opportunity to receive “just-in-time” support when they need it most (i.e., before tests). Students often will not realize that they need support of this kind until the last minute, at which point appointments may not be available through the on-line booking system; thus, the “Math Drop-in” support enhances our ability to assist a previously underserved demographic.

Math Drop-in Support

The goal of the “Math Drop-in” support is to target high-school mathematical skills, including data management: it is not intended to address concepts that are directly part of a university level calculus or formal statistics course. It provides students with an informal and confidential setting in which they can explore their current approach to learning course material and learn techniques to help them develop their quantitative reasoning skills. This support focuses on process, and encourages students to justify their understanding as it applies to a particular method or application; it does not focus on specific responses to assignment questions or course material.

The “Math Specialist” responsible for delivering this support needs to have direct experience in the teaching of first-year university level calculus and a clear understanding of, and demonstrated ability to address, math challenges associated with high school to university transitional issues. Drop-in sessions were scheduled so as to be integrated with the delivery of course material, such as assignments or tests/quizzes (i.e., algebraic manipulation of formulae, basic understanding of descriptive statistics, interpreting graphical data, etc.). A comparison between the math support available to students in the 2015/16 academic year and this academic year (2016/17) is presented in the three tables that follow, and it is striking to note that the number of students attending for math-specific support tripled (from 59 to 178) year over year.

Table 2: Year over Year comparison of students seeking Math Specific Support

Year	Total Math & Science Appointments	Math Specific Support	Drop-in Math Support	% of Total attendance that targets math
2015/16	430	59	0	13.7%
2016/17	523	178*	147	34.0%

* Note: The total of 178 includes 31 appointments that were served as pre-booked appointments. The breakdown of the 31 students attending those bookings can be examined in Table 4 below.

Table 3: Comparison of Math support as it pertains to Math Drop-ins only

MAT133	MAT134	MAT135	MAT102/232	Math Other
16	83	28	6	14

Table 4 Breakdown of the 31 face-to-face booked appointments for Math & Science

MAT133	MAT134	MAT135	MAT102 /223	PHY136 /137	STA107/ SOC222/ BIO360	Other*
3	2	6	5	2	4	10

* Other = Chemistry, Biology, Economics, Finance

Of the 147 appointments, 57 represent unique attendances (31 students attended only once and 26 attended at least two times). Of the 57 unique students who attended the “Math Drop-in” support, 51 attended their first session during the first term; there were only 6 new students for the second term. It should also be noted that the distribution of courses reflected in the Math Drop-in support demonstrates a very heavily skewed first-year calculus support, with 127 of the 147 students seeking drop-in support coming from MAT133, MAT134, and MAT135.

Student Survey for Math Drop-in Support

Students attending the drop-in sessions were surveyed regarding their experience with the “Math Drop-in” support and asked to respond to the following three questions:

1. Did the drop-in Math session(s) help you to resolve your misunderstanding?
2. Did the strategist encourage you to explain your misunderstanding?
3. After attending a session did you feel more confident in your math ability and has this confidence translated into productive and improved experiences in class and on tests/quizzes?

The majority of the responses were very positive, with students indicating that the sessions were helpful not only in terms of resolving misunderstandings, but also in terms of encouraging them to figure out where that misunderstanding had originated. Most significantly of all, student responses to the third question indicated that the “Math Drop-in” had indeed made them feel more confident, and that the support had impacted positively on their class performance.

Online Video Tutorials

Online video support tutorials designed by Dr. Maria Wesslen were continued this year with new videos being created for SOC222 (a sociology statistics course), taught by Dr. Andrew Miles. The result was an REB approved investigation, with the collaboration of Dr. Andrew Miles, to collect data on the impact of the support videos on student success in the course, looking specifically at the efficacy of the videos in helping students avoid misconceptions associated with the application of statistics. The data have now been collected and will be examined in the next few months. Other courses that have used the math video tutorials include MGM301 (Dr. Gerhard Trippen) and BIO207 (Dr. Fiona Rawle)—although in the case of the latter, the initiative was not run this year as Dr. Rawle was on sabbatical.

Scientific Literacy and Critical Reasoning

The Graded Response Method (GRM) is a tool which specifically targets conceptual knowledge by requiring students to justify their rationale for a particular response. It has been applied in a number of courses over the last several years and has met with substantial success as a means of encouraging student engagement in exploring course material. In 2015-2016, the GRM was used in the following courses: BIO153, BIO356, CSC108, CSC290, GGR111, GGR202, GGR305, MGM200, MGM301, and RSM270. GGR111 and 202 did not utilize the GRM during the 2016/17 academic year, but one new course (ANT101) was added for Summer and Fall iterations. A total of approximately 2000 students used some aspect of the GRM during the 2016/17 academic year across UTM and at the Rotman School of Management.

Table 5: Courses applying GRM in 2015-16 academic year

Course	Method for delivery of GRM	In-class support (tutorials or similar interventions)	# of students completing course
ANT101H5S & ANT101H5F	Assessment & Instruction	Instructor support in collaboration with RGASC	≈ 900
BIO153H5S**	Assessment & Instruction	Active Learning tutorial support	54
BIO153HFS	Assessment (Modified)	No direct support	≈ 800
BIO356H5F	Assessment & Instruction	Active Learning tutorial support	31
CSC290H5F	Assessment & Instruction	Lecture Support	≈ 60
CSC290H5S	Assessment & Instruction	Active Learning tutorial support	≈ 60
GGR305H5S	Assessment & Instruction	Active Learning tutorial support	≈ 100
MGM301H5F	Assessment (Modified)	None	40
RSM270*	Assessment (Modified)	None	≈ 120

* Note: Two sections of RSM270 utilized the assessment form of the GRM without direct support from the RGASC.

** Note: Summer iteration of BIO153 completed during July August of 2016

The RGASC's research on assessing the impact of the GRM has been done in collaboration with a number of colleagues including Dr. S. Fukuzawa (ANT101), Dr. C. Richter (BIO153), Dr. G. Trippen (MGM200, MGM301, and RSM270), and Dr. N. Laliberté (GGR111 and GGR202 from the previous year). This research has yielded some significant findings regarding the GRM's impact on student learning, finding presented in one paper currently under review, and 3 conference presentations directly linked to the Graded Response Method (GRM).

Problem Based Learning (The Virtual Mystery)

In the course of adapting the Graded Response Method (GRM) to ANT101 (see Table 5 above), the RGASC's Numeracy and Scientific Literacy specialist (Michael deBraga) established links between it and an initiative originally developed by Dr. Fukuzawa. This initiative focuses on the development of what Dr. Fukuzawa calls "Virtual Mysteries," and involves interventions based on Problem Based Learning (PBL) pedagogy: it helps to support student learning by providing students with opportunities to investigate a scenarios associated with forensic anthropology. Each week, students are provided with clues that they must use to move toward a plausible and defensible answer to the problem raised in the scenario. This form of inquiry, with its use of PBL, matches up with the rationale for the GRM, which requires that students justify their rationale for selecting given response. The common ground that clearly exists between these two separately developed initiatives provides a basis for developing the Numeracy & Scientific Literacy pedagogy currently under the direction of the RGASC's Numeracy & Scientific Literacy specialist. Part of the mandate of the RGASC is to expand the use of its numeracy and science support; collaboration with Dr. Fukuzawa responds to that imperative. The goal of this collaboration is to adapt the "Virtual Mysteries" into the discipline of biology and link it to the use of the GRM. We hope to determine if the combination of the "Virtual Mysteries" & the GRM in both ANT101 and in BIO356 (possibly expanding to BIO153) could further enhance students' deeper reasoning and critical thinking skills.

This collaboration led to a larger collaborative effort: with, and Dr. Fukuzawa (Department of Anthropology), Dr. Miller (Department of Anthropology and Vice Dean Teaching & Learning), and Trevor Orchard (Laboratory Technician, Department of Anthropology), Dr. deBraga (RGASC) was part of a LEAF proposal entitled The Virtual Mystery: Engaging students in large courses with an online hybridized problem-based learning project. This provides the RGASC with an opportunity to further expand the mandate of the Numeracy & Scientific Literacy support by adding yet another pedagogical option to the critical thinking tool box. The combination of the GRM and Virtual Mysteries instructional tools, coupled with the On-line Math support Tutorials (see above) and the expanding "Math Drop-in" support, will provide the RGASC with a number of diverse platforms from which its student and faculty supports options can be built.

3) English Language Learner (ELL) Support

Since its creation in September 2014, the English Language Learner (ELL) program at UTM has continued to grow and develop in response to the ever increasing diversity of the student population. In addition to the 245 face-to-face appointments held within the RGASC, ELL support was offered through online programming related to grammar and academic integrity, subject-specific programming within key courses, departmental specific programming focusing on core academic skills, and a for-credit course designed to encourage skill building and communication among students with different cultural backgrounds.

Online programming for ELL support included an academic integrity tutorial and the update of a suite of ten grammar and vocabulary workshops designed in the 2015/2016 academic year. This tutorial and the updated workshops were then embedded into the

course shells on Blackboard in a number of courses including BIO400, CLA101, ENG110, PHL105, LIN486, LTL486, RLG101, UTM115, as well as all DVS courses in FAH, CIN, and VCC for the Fall and Winter terms. These workshops allowed students to review key grammatical concepts and then to complete a corresponding online quiz to test their knowledge. In addition, instructors or TAs could refer particular students to these workshops if areas of concern were identified in student writing. Instructors seemed particularly pleased with these modules, as demonstrated by the following email communication:

I am looking at the grammar workshop exercises the ASC has provided on our BIO 400 Portal page... what I have seen this year is GREAT! And just what we need to facilitate peer evaluation exercises on some of our assignments this year. (BIO400)

In addition to the online programming, attempts have been made to embed ELL support within specific courses. This has been identified in past years as a particular challenge, because not all students within a given course would be considered ELL. Therefore, the development of the Professional English Language Skills (PELS) program and the PELS DVS program emerged. These programs were built upon the Communication Café model and LAUNCH programming, both introduced in 2015/ 16, and focused on providing relevant vocabulary and academic skills that were particularly tailored to use in the for-credit course. For example, in the CIN101 PELS DVS model, one topic included “writing a successful film review,” providing just-in-time support for students’ upcoming film review assessment. PELS programming was offered in HIS101 and RLG101, as well as through a generic set of PELS workshops. PELS DVS programming was offered in FAH101, CIN101, and VCC101. Students received CCR accreditation if they completed seven workshop sessions. Attendance data is as follows:

Table 6: PELS - FAH101

Date	Topic	Attendance
Sept 9	Introductions	4
Sept 16	Critical Reading in FAH	16
Sept 23	Writing an Effective Introduction	18
Sept 30	Descriptive Writing Practice	21
Oct 7	The Editing Process	16
Nov 4	Revision!	16
Nov 11	Analysis and Argumentation	15
Nov 18	Test Taking Tips	21
Total		127

Table 7: PELS - CIN101

Date	Topic	Attendance
Sept 9	Strategically Learning to Learn	28
Sept 16	Writing an Effective Introduction	17
Sept 23	Descriptive Writing Practice	27
Sept 30	Editing and Proofreading	28

Oct 7	Revision!	13
Oct 21	Oral Presentation Skills	24
Oct 28	Time Management	24
Nov 4	Writing a Successful Film Review	23
Nov 11	Writing Organized Body Paragraphs	21
Nov 18	Referencing and Citing	29
Nov 25	Test Taking Tips	23
Total		257

Table 8: PELS - VCC101

Date	Topic	Attendance
Jan 9	Introductions	13
Jan 16	Conversation Starters (small talk)	19
Jan 23	Critical Thinking	22
Jan 30	Communication Time	17
Feb 6	Using Punctuation	18
Feb 13	Proofreading Aloud	17
Feb 27	Being Descriptive	20
Mar 6	Lost in Translation	16
Mar 13	Summarizing Academic Readings	11
Mar 20	Negotiating Group Work	17
Total		170

Table 9: PELS - RLG101 (Fall and Winter courses)

Date (Fall)	Date (Winter)	Topic	Attendance (Fall)	Attendance (Winter)
Sept 15	Jan 13	Strategically Learning to Learn	6	4
Sept 22	Jan 20	Effective notetaking while observing	8	4
Sept 29	Jan 27	Chicago Style Referencing	9	4
Oct 6	Feb 3	Editing and Proofreading	7	4
Oct 20	Feb 10	Critical Thinking	7	2
Oct 27	Feb 17	Analysis Part 1	6	2
Nov 3	Mar 3	Analysis Part 2	5	0
Nov 10	Mar 10	Preparing for the Field Research Essay	6	2
Nov 17	Mar 17	Writing a Conclusion Paragraph	6	0
Total			60	22

Table 10: PELS - HIS101

Date	Topic	Attendance
Sept 15	Critical Reading	5
Sept 22	Writing an Effective Introduction	7
Sept 29	Analytical Writing Practice	2
Oct 6	Editing and Proofreading	2
Oct 20	Revision!	3
Oct 27	Incorporating Instructor Comments	2
Nov 3	The Structure of Writing	2
Nov 10	Writing an Effective Thesis	2
Total		25

Table 11: PELS - Generic

Date	Topic	Attendance
Sept 19	Strategically Learning to Learn	19
Sept 26	A 'how to' guide to Academic Referencing	16
Oct 3	Critical Thinking: What Professors Really Want	13
Oct 17	Writing an Annotated Bibliography	11
Oct 24	Oral Presentation Skills	11
Oct 31	Grammar Boot Camp	10
Nov 7	Time Management	11
Nov 14	Test Taking Tips	9
Total		100

In addition to the PELS programming, ELL support was offered to students in the Department of Management through 2 hour workshops related to Management's Professional Skills Development Program (PSDP). Built upon the successful workshops from last year, the three most popular topics were offered during the month of October. These included *Test Taking Tips*, *Negotiations*, and *Improving Academic Vocabulary* and were attended by 15, 8 and 5 students respectively. Partnerships were also formed with the Department of Visual Studies to assist students who were not enrolled in courses supported through PELS DVS and two additional workshops were offered on Time Management (attended by 5) and note-taking (attended by 2). A 60 minute workshop was also offered in BIO400 on Critical Thinking within their class lecture.

While the above programming was embedded within other courses, the ELL program also attempted to encourage students to improve their English communication skills through a for-credit course titled *UTM115H5: Communication Among Cultures*. This 0.5FCE course, offered in Fall 2016, was part of the ONE series, open to first-year students and facilitated by the Office of Student Transition (OST). The course description, in its first line, specifically suggested that this course was designed for English Language Learners. Open to 60 students and run in one of the active learning classrooms, this course examined cultural differences by using experiential and game-based learning techniques. Feedback from students was positive and highlighted several key strengths, including:

[This course] taught me how to communicate effectively with students and professors; UTM Faculty, and people of other cultures. (Anonymous student comment)

[This course] contributed to my success by introducing me to the Academic Skills Centre. (Anonymous student comment)

Because of the success of UTM115H5 in 2016, it will be offered again in Fall 2017; in this iteration, it will be made to focus on additional skill development, specifically in areas of academic reading and academic integrity.

In addition to these larger initiatives, some more focused support was offered to better assist a larger range of ELL students. This included TA training sessions, where TAs were provided instruction on challenges that might be associated with ELL writing and were asked to consider appropriate feedback strategies when commenting on student work. By working with TAs, not only was the ELL program highlighted to a broader demographic, but a connection was made with TAs, so that they could appropriately respond to struggling ELLs by encouraging them to attend the RGASC. This idea of circulating the message to a broader audience was also demonstrated during both Head Start and Orientation programming, where ELL students were encouraged to attend workshops focused on specific academic skill building.

While undergraduate students make up a significant portion of demographic population of ELLs, there is still some need for support among the graduate students at UTM. Because of this, the ELL program offered individualized support through face-to-face consultations. These consultations were tailored to meet the specific needs of these students, but generally targeted skill building in areas of reading, writing, and oral communication.

New Initiatives

In 2016, UTM partnered with teachers and administrators from local high schools involved in the Region of Peel ELL Program for a Professional Development Day. Teachers, Principals and Administrators were invited to UTM to exchange ideas on how best to support international students in their transition from high school to university. The goals of this initiative were:

- Identify the knowledge and skills required by students to be successful in post-secondary (university) business and social science programs.
- Analyze the knowledge and skills imbedded in the overall expectations of the English Grade 11 Academic and Grade 12 academic curriculum (3U and 4U) and how these align with academic English language requirements of the university program
- Brainstorm strategies and resources to support adapting the 3U and 4U courses to reflect student identity, meet curriculum expectations, and prepare students for their future career pathways and success in college and university programs.

There were three main topics of discussion included in this professional setting. These included Academic Writing, Oral Communication, and Academic Integrity.

In terms of UTM's involvement, contributing parties included the Office of the Registrar (OR), the RGASC's ELL program, and the English Language Program in the School of Continuing Studies. It is expected that this initiative will continue on an annual basis. The RGASC and the OR continue to work together on new initiatives to better support students. Currently, discussions are also in progress on an additional transition initiative, this time focusing on the transition of international student from UTM's Academic and Cultural English (ACE) program to full-time undergraduate study. While discussions are only just beginning, it is anticipated that this program would introduce students to the breadth and depth of support the RGASC can offer as they continue to pursue their studies.

4. Graduate Student and TA Support

The primary way that the RGASC supports graduate students is by offering programming accredited by either the Graduate Professional Skills program (GPS) or the Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP). These programs offer incentives—transcript notations and certificates—to students who complete the required programming. Low registration and attendance at graduate student workshops has been a significant challenge for the RGASC in previous years. To address this challenge, the RGASC identified two strategic priorities for graduate student and teaching assistant support: relationship building and capacity building.

In order to improve the RGASC's ability to determine priorities for graduate student support and to advertise workshops and other services, a substantial effort was made to build relationships with key stakeholders across all three campuses. Graduate student programming priorities were determined by 1) individually contacting all graduate student supervisors and speaking at faculty meetings to request suggestions for graduate student programming and support; 2) consulting with UTMAGS and other departmental graduate student groups, including those from CPS, Geography, and Biology; and 3) surveying graduate students at the start of both the fall and winter semesters.

Given the wide range of programming requested and the breadth of the GPS program, it is often necessary to find facilitators who are willing and available to develop and offer workshops which the RGASC does not have the in-house expertise to deliver. This is not always easy. To address this challenge and build the RGASC's capacity to offer a wider range of workshops, the RGASC's Educational Developer attended graduate student events across all three campuses in order to identify and build relationships with potential workshop facilitators. The RGASC also hired two graduate students who worked with the Educational Developer to develop and facilitate workshops on topics for which a staff or faculty facilitator could be identified.

During the 2016/2017 academic year, the RGASC noted a significant improvement in the level of graduate student engagement in programming.

Graduate and Professional Skills (GPS) Program

The RGASC offers programing accredited by the GPS program, an initiative of the School of Graduate Studies, which offers a transcript notation for students who complete 60 hours of programming. This year, the RGASC offered the following GPS accredited workshops:

Table 12: GPS Workshops

<i>Workshop Title</i>	<i>Date & Time</i>	<i>Facilitator(s)</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Teaching Creative Problem Solving Skills: An Experiential Workshop	November 28, 5pm – 8pm	Michael DeBraga , Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, RGASC Tom Klubi , Learning Strategist & Program Manager, RGASC	19	8
Creating Scientific Figures using Adobe Illustrator	March 6, 10am - 1pm	Christine P'ng , Graduate Student, Biomedical Communications	20	16
Introduction to Statistics using R Software	March 16 10am - 1pm	Alvaro Nosedal Sanchez , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, MCS	25	5
Creating and Maintaining an Academic Personal Website	April 5, 11am – 2pm	Sadia Sharmin , Course Instructor, MCS & Doctoral Candidate, OISE	20	9
Conflict Resolution Fundamentals, Part 1	April 25, 11am-1pm	Matthew Jones , G2G Peer Advisor, Conflict Resolution Centre (CRC) Priyanka Manohar Chandran , G2G Peer Advisor, CRC	9	5

Last year, the RGASC organized 6 GPS workshops, but unfortunately all were cancelled due to low registrations.

The RGASC also provides face-to-face appointments for graduate students and students applying to graduate school. Most appointments with students applying for graduate school focus on application materials (letters of intent, statement of purpose, etc.) while appointments with graduate students typically address writing and / or presentation skills. In 2016/2017, the RGASC conducted 53 appointments with graduate students and undergraduate students applying for graduate school.

Teaching Assistant Training Program

The RGASC works in partnership with the Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP), a tri-campus training program for any student working as a teaching assistant at the University of Toronto. This program provides certification of professional teaching development and supports departments in their efforts to provide general training for TAs, especially new TAs and TAs teaching in new contexts. The RGASC collaborated with

TATP to deliver two extensive training programs for new TAs – one in September 2016 and one in January 2017. 122 TAs attended TA Day in September and 38 attended in January.

The RGASC also offered the following TATP-accredited workshops in 2016/2017:

Table 13: TATP Workshops

<i>Workshop Title</i>	<i>Date & Time</i>	<i>Facilitator(s)</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Teaching Creative Problem Solving Skills: An Experiential Workshop	November 28, 5pm – 8pm	Michael DeBraga , Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, RGASC Tom Klubi , Learning Strategist & Program Manager, RGASC	19	8
After your Teaching Assistantship: Professional Development, Transferable Skills and Teaching Portfolios	November 15, 3pm - 5pm	Mike Kasprzak , TATP Curriculum Developer Kathleen Ogden , TATP UTM Trainer	--	10
Presentation Skills for Instructors and Teaching Assistants	January 20, 10am-12pm	Chester Scoville , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of English and Drama	14	9

The RGASC has delivered training in writing pedagogy as part of the Writing Development Initiative and for TAs with appointments in writing intensive courses (see the section on Writing Support above for more details).

RGASC faculty members have also been involved in creating additional TA training resources. The Writing Specialist worked with TATP to create online resources for graduate students to assist them in teaching writing. The Educational Developer worked with a faculty member from MCS to create a pilot workshop to train TAs in using peer instruction as an instructional strategy. This workshop will be offered to all TAs teaching first year computer science courses in Fall 2017.

Future Directions

The RGASC will continue efforts to build capacity to offer a wide range of workshops for UTM-based graduate students and to increase attendance at these workshops.

The RGASC has identified a need for increased collaboration among units involved in programming for UTM-based graduate students. In February 2017, the Educational Developer began organizing monthly meetings attended by representatives from the Career Centre, Library, and HCC to discuss graduate student programming efforts across the UTM campus. The initial goal of these meeting was to help coordinate our graduate student

programming efforts and more efficiently cross-promote events. As a result of these meetings, our areas will collaborate to offer programming UTM-wide event, discussed in more detail below. We will also be creating a list of all graduate student programming offered at UTM, to be distributed to graduate students and their supervisors in September 2017.

The RGASC is currently leading the development of a graduate student academic and professional skills development day to be held at UTM in September 2017. It will be a day-long event with workshops, seminars and a panel discussion that aims to enhance graduate students' professional and academic skills to better prepare them for their studies and for a competitive job market. The Office of the Vice-Dean, Graduate has approved this event and allocated funds from the GEF. Credit in the Graduate Professional Skills (GPS) program and the Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP) will be offered for participation in the day's events. This event will involve collaboration between the Office of the Vice-Dean, Graduate; UTM's Association of Graduate Students (UTMAGS); School of Graduate Studies (SGS); UTM Career Centre; UTM Library; and UTM Health and Counselling Centre (HCC). The RGASC will also lead the development of a cohesive list of all programming for graduate students at UTM to be distributed at the event this September. In addition to the opportunity to present a cohesive picture of programming for UTM-based graduate students, a large event like this greatly improves the likelihood of facilitators from UTSG and UTSC agreeing to run workshops for us at UTM - pairing facilitators from other campuses with local talent will help us build our capacity to offer a wider range of workshops.

The RGASC will continue efforts to connect with graduate student supervisors. During the summer, UTM faculty members will be contacted to determine whether they are interested in offering additional programming for graduate students. The RGASC will also encourage graduate student supervisors to use the comprehensive list of UTM graduate student programming that will be distributed in September to initiate a discussion with their students regarding a professional development plan for the year.

Next year, the RGASC will try offering more opportunities for students to participate in a series of workshops, in addition to offering one-off workshops. UTSG has noted greater learning gains and increased student engagement with this approach.

We have noticed that our workshops attract mainly research-stream graduate students from the sciences – especially Biology and CPS. Next year, we will place extra emphasis on engaging professional Master's students (MMPA, MBiotech, MScBMC, MscSM, and MMi). We will also continue trying to engage graduate students from some of UTM's other large research-stream populations including geography, anthropology, sociology and psychology.

The results of the RGASC's Fall 2016 graduate student survey indicated that many graduate students aren't interested in receiving GPS credit for workshop attendance because they don't want to have to go downtown to complete the majority of the 20 credits (60 hours) they need to receive a notation on their transcript. To address this, the RGASC

has spoken with SGS about offering UTM-based students the opportunity to participate in workshops happening at UTSG via Skype.

5. Faculty Support

Individual Consultations

There was a seven-month gap in the Educational Developer role at the RGASC. In mid-July, a new Educational Developer started at the RGASC.

In 2016/2017, the RGASC provided 112 hours of individualized support for over 25 different faculty members and course instructors (excluding consultations with WDI-funded courses or consultations related to teaching in the active learning classrooms). Individualized support focused on the following projects: 1) new course development; 2) course redesign; 3) syllabus review; 4) learning outcome development; 5) course redesign; 6) alignment of learning activities, assessments and course learning outcomes; 7) assignment design; and 8) innovative pedagogical approaches.

The RGASC's Educational Developer also conducted teaching observations for 4 faculty members, 2 course instructors, 3 job candidates and 2 teaching assistants. All observations except those for the job candidates, involved a pre-observation meeting, a 1-3-hour teaching observation, a post-observation meeting, and an average 2 pages of written feedback.

Professional Development Opportunities

Professional development opportunities for UTM faculty and instructors are organized by the Teaching and Learning Collaboration (TLC) group and the RGASC. The Teaching and Learning Collaboration at UTM aims to connect colleagues with a shared interest in teaching and learning in order to advance teaching practice at UTM. During the 2016/2017 academic year, the TLC and RGASC supported the following events:

Table 14: TLC Events

<i>Workshop Title</i>	<i>Date & Time</i>	<i>Facilitator(s)</i>	<i>Registered</i>
Seminar: Strategies for teaching large classes: lessons from Australia, New Zealand and the West Coast of North America	September 30, 2pm – 3pm	<i>Michelle French</i> , Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Physiology, UTSG	18
Workshop: Giving Formative Feedback on Sentence Level Issues	October 12 1pm – 4pm	<i>Michael Kaler</i> , Lecturer and Writing Specialist, RGASC, UTM	13
Seminar: Problem Based Learning in the Social Sciences	October 26 10 am – 11am	Sherry Fukuzawa, Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, UTM	8

		Nathan Innocente, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Sociology, UTM	
Workshop: Developing and Aligning Student Learning Outcomes	November 25, 2pm – 4pm	<i>Dianne Ashbourne</i> , Educational Developer, RGASC, UTM	19
Seminar: Experiential Learning and Indigenous Ways of Knowing	January 25 2pm – 3pm	Cat Criger, Aboriginal Elder, Traditional Teacher and Mentor, Indigenous Centre, UTM Nicole Laliberte, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Geography, UTM	13
Seminar: Stress, Anxiety, and Failure: Normal or a Mental Illness?	February 13 12pm – 1pm	Andrea Carter, Assistant Dean Student Wellness, Support & Success	30 (staff+ faculty)
Seminar: Assessing the value of integrating writing into a required methodology course in sociology	April 7 11am - 12pm	Jayne Baker, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Sociology, UTM Tyler Evans-Tokaryk, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream and Director, RGASC, UTM	13
Seminar: Game-Enhanced Learning	April 18 1pm – 2pm	Lee Bailey, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Economics, UTM Tom Klubi, Learning Strategist and Program Manager, RGASC, UTM	21

The RGASC, the TLC, and three faculty volunteers supported three Communities of Practice that met regularly throughout the 2016-2017 academic year. The goals of the communities of practice are to connect faculty, librarians, and staff with a shared interest in a teaching and learning topic and to advance teaching practice at UTM. The members of each community of practice met at least three times per term to discuss current research, share examples from their own practice, and collaborate on projects. Topics for the communities of practice were as follows:

- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) at UTM (9 members)
- Facilitating small group work (8 members)
- Teaching in active learning classrooms (11 members)

All three communities of practice plan to continue meeting during the 2017-18 academic year.

The TLC and RGASC also plan to facilitate the creation of two new communities of practice: one focused on experiential learning and the other focused on academic skills development.

Curriculum Development

The Director Teaching and Learning Support and Innovation and the RGASC's Educational Developer Collaborate to support curriculum development at UTM. In 2016/2017, the RGASC has been involved in curriculum mapping initiatives in the Departments of Management, Anthropology and Language Studies. The RGASC was also actively involved in creating and aligning the programing learning outcomes for the the Master of Management in Urban Innovation (MMUI) program proposal.

Active Learning Classrooms

UTM's technology-enhanced Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs) are learning spaces designed facilitate dynamic student participation in learning. Two pilot active learning classrooms have been in use since the Winter 2015 semester. During the past 2 years, over 80 instructors, librarians and TAs have taught over 4,240 students using a wide variety of different instructional practices. During the Fall 2016 term, 16 instructors held either their lecture or tutorials for their class in the ALCs. During the Winter 2017 term, 15 instructors held either their lecture or tutorials for their class in the ALCs.

The RGASC collaborates with the Library, Information and Instructional Technology Services (I&ITS), the Office of the Registrar, and Facilities Management and Planning to support and document the usage of the ALCs. There are two key roles the RGASC plays in the ALCs: 1) instructor support and training initiatives; and 2) research on teaching and learning in the ALCs. The RGASC's Educational Developer works directly with instructors to support the design and re-design of courses for the ALCs. They are also a member of the 4-person ALC Support Team that also includes the Library's Coordinator of Library Instructional Technology Services, the Library's Instructional Technology Support Specialist, and I&ITS's Classroom Technologist. The ALC Support Team collaboratively organizes training opportunities for instructors and TAs working in the ALCs. This year, these events included:

- 5 ALC Orientation/Refresher sessions in September 2016
- 2 ALC Open Houses in January 2017
- ALC Show and Share community-wide event in April 2017

The ALC Support Team also collects data to document the usage of the ALCs and research their impact on teaching and learning. In 2016/2017, the students in 26 classes held in the ALCs were surveyed and asked to provide feedback on their experiences in the room. The ALC Support Team also conducted one-on-one interviews with 14 of the instructors who used the ALCs this year.

Online and Hybrid Learning

The RGASC works collaboratively with technology librarians and I&ITS to provide support for instructors using online resources in their courses. While support for online initiatives is provided centrally, the RGASC supports funding proposals for the ITIF and UTM Teaching Innovation Fund, and provides educational development resources to successful projects.

Part Three: RGASC Programs

In addition to its core focus areas, the RGASC provides academic support to UTM undergraduate students through five formal programs: 1) Head Start; 2) Facilitated Study Group Program; 3) Program for Accessing Research Training (P.A.R.T.); 4) Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS) Program; and 5) Preparation to Launch Program. The following is a brief overview of each program's activities in 2016/ 2017.

1) Head Start

Once again the RGASC held the Head Start transition program in August 2016, but this year we significantly altered the schedule and curriculum so that it would be better aligned with Orientation Week programming organized by the Office of Student Transition (OST).

Total attendance figures for the traditional August week of Head Start were down from the 1642 in 2015 to 828 in 2016. Unique attendance was also down from a total of 322 in 2015 to 246 unique attendees in 2016. The decline in the numbers, down almost 50% for total attendance and 24% for unique attendance is significant, but continues a trend observed the previous year with the attempt to transfer Head Start programming into Orientation Week. In 2016, the promotion of Orientation Week significantly impacted Head Start numbers for the week of August 22nd. We expect that for 2017 this transfer of the transition support sessions that Head Start has historically offered will continue to move into the Orientation Week and as such departmental sessions will be eliminated completely from the 2017 iteration of Head Start.

Overview of Head Start Attendance (Academic Workshops):

The 2016 iteration of Head Start ran 35 separate small and larger group workshops supporting both department specific deliverables as well as skills based workshops. Seven of the 35 workshops were department specific with 5 representing returning departments and 2 new departments (Language Studies & Economics). The department specific workshops accounted for 267 of the 828 total attendance (32%).

In effect, the future role of Head start, therefore, will be reduced from what was once the only significant transition support option for students into serving as one of a number of transition support options, with the primary transition support piece being embedded into the Orientation Week held in September.

Table 15: Comparison of Attendance from 2015 to 2016 for Department sessions

Session Name	Attendance 2016	Attendance 2015	% difference
CPS dept.	33	68	-52%
Historical Studies*	53	88	-40%
Language Studies	22	NA	NA
MCS dept.	41	83	-51%

iCCiT	21	24	-13%
Biology	72	110	-35%
Economics	25	NA	NA

* Note: The Historical Studies session had previously been referred to as the Critical Reading & Writing Large Group Session.

As can be seen by Table 1 above and Table 2 below, Department, as well as small group skills workshops attendances, were significantly down year over year. This decline reflects the movement toward a greater focus on the promotion of the OST sponsored orientation week and a reduction in department resources aimed at promoting Head Start as what had originally been viewed as the only viable transition support available to students before the start of the term. The new focus, to target programming when the majority of students are on campus, as recommended by the OST solicited External Review was a major influence on Head Start and changes to the program will be piloted for 2017.

Table 16 Comparison of Attendance from 2015 to 2016 for Skills sessions*

Session Name	Attendance 2016	Attendance 2015	% difference
Writing & Reading Focus			
Academic Integrity*	34	65	-48%
Critical Reading for Success*	22	NA	NA
Critical Writing for Success*	33	NA	NA
Lab Report Writing	39	126	-70%
Library 101*	42	83	-50%
Grammar Bootcamp	9	NA	NA
English & Drama Skills	15	NA	NA
Numeracy Skills			
Test your Math Skills*	52	135	-61%
Problem Solving for Success	19	88	-78%
General Skills			
Get the most out of your Syllabus*	58	NA	NA
Lunch with faculty*	82	67	+18%
Time Management*	58	128	-55%
Lab Tours*	58	NA	NA

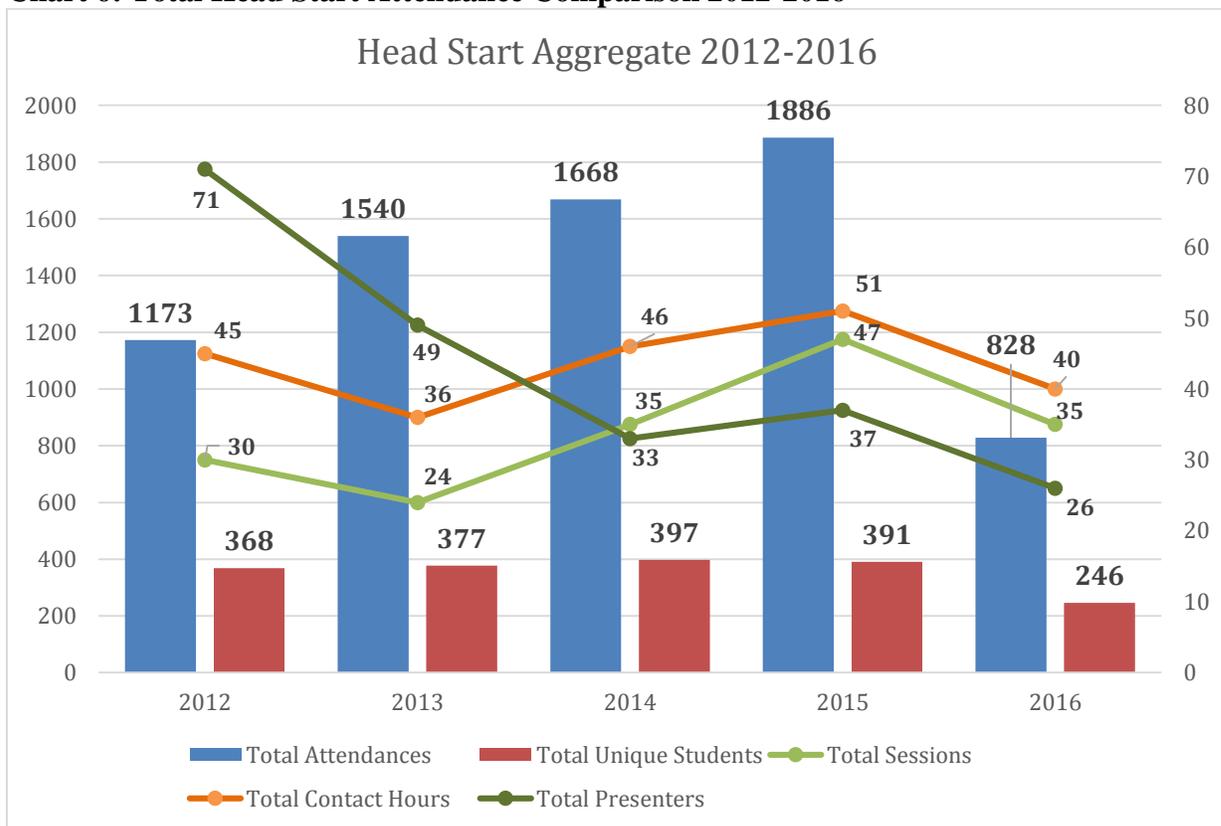
* Note – Most workshops were help multiple times and therefore count as separate skills workshops that are calculated as part of the total of 28; these are marked with an asterisk.

Overview of Head Start Attendance for last 5 years:

Table 17: Comparative Head Start Attendance* Data:

Year	Total Attendance	Unique Attendance	Presenters	# of Total Sessions	# of Total Hours
2012	1173	368	71	30	45
2013	1540	377	32	24	36
2014	1668	397	33	35	46
2015	1642	322	37	35	51.5
2016	828	246	26	35	40

Chart 6: Total Head Start Attendance Comparison 2012-2016



Note: asterisk (*) indicates combined Head Start & Orientation Week attendance figures

Student Feedback on Head Start

As always, students were asked to provide feedback on the value of the Head Start program at the end of the Fall Term to ensure they had had a full semester to apply and practice the skills they acquired. Their comments suggest that the curriculum transition program continues to meet their needs, but that timing continues to be a challenge.

When asked whether “your Head Start experience has helped you prepare for university studies”, 86% (30 of 35 respondents for this question) answered “yes” and 14% (5 respondents) answered “no.”

In response to the question “How helpful to you were the session(s) that you attended”, 85% (356 of 417 respondents) answered “helpful or very helpful.”

When asked about the best time to schedule Head Start, however, 49% of respondents indicated that the best time to hold Head Start would be the first week in September. This finding echoes the recommendations of the External Review on Orientation and has helped to inform the RGASC’s decision to better integrate Head Start within the rest of Orientation Week programming offered at UTM.

2) AccessAbility Resource Centre

The RGASC offers support to students at the AccessAbility Resource Centre in the form of weekly one-on-one learning strategy appointments. These appointments were offered by two full-time, permanent members of staff, a Learning Strategist/Program Manager and a Program Strategist who was hired in the Fall term. The Program Strategist has since taken on the majority of the learning strategy appointments and as a result, the number of appointments made available to students increased from 4 to 6 hours per week. Appointments with the Learning Strategist and Program Strategist generally focused on helping the students to develop effective study skills and habits primarily through modelling. Typical areas of focus included; note-taking, reading comprehension, memory strategies, exam and test-taking techniques and time management.

In 2016 / 17, 131 hours of learning strategy appointments were booked with AccessAbility students at the AccessAbility Resource Centre (ARC), although due to cancellations the number of completed appointments was actually 110 hours. In contrast, in 2015/2016, 88 hours of appointments were scheduled, while only 44 hours of appointments were completed. A protocol for non-attendance was put in place in 2016/2017: once it had been established that a student had not turned up for an appointment or had cancelled their appointment, students on the wait list were contacted to see if they could take the time slot. This new protocol appears to have been a key factor in the appointment completion rate improving from 50% in 2015/2016 to 84% in 2016/2017.

A clearer paper-based referral process was established so students who had been referred by the Learning Strategist or Program Strategist for further RGASC support were clearly identified when they came to the centre for appointments through the presentation of their referral form. In addition, both the Learning Strategist and Program Strategist have been given limited access the student database Clockwork, which has streamlined and formalized the way in which appointments are booked and notes are taken from student consultations.

In August 2016, the RGASC organized and delivered the Summer Transition program for incoming ARC students. A total of 15 students attended (out of 19 enrolled), and the programming was delivered by 3 faculty members, 1 librarian, 3 staff members, and 6 Peer Mentors. In the Student Feedback Survey, 100% of students agreed that the sessions

increased their confidence in succeeding in their first year of university and 100% agreed that they had been introduced to more effective approaches to preparing for university.

In the Fall term, the RGASC was approached by the AccessAbility Resource Centre to collaborate on a new online training module for the ARC note-takers. Preliminary discussions have taken place in regards to a framework for the training module and work on this project will continue in 2017/2018.

3) Facilitated Study Group (FSG) Program

Program Overview

Based on the Supplemental Instruction model developed by the University of Missouri at Kansas City, facilitated study groups are a non-remedial approach to learning enrichment that uses peer-assisted study groups to integrate essential academic skills with course related material. The study groups employ a wide range of collaborative learning techniques to help students build a structured study routine in order to process their study material more effectively. The essential features of the RGASC's Peer Facilitated Study Group Program are as follows:

- FSGs are offered in support only of courses in which there is active collaboration between the course instructor and the RGASC.
- FSGs target historically difficult courses rather than “at-risk” students.
- Participation in the FSG program is voluntary and open to all students enrolled in the course.
- The impact of this intervention on the academic performance of the class as a whole is measured by the RGASC at the aggregate level.
- The sessions are peer-facilitated by a team of facilitators, model students who are hand-picked by the course instructor and intensively trained by the RGASC in proactive learning and study strategies.
- The opportunity for students to attend the study groups is made available at the beginning of the term, before students encounter academic difficulties.

The goal of the FSG program is two-fold:

1. To provide course instructors and their students with a non-remedial approach to learning enrichment by deploying peer-assisted study groups to integrate essential academic skills with course-related material.
2. To provide senior students, who are in the process of transitioning out of the undergraduate phase of their university career, with an experiential learning opportunity through which they acquire skills and competencies critical to their professional development and commensurate with Degree Level Expectations.

The FSG Program operates through volunteer participation from the Facilitators. The opportunity to gain experience in a facilitation role is a key motivator for them, particularly as many of them have ambitions to teach in the future. Facilitators also receive a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) annotation on their transcript and guidance from RGASC faculty

on how to construct a teaching portfolio. Throughout the year, facilitators have appointments with the RGASC’s Learning Strategist, Program Strategist and Program Assistants, who are experienced, senior Facilitators themselves, to receive feedback on the portfolio as a “work-in-progress”.

Facilitator Training

Approximately 15 hours are devoted to initial training, with three objectives:

- 1) To define the role of facilitators as role models who are aware of the keys to their success and their learning style tendencies. While a T.A. acts in the role of a “content expert” in a course, the facilitator learns to see her/himself as a “course expert”, with the meta-cognitive awareness of how to be successful in a course.
- 2) To present the concept of the study group as the anti-tutorial. Much of the training is devoted to understanding the role of collaborative learning techniques and various learning styles in building learning networks within the study sessions, and breaking the students’ cycle of learned helplessness.
- 3) To emphasize the importance of incorporating a “scaffolding” approach into the design of the study sessions. The study sessions model the process of effective study and exam preparation strategies by practicing study skills and eventually building the students into self-directed learners.

Results

In 2016/2017, there were 5025 attendances at Facilitated Study Groups for 590 sessions in 32 courses. This compares to 4962 total attendances for 723 sessions in 35 courses in 2015/2016. The number of Facilitators for 2016/2017 was 161, compared to 217 for 2015/2016.

The following courses participated in the FSG Program in 2016/2017.

Table 18: FSG-Supported Courses

ANT 101	CHM 243	ITA 100
ANT 102	CHM 361	MAT 102 (Fall)
ANT 202	ECO 100	MAT 102 (Winter)
BIO 152	ENV 100	MAT 133
BIO 153	FRE 372	MGT 120
BIO 207	FRE 373	PHY 136
BIO 210	FRE 382 (Fall)	PHY 137
CHM 110 (Fall)	FRE 382 (Winter)	PSY 100
CHM 110 (Winter)	FRE 391	SOC 222
CHM 120	FSL 106	SPA 100
CHM 242 (Winter)	GGR 214	

The following courses from 2015/2016 did not participate in the FSG program this year.

Table 19: 2015/16 Courses not Participating in FSG Program in 2016/17

CHM 211	LIN 101
CHM 242 (Fall)	LIN102
FRE 280	MGM 101
FSL 105	MGM 102

Feedback on the FSG Student Experience

Over the past six years (from 2011 to 2017), students attending Peer Facilitated Study Groups (FSGs) have been asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire about their participation in and perceptions of FSGs. Survey responses have been collected from 3514 students over six academic years: 2011/2012 (348 students), 2012/2013 (808 students), 2013/2014 (573 students), 2014/2015 (574 students), 2015/2016 (741 students) and 2016/2017 (470 students).

In the questionnaire, 15 questions are asked about the students’ perceptions of the FSGs. The 15 perception questions are intended to measure six domains:

1. The awareness of academic skills building and its role in the students’ success
2. The perception of FSG method as an effective or optimal way of understanding course material
3. The certainty of FSG approach as a cause for the students’ success in the course
4. The Viral Effect – transferring the experience of FSGs to their peers
5. The Viral Effect – transferring the experience of FSGs to other courses
6. Awareness of link between FSGs and increasing confidence toward university and their discipline

Students responded to these 15 questions by selecting a number between 1 (do not agree) and 5 (highly agree). The 2015/2016 responses and the 2016/ 2017 responses have yet to be correlated with those from 2011 - 2015, but a survey of the responses from the last two years show that they are in line with the results of the previous four years:

Table 20: Student Perception of FSGs

The awareness of academic skills building and its role in the students’ success:	3.67 out of 5
The perception of FSG method as an effective or optimal way of understanding course material:	3.54 out of 5
The certainty of FSG approach as a cause for the students’ success in the course:	3.14 out of 5
The Viral Effect – transferring the experience of FSGs to their peers:	3.35 out of 5
The Viral Effect – transferring the experience of FSGs to other courses:	3.42 out of 5
Awareness of link between FSGs and increasing confidence toward university and their discipline:	3.59 out of 5

Future Directions and New Initiatives

The primary challenge continues to be addressing the need to build and maintain a model that is both sustainable and scaled appropriately. A key area of focus is improving the way in which we monitor the sessions on an ongoing basis, while having an infrastructure in place that allows for high quality, sustained professional development for the facilitators. The voluntary nature of the program has meant that connecting with the facilitators in a sustained and meaningful way has at times been difficult.

In 2016/2017, for the first time, facilitators were required to attend lectures for the course they were running FSG's for. The new requirement was added to ensure the facilitators were up-to-date with current course material, and to create more opportunities for the FSG's to be advertised to the class. Program Assistants have reported that attendance for FSG's is increases dramatically when Facilitators have recently advertised in lectures and so facilitator presence in classes will be an area of continued focus in the year ahead.

A further change in the FSG program has been the development and implementation of a session plan template to be used by all facilitators. Previously we had seen great variation in the quality of the session plans that facilitators were submitting to the Program Assistants, Learning Strategist and Course Instructors. The template provided clear guidance regarding the key components of an effective session, while stimulating ongoing reflection from the facilitators. In addition, the template provided a more consistent and uniform way for the Program Assistants, Learning Strategist, Program Strategist and instructors to review session content and provide directed feedback.

Steps have been taken to enhance the training offered to facilitators through the implementation of timely in-service training, which was primarily led by the Program Assistants. While the initial training provides the facilitators with the foundational skills and knowledge to begin leading FSG sessions, the in-service training provides an opportunity for the sharing of good practice and more intensive focus on key facilitation techniques.

The one-hour in-service training sessions took place in both the Fall and Winter terms and the aim is to continue these sessions in 2017/2018 with increased regularity. As part of this effort a defined in-service training schedule will be developed, which will also focus on further developing the training experience of the Program Assistants. Another area of focus for the year ahead will be implementation of the Learning Portal as a tool in the program. In 2015/2016, Portal was identified as a platform through which communication with the cadres of facilitators and Program Assistants can be made more efficient, ongoing training can be delivered and opportunities for collaboration can be utilized. The successful use of Portal with the PASS Program will be used as a model for this project in 2017/18.

The FSG model of support extends beyond the FSG program to three additional areas: Residence Peer Academic Leader program, Academic Societies, and Exam Jam. The RGASC continues to provide training and academic support for the Peer Academic Leaders in the Residence: in August, two days were devoted to facilitator training for the 15 Residence PALs. In addition, a third day was dedicated to the development of academic

skills workshops for the PALs, a new Residence initiative that would enhance the array of services which the PALs could offer to support the building of academic skills for Residence students. The relationship between the RGASC and the Academic Societies continues to develop. During 2016/2017, seven members of the UTM Anthropology Society were trained as Facilitators, and the Society conducted 10 FSG sessions for three different Anthropology courses during the Fall-Winter session. The RGASC and the Office for Student Transition have worked more closely together in planning for the end of term Exam Jam. This resulted in the Mega-FSG sessions being more closely integrated into the wider Exam Jam advertising. It also led to the sessions being located in rooms which were geographically closer to other events and rooms which were more conducive to high quality facilitation. These changes resulted in stronger attendance during Exam Jam and the plan is to continue this collaborative planning in 2017/2018.

Finally, plans have been put in place to increase the online presence of the Facilitated Study Groups on the RGASC website. Additional webpages and links will be added early in the new academic year with a focus on providing richer content on how FSGs are run at UTM and on how Supplemental Instruction can enhance student learning.

4) Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS) Program

The PASS Program was launched in February 2015 to provide dedicated support to academically “at risk” students. The Program’s ultimate goal is to rebuild students’ motivation, model successful behaviors, and raise students’ self-awareness (i.e., to build students’ resilience).

In 2016/2017, the PASS Program was offered three times (Summer, Fall, and Winter), with a total of 125 students enrolled. In each iteration, RGASC faculty members worked closely with the Office of the Registrar to refine the referral, intake, and record-keeping processes. Students’ responses to the Program have been monitored closely and the curriculum, modes of instruction, and assessment tools revised accordingly.

The PASS Program comprises a six-week course (non-credit-bearing) in one term followed by individualized monitoring and support in the subsequent term. Each week of the course includes the following:

- A two-hour “class meeting” focusing on foundational academic skills (listening, note-taking, reading, writing, problem-solving, critical thinking, research skills).
- A PASS Facilitated Study Group providing students with an opportunity to practice the skills introduced in the preceding class.
- A reflective writing exercise.

Changes to PASS in 2016/2017

Duration

Since 2015/16, the number of hours in the PASS Program have increased.

Table 21: Changes to PASS Curriculum

	Classes	PASS Facilitated Study Group	Total Hours
Summer 2016	1 hour for 7 weeks	1 hour for 7 weeks	14
Fall 2016	2 hours for 5 weeks	1 hour for 5 weeks	15
Winter 2017	2 hours for 6 weeks	1 hour for 6 weeks	18

The increase in the number of hours has allowed for the insertion of additional content, such as a session on examination and test techniques, and more time for a deeper examination of foundational academic skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. The increase in the duration of each class has allowed for a deeper level of exploration of key concepts.

The Learning Portal

In the Winter term, all student attendance and work was tracked and submitted through the Learning Portal. In previous iterations of the program, all tracking of student attendance and assignment submissions were done using a paper-based system. Over time this became very labour-intensive and led to a variety of issues regarding the storage of files. In addition, communication with the students the Program took place primarily on an individual basis by email, which made tracking communication a time-consuming process.

Using Portal provided the following benefits:

- It gave the ability to make program-wide announcements that staff, Program Assistants and all students could see and follow simultaneously.
- It created the opportunity for the students to engage with a Learning Management Software (LMS) platform in a similar way to how they would in their university degree courses.
- Portal provided a simpler way for the course instructors to monitor both the activity of the students and the work of the Program Assistants.
- Whereas the students previously had limited access to the written feedback on their reflections by Program Assistants, the submission by students and subsequent follow-up through Portal allowed the students to receive qualitative, encouraging feedback to every submission. This ongoing feedback led to reflections which were of progressively better quality over time and allowed an additional form of coaching that wasn't fully utilized before. In addition, the comments by Program Assistants could be easily accessed by students on campus or at home.

Exit Interviews & Follow-up Appointments

In the Winter term, the PASS exit interview process was altered to allow more time for the completion of outstanding work. In previous iterations, all of the exit interview questions were asked at the time of the interview, whereas in the Winter term students were asked to respond with written responses to the questions beforehand. This meant that the interview discussions were more focused, which allowed more time to be dedicated to having the students complete any outstanding work during the interview time slot. As a result of this, the amount of time spent following up with students on outstanding work after the program was completed was reduced. This also positively impacted the number of students who had completed all requirements of the PASS program by the time the exit interviews had been completed.

The exit interview was also used as an opportunity to invite students to attend a one-on-one Writing Centre appointment where they would have the opportunity to get feedback on their exit writing assignment. Many students in the exit interviews commented on how valuable they found the writing component of the program and that they would like to get more guidance on their writing, so having the opportunity for a 20-minute follow-up appointment was overwhelmingly positively received.

Use of PASS Graduates as Program Assistants

In the Fall term, 1 of the 6 Program Assistants was a PASS graduate and in the Winter term, this number increased to 2 of 6. The move towards including former PASS students as Program Assistants stemmed from a desire to help build resilience in the PASS students through developing a greater awareness of how other students navigated the journey from being academically “at-risk” to achieving academic success. A number of students who mentioned these Program Assistants in the exit interviews talked about how important it was for them to hear that other students had been in their position and still went on to be successful. Many of them said that hearing from other students who had faced their challenges, gave them a great sense of encouragement and allowed them to feel that they were not alone. In 2017/18, the aim will be to progressively increase the number of Program Assistants who are PASS graduates.

Enrolment

In the Fall and Winter terms we saw an increase in our retention rate, with 24 of the 30 students enrolled completing the program.

Table 22: PASS Enrollment

	Students Enrolled	Students Completed	Retention Rate
Summer 2016	53	31	59%
Fall 2016	42	31	74%
Winter 2017	30	24	80%

The Summer 2016 completion rate is in line with the Bounce Back Retention Program from San Diego State (the model for the PASS program), which shows average completion rates of 65% for its program. The Fall 2016 and Winter 2017 Completion rates are far above the San Diego State results, and reflect greater efficiencies introduced into the

administration of the PASS program. The utilization of Portal and a more streamlined exit process have been identified as two key reasons for the improvement in retention. It is interesting to note that the completion rate has steadily increased as the total contact time has increased from 14 hours (Summer) to 15 hours (Fall) to 18 hours (Winter).

Future Directions

Many of the students commented on the sense of community they felt while in the PASS Program and noted that engaging with other 'at risk' students made them feel less isolated and more hopeful. Accordingly, our plan is to further develop the program to allow this sense of community that the students feel to continue once the program is completed. To this end, we will organize a "Reconnect" session in the term following PASS where all of the participants will be invited to come together for a few hours to review some of the content of the PASS program and continue to discuss the transition to academically successful behaviours and attitudes. A pilot version of this was run in the Winter term with 6 students attending.

Now that the Reconnect Session has been explicitly discussed in the exit interviews, we anticipate growing attendance in the year ahead. In addition to the Reconnect Session, further discussions will take place with other university service areas to develop a more robust "PASS Term 2" schedule that can allow PASS graduates to stay connected to key resources, the RGASC and to one another.

The Office of the Registrar and the RGASC will meet this summer to plan and implement a tracking database for PASS, in order to measure the effectiveness of the program in terms of retention, changes in CGPA and persistence to graduation. Since the winter term 2015, 140 students have completed the PASS course (out of 208 enrolled).

5) Program for Accessing Research Training (P.A.R.T.)

P.A.R.T. is a research training program available to all UTM students. It is offered once a week throughout the Fall and Winter terms and then in a more compressed format as a "Summer Institute" in the last week of April and first week of May when there are very few other programs competing for students' attention. For the past few years, P.A.R.T. has included eleven distinct training modules and an information session on how to apply for an ROP course. Each training module comprises four hours of classroom instruction and a homework exercise or assessment. Instruction includes both conceptual discussion and hands-on practice of research methods.

P.A.R.T. programming is now divided into three kinds of research methods: Core, Quantitative, and Qualitative. Students who complete all three Core modules, at least two of the Quantitative or Qualitative modules, and a Reflective Writing Exercise will receive a CCR annotation as either a Qualitative Methods or Quantitative Methods P.A.R.T. participant.

Changes to P.A.R.T. in 2016/2017

In response to feedback from the UTM community, we attempted to expand the Program's curriculum to include more teaching of research methods common to the Humanities. We solicited proposals from Humanities scholars based at UTM and ultimately approved a new module entitled "Conducting Archival Research." We also expanded the Advisory Committee to include a faculty representative from the Humanities.

The table below presents P.A.R.T. attendance data for Fall 2016 and Winter 2017.

Table 23: P.A.R.T. Enrollment 2016/2017

Workshop Name	Date	Registered	Attended
Research Ethics	20-Sep	17	16
Conducting Literature Searches	04-Oct	44	29
Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review	19-Oct	45	30
Research Ethics	Oct-16	44	20
Lab Protocols	02-Nov	42	10
Experimental Design	15-Nov	38	15
Data Analysis	10-Jan	44	11
Leading a Focus Group	24-Jan	46	8
Statistics	25-Jan	48	11
Preparing for an ROP	01-Feb	18	4
Transcribing and Coding	08-Feb	42	8
Conducing Archival Research	28-Feb	41	4
Conducting Interviews	13-Mar	46	5

The P.A.R.T. Fall / Winter Program in 2016/2017 had a total of 171 attendances², an increase of over 100% from Fall /Winter 2015/2016 which had only 87 attendances.

The P.A.R.T. Summer Institute was held for the second time in the last week of April and first week of May. This approach was once again popular with students, with 56 unique students registering generating a total of 268 registrations across the 13 modules. Final attendance numbers were not yet available when this report was published.

P.A.R.T. Participant Feedback

In general, student feedback on the P.A.R.T. program was very positive. In response to the statement "I found this module intellectually stimulating," 78% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Similarly, 90% of respondents were either slightly or extremely satisfied with P.A.R.T., and over 93% were somewhat or very likely to recommend P.A.R.T. to another student. One potential area of improvement for P.A.R.T. instructors would seem to be in the way they include activities in their modules: 14% of respondents disagreed or

² Each P.A.R.T. "attendance" represents a student who attended all of the required classes and completed the assigned homework for a given module. Each module includes four hours of instruction, with the exception of Research Ethics which includes two hours of instruction.

strongly disagreed with the statement “The module provided opportunity for ‘hands-on’ experience in terms of research, case studies, or real-world situations.”

Future Directions

No major changes have been proposed for P.A.R.T., although we will be addressing feedback we have received regarding scheduling. In Fall 2017, we will be staggering the registration process so that students do not register in September for modules being taught in late March. Instead, registration will be held twice, in September and January. We hope that this will improve attendance for modules in Winter term.

Part Four: Collaborative Programming

The RGASC collaborates with a number of stakeholders across campus to promote a culture of teaching and learning and to provide academic support for students and faculty members. The following is a brief overview of some of the RGASC's more important collaborative projects.

Exam Jam

Providing opportunities for faculty-led intensive study sessions interspersed with opportunities to engage in activities that help manage or reduce stress, Exam Jam seeks to establish healthy and productive study habits for students during exam time. During the Fall 2016 Exam Jam event, faculty-led review sessions were held for 82 courses and 2,909 attendances. For Winter 2017 Exam Jam, there were 83 courses participating and 2,688 attendances. This year, the RGASC presented two workshops and five Mega-FSGs at the Fall Exam Jam; we also presented three workshops and six Mega-FSGs during the Winter Exam Jam. A total of 409 students attended the Meg-FSGs in the Fall and 261 in the Winter—these numbers are included in the FSG attendance figures presented elsewhere in this Report. For the Winter 2017 Exam Jam event, we offered “Writing Consultations” for those students who had take-home exams and final assignments. A total of 3 students took advantage of this support.

Table 24: Exam Jam Attendance

Exam Jam - December 2016	
Essay Exam	12
Short Answer	11
Multiple Choice	0
Total	23

Exam Jam - April 2017	
Essay Exam	3
Short Answer	2
Multiple Choice	12
Total	17

Early Alert Program

In 2015/2016, the RGASC was involved in the design and administration of the Office of the Registrar's Early Alert System (EAS). The EAS is a tool for instructors to help manage communication with classes of any size. The benefit of using EAS over traditional methods such as email is its ability to display who has actually read the message. Instructors are shown a list of their courses along with the class list where they can select which students to communicate with and whether the message they wish to send is one of concern, congratulation, or announcement. EAS helps instructors communicate with students and lets the instructors know whether the students have read these messages.

This year, five courses participated in the Early Alert Program: CSC108 (2 sections); MAT 133; MAT 135 (2 sections); MGM101; and STA 220. A total of 931 unique students (1207 total students) were contacted during calling campaign.

Between September 27 and November 18, a total of 1833 email messages were sent to students: 1525 were messages of “concern” while 308 conveyed a note of “congratulations.”

The EAS was not actively used in the Winter term.

Office of Student Transition

The RGASC and the Office of Student Transition (OST) collaborate closely to ensure that each other’s programs are aligned and complementary. In 2016/2017, RGASC faculty led tutorials for utmONE courses, contributed to the development of OST’s new online Time Management tool, and offered a series of academic skills workshops during Orientation Week (see discussion of Head Start, above).

OST and the RGASC are also in the early stages of creating a Community of Practice (CoP) entitled “Connected Learning.” The goals of this CoP are as follows:

1. to align models of academic support for students on campus;
2. to create a pool of resources for stakeholders to use when developing programming and delivering support;
3. to promote and share effective strategies for supporting students.

Over the summer, the RGASC will create a website and formal framework for the CoP so that other stakeholders can be invited to join in September 2017. Throughout the academic year, the CoP will meet every three weeks to discuss a Core Foundational Academic Skill (from the list of 12 we have agreed to prioritize in 2017/2018) and develop tools and strategies for teaching this skill.

Finally, the RGASC and OST collaborated on the development of a new credit-bearing course called utm118, The Science of Learning. This course explores theories of learning and research on the strategies students should employ to reach deep understanding and is designed to help students develop their critical thinking, university-level oral and written communication, critical reading, and other foundational academic skills. The latest addition to the suite of utmONE offerings, utm118 was approved in 2016 and will be offered for the first time in September 2017 with RGASC faculty and staff teaching all of the lectures. Ultimately, we hope to offer up to four sections of utm118 each year.

UTMSU, Academic Societies, and Clubs

The RGASC works collaboratively with the UTMSU Executive, Academic Societies, Clubs and Associations to provide a variety of skills development and training opportunities through UTMSU-promoted associations and events. The RGASC has collaborated on and supported over 20 student initiatives. Collaborations represented in the table below include academic initiatives proposed by clubs and associations, approved and funded by the “Club’s Funding Initiative”, a pool of money available to clubs sponsored by the Office of the Dean and the RGASC.

Table 25: RGASC Partnership with UTMSU Executive

UTMSU Initiative	Description of Activity
UTMSU Academic Advocacy Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skills Workshops: Academic Integrity, Citation, and Paraphrasing.
UTMSU Destressor Event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTMSU Club Collaboration Destressor Event: Exam Preparation
UTMSU Societies and Clubs Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skills Workshop: Time Management • Training and Information Sessions

Table 26: RGASC Partnership with UTMSU Academic Societies

Academic Society Name	Description of Activity
UTM Philosophy Academic Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skills Workshop: Essay Writing (PHL105 Essay) Assignment
Historical Studies Academic Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped students develop discipline-specific "tip sheets"
Psychology Association of Undergrad Students of Erindale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skills Workshops: Multiple Choice Exam Preparation and Essay Exam Preparation
UTM Anthropology Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FSG Training
Sociology & Criminology Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editing training for undergraduate journal

Table 27: RGASC Partnership with UTMSU Clubs and Associations

Club / Association Name	Description of Activity
Business Consulting Association - Think Like A Pro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for "Think Like a Pro" event (a day-long simulation of a real-life consulting issue)
Caribbean Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development (note-taking and study habits) and funding

Debate League of Mississauga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for multiple debating events
Erindale Campus African Student Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skills Workshop: Study Habits
Erindale Gaming Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development (problem-solving, teamwork, communication), training, and funding for games night
Italian Club of Erindale at UTM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for networking and social event
UTM Mooting and Mock Club – Trial Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding to support eight teams representing UTM registered for the 2017 Osgood Cup
Polish Students Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for exam prep/destressor workshop for first-year students
Students Offering Support UTM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for programming developed in association with the Erindale Gaming Organization (see above)
UTM Badminton Club (UTMBC), UTM Squash Club (UTMSC), UTM Ping Pong Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for the Racket Triathlon and associated social programming
UTM Helping Hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for social programs to support Syrian students
UTM Musical Theatre Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development (public speaking) and funding
UTM Scribes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development

In terms of training beyond the TA-level, the RGASC also helped train undergraduate student editors of two journals, *With Caffeine & Careful Thought* and *The Society: Sociology and Criminology Undergraduate Review* in assessment and editing skills.

Special Projects, Committees, and Working Groups

RGASC faculty and staff are also involved numerous special projects, committees, and working groups at the University of Toronto, including the following: Curriculum Renewal Guide for Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education; UTM Mapping Tool Steering Committee; Indigenizing Curriculum Working Group; CTSI Advisory Committee; Student Life Professionals Network at UTM; University of Toronto Supplemental Instruction Working Group; Orientation Working Group; Academic Technologies Committee; Teaching Development and Innovation / Teaching Development Travel Grant Committees.

Appendix A: RGASC Advisory Committee Membership 2016/2017

Seat	Individual	Term Expiry
UTMSU Representative	Maya Tomkiewicz	2017
Undergraduate Student	Jiajia Zhou	2017
Graduate Student	Connor Fitzpatrick	2017
Teaching Assistant	Justin Murfitt	2017
Humanities Instructor	Michelle Troberg	2017
Social Sciences Instructor	Joe Leydon	2018
Sciences Instructor	Christoph Richter	2018
Management / Prof. Schools Instructor	Catherine Seguin	2017
Director, Teaching and Learning Support and Innovation	Andrew Petersen	N / A
Manager, Office of Student Transition	Jackie Goodman	N / A
Librarian	Paula Hannaford	2018
Director, Teaching and Learning Support and Innovation	Andrew Petersen	N / A
Undergraduate Advisors (2)	Sharon Marjadsingh Diane Matias	2018 2018
RGASC Staff / Faculty Member	Tom Klubi	2018
RGASC Coordinator	Cliona Kelly	N / A
Director, RGASC	Tyler Evans-Tokaryk	N / A

Appendix B: RGASC Research and Scholarship 2016/2017

Updated news regarding RGASC faculty and staff members publications, conference presentations, and other research activities is available on the RGASC website at <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/news>. The following is a list of research published or presented in the 2016-2017 academic year.

- Ashbourne, D. & Evans-Tokaryk, T. (October 2016). "Assessment Design: Best Practices for Inclusive Teaching and Learning." Educational Developers Caucus Institute. Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Oakville, Ontario.
- Baker, J., Evans-Tokaryk, T., Piekosz, A., and Board, S. (April 2017). "Assessing the value of integrating writing into a required methodology course in sociology." UTM Teaching and Learning Collaboration Group Seminar. University of Toronto Mississauga. Mississauga, Ontario.
- Bailey, L. & Klubi, T. "Game Enhanced Learning." (April 2017). UTM Teaching Learning Collaboration Group Seminar. University of Toronto Mississauga. Mississauga, Ontario.
- deBraga, M. & Laliberté, N. (October 2016). "The Graded Response Method: An Approach to Encourage Higher Order Thinking Skills using a Multiple Choice Format." International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (ISSoTL) Conference. Los-Angeles, California.
- deBraga, M., Piunno, P.A.E., Gradinaru, C.C., Krull, U.J., Laflamme, M., & Milstein J.N., Boyd, C., & Rawle, F. (June 2016). "Enhancing Team-Based Undergraduate Student Research Productivity and Learning Outcomes: Combining Modern Project Management Practices with Self-Reflection Exercises." Canadian Society for Chemistry, 99th Canadian Conference & Exhibition, Halifax, Nova Scotia.
- Evans-Tokaryk, T. (May 2016). "Social Justice and Writing Instruction in South Africa: A Case Study in Knowledge Transfer." Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) Conference. University of Calgary. Calgary, Alberta.
- Evans-Tokaryk, T., Hill, C., Janes, D., Scoville, C., Switzky, L. (May 2016). "Pedagogical Innovations in the Department of English and Drama University of Toronto Mississauga." Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE) Conference. University of Calgary. Calgary, Alberta.
- Evans-Tokaryk, T. (June 2016). "Academic Writing Instruction and the Discourse of English as an International Language (EIL): A Comparative Study of Canadian & South African Writing Instruction." International Writing Across the Curriculum (IWAC) Conference. University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, Michigan.

- Evans-Tokaryk, T. (October 2016). "Critical Discourse Analysis of Student Writing." Invited Lecture. Writing Across the Curriculum Program. Ontario College of Art and Design University. Toronto, Ontario.
- Evans-Tokaryk, T. (February 2017). "Academic Writing Instruction and the Discourse of English as an International Language." Writing Research Across Borders (WRAB) Conference. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. Bogotá, Colombia.
- Evans-Tokaryk, T. (March 2017). "Social Justice, WAC, and Academic Literacies: A Case Study in Knowledge Transfer between Canadian and South African Writing Centres." Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Portland, Oregon.
- Evans-Tokaryk, T. (March 2017). "Cultivating Research Capacity through International Exchanges about Higher Education Writing Research." Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). Portland, Oregon.
- Ferlito, L. & Klubi, T. (June 2016). "Promoting Academic Skills for Success (P.A.S.S.): Design, Usage & Future Directions" Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) Conference. Vancouver, British Columbia.
- Kaler, M. (October 2016). "Assessment Design: Best Practices for Inclusive Teaching and Learning." Educational Developers Caucus Institute. Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. Oakville, Ontario.
- Kaler, M. & Evans-Tokaryk, T. (May 2016). "How're we doing: Assessing the effectiveness of course-specific writing development projects." Canadian Writing Centres Association (CWCA) Conference. University of Calgary. Calgary, Alberta.
- Thuna, M., Richter, C., & Kaler, M. (May 2016). "Developing skills through learning content: Integrating research and writing training into an introductory biology course." Teaching and Learning Symposium, University of Toronto.