

The Robert Gillespie
ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTRE

(RGASC)

Annual Report 2019/2020

Updated: June 26, 2020

Presented to RGASC Advisory Committee: June 23, 2020

The RGASC's Mandate

The mandate of the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre is *to support and promote teaching and learning in a range of contexts across UTM*. For students, the RGASC is a resource for developing academic skills through individual appointments and group-based initiatives. For instructional staff and faculty, the Centre is a partner in teaching and learning activities ranging from course and program design to implementation and to the assessment of a given intervention's impact.

Faculty and staff appointed at the RGASC have a range of specializations, including academic peer support, academic writing instruction, educational development, English language learning, numeracy, scientific literacy, and supplemental instruction. This diversity of experience and expertise enables the Centre to collaborate productively with partners from across the disciplines and campus, who bring with them a varied and diverse set of teaching and learning objectives.

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Introduction

This document reports on the programming and the different forms of academic support provided by the RGASC between 01 May 2019 and 30 April 2020. 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.

The 2019/2020 Annual Report is organized into five sections:

- 1) General Undergraduate Support;
- 2) Core Focus Areas;
- 3) Programs;
- 4) Course Teaching; and
- 5) Collaborative Programming.

Wherever possible, it offers both a quantification of the results of RGASC programming and qualitative feedback from our stakeholders. 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 common themes running through this year's Report are "managing growth," "planning for the move to the Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy," and (of course) "shifting to remote learning as a response to the coronavirus pandemic."

¹ The Terms of Reference for the RGASC Advisory Committee are posted on the RGASC website (<https://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.

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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RGASC Mission

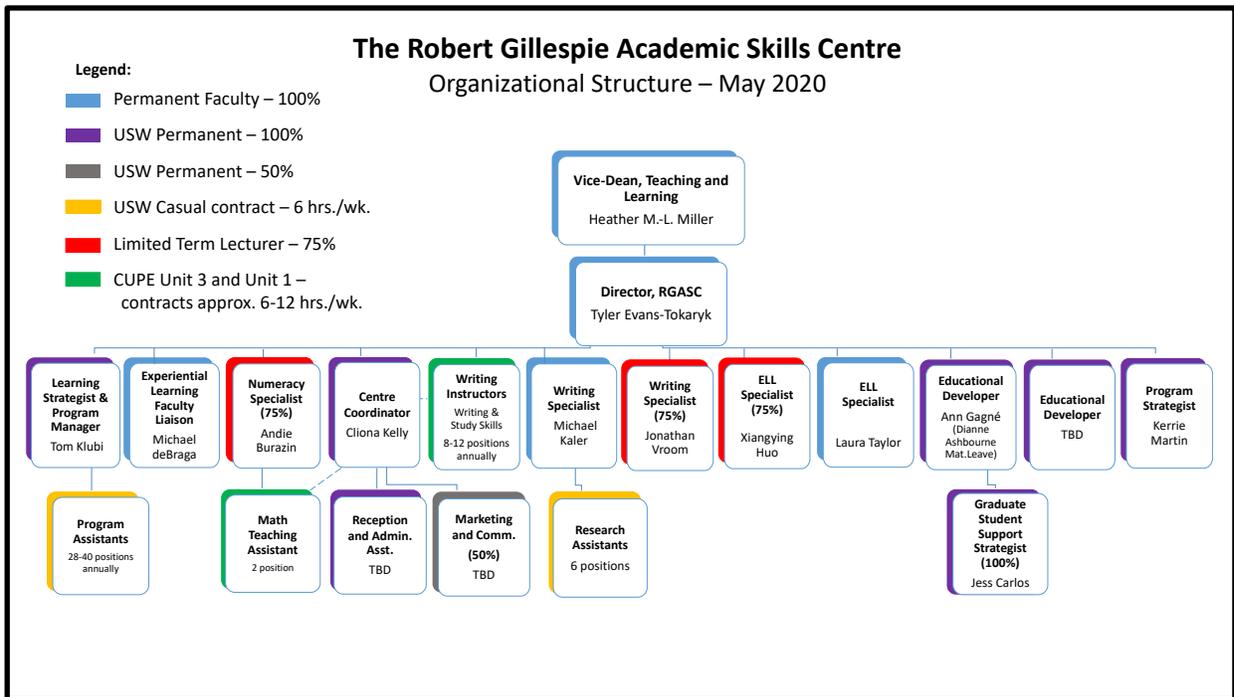
The RGASC is a hub for academic skills development on the University of Toronto Mississauga campus and has a dual mandate: to support instructors and teaching assistants in their efforts to implement best practices in teaching and learning, and to support students in their efforts to enhance their academic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

The RGASC is neither a Department nor an Extra-Departmental Unit; instead, it functions as an academic unit within the Office of the Dean and the Director reports directly to the Vice-Dean Teaching & Learning. The following is an organizational chart of the RGASC, current as of May 2020:



As reported in the 2018/2019 Annual Report, the Vice-Dean Teaching & Learning has been in discussions with the RGASC and other units on campus regarding the possibility of creating an EDU-A in which multiple stakeholders could work together to conduct research on, and support best practices in, university pedagogy. This proposal is currently moving through governance and is on schedule to be approved for July 1, 2020. If approved, the proposed academic unit (tentatively called the Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy or ISUP) will provide a home for the RGASC, all of the utmONE courses, the new foundational writing course set to launch in Fall 2020, at least four new Writing Studies faculty members that were hired in 2020, proposed numeracy courses and faculty, and much more. One staff position from the Centre for Student Engagement will move to the RGASC to support the utmONE courses and other programming related to academic transition. Also, at the time of writing, search committees were ongoing for the ISUP Director and an Associate Professor in the field of Writing Studies (tenure stream).

Part One: General Undergraduate Support

1) *One-on-One Appointments*

One-on-one 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 one-on-one 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 one-on-one appointments at the RGASC are conducted in-person and are 30 minutes long, but an increasing number of appointments are shorter (ca. 20 minutes) drop-in appointments offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

In the summer of 2019, the RGASC and most other Writing Centres at the University of Toronto were forced to retire the old automated booking system (ABS) we had used for well over a decade to manage our one-on-one appointments. The old ABS had been designed by Woodsworth College in 2005 and kindly made available free of charge to other University of Toronto Writing Centres in 2006. Woodsworth College made the decision last year that it could no longer afford the costs of maintaining the system, particularly when other reasonably-priced commercial systems such as WCONLINE had become available and were being used by Writing Centres around the world.

The University of Toronto Writing Centres collectively made the decision, therefore, to adopt WCONLINE to assist with the scheduling, record-keeping, and reporting of appointments and other activities at their Centres. Because students often access support on different campuses and at different colleges' Writing Centres, the Writing Centres' group paid the University of Toronto's IT unit to develop a "front end" for students to access WCONLINE. This "front end" uses a technology called SSO (single sign-on) and uses Quercus to authenticate the student and identify their "home" Writing Centre. The SSO ensures that students always arrive at the correct centre using a common point of entry. In effect, this means that the RGASC only supports students registered at UTM and that UTM students will not be able to access other Writing Centres. Like all Writing Centres at the University of Toronto, the RGASC is able to manually add students to WCONLINE if necessary.

A cloud-based system, WCONLINE also provides the tools for conducting synchronous and asynchronous online appointments, a feature that was particularly useful when the university shifted to remote learning in March 2020 in response to the coronavirus pandemic. As the data below demonstrate, the RGASC piloted asynchronous online appointments in Fall 2020 and synchronous online appointments in Winter 2020 (before the coronavirus pandemic closed campus). Once campus closed, we dramatically increased the

number of asynchronous online appointments available for students.

One of the other advantages of WCONLINE is that, for the first time in the RGASC's history, we are able to report on appointment data for the actual dates covered by the Annual Report. When considering the data below, it is important to take into consideration the significant impact the campus closure from mid-March through to the end of our reporting period (April 30) had on the RGASC's operations. While the Centre took advantage of WCONLINE's functionality and was able to shift appointments online quite quickly, demand for online appointments was quite weak (presumably because students were preoccupied with the many other aspects of their lives impacted by COVID-19). Hundreds of students who had booked appointments at the RGASC either cancelled or simply didn't attend the online version of their appointments. Most importantly, many students typically attend drop-in appointments in the last few weeks of term. Obviously, this form of support was not available to them when campus closed.

As Charts 1 and 2 below demonstrate, before COVID-19 forced the closure of campus, the RGASC was experiencing a significant increase in the number of student appointments and was likely on track for more than 3,000 appointments by April 30. Even with the shift to online appointments in mid-March, we had an increase in the number of unique students from 1,310 in 2018/2019 to 1,393 in 2019/2020 and a slight increase of 59 appointments (from 2,798 in 2018/2019 to 2,857 in 2019/2020). It is important to note that these numbers do not take into account the large number of cancelled or unattended online appointments and the cancellation of dozens of hours of drop-in sessions after COVID-19 forced the closure of campus.

Chart 1: Total Unique Students (2016 – 2020)

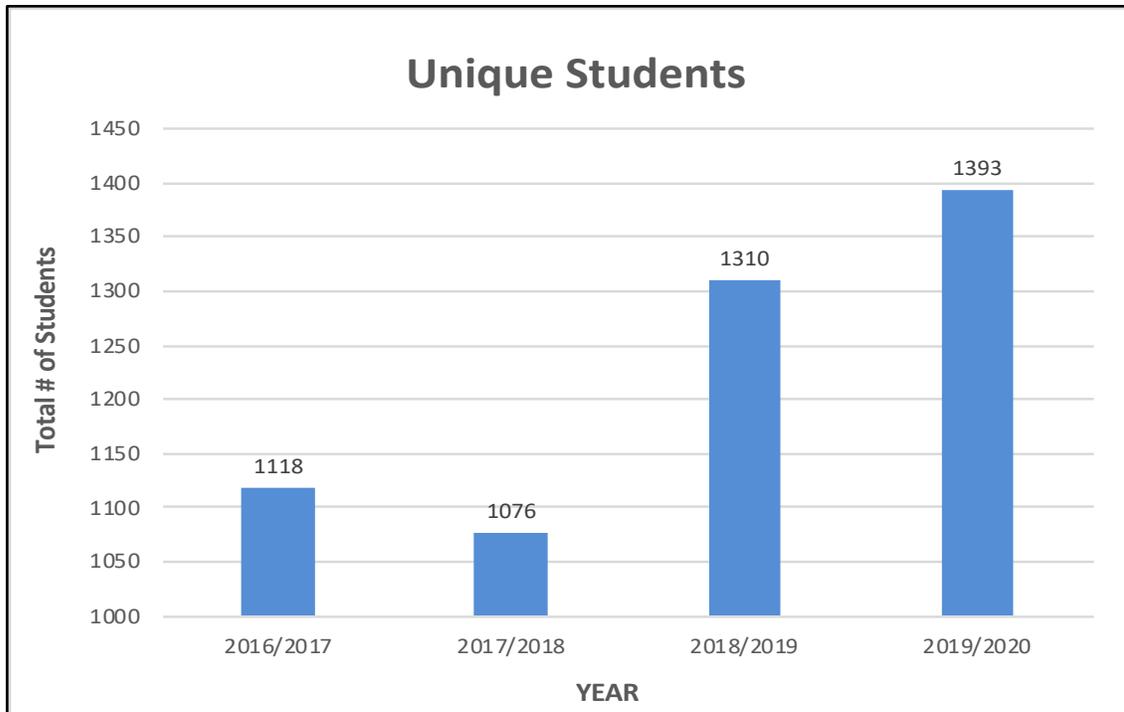
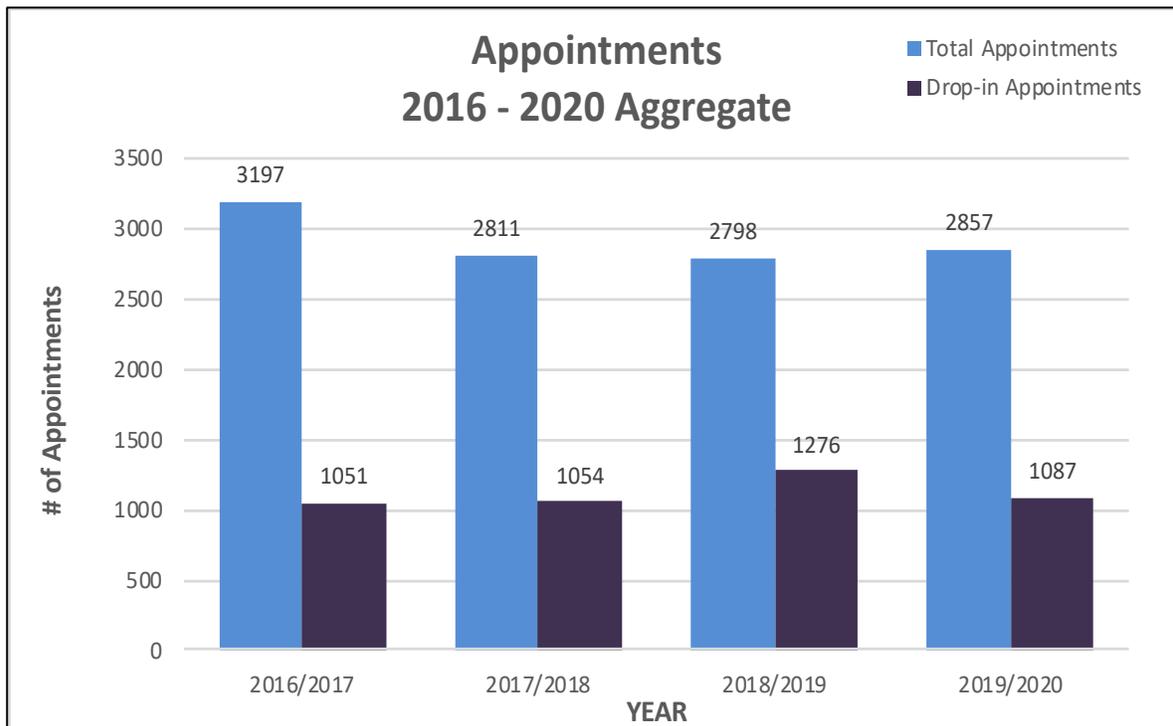


Chart 2: Automated Booking System (ABS) and WCONLINE Data (2016 – 2020)



As Table 1 below indicates, the number of waitlisted students at the RGASC more than tripled from 531 in 2018/2019 to 1,772 in 2019/2020.

Unfortunately, we do not know how many of those waitlisted students were able to actually

book an appointment, as WCONLINE does not collect this information. However, given students’ increased preference for “just-in-time” support, we are assuming that a significant number took advantage of drop-in appointments when they were available.

Table 1: Waitlist Data (2015 – 2020)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Waitlisted Students</i>	<i>Waitlisted Students Booked</i>
2015/16	448	119
2016/17	445	186
2017/18	684	259
2018/19	531	222
2019/20	1772	N/A

N/A – WCONLINE does not collect this information

Regardless of how many waitlisted students were able to book an appointment, we acknowledge that steps must be taken to reduce the number of students who put themselves on a waitlist. Strategies we will explore include adjusting the weekly schedules of Writing Instructors so that they better correspond with students’ availability (WCONLINE reporting functions can assist with this), offering more drop-in appointments (general and course-specific), and offering more online appointments so that the availability of office space is not a barrier. We will continue to operate with extended business hours (Monday through Thursday, 9:00 am till 7:30 pm in the Fall and Winter terms) and explore more online forms of support.

It is worthwhile noting that the increased demand for RGASC services is likely in part the result of improved marketing of drop-ins and other forms of support through the RGASC website, social media, Campus Media Screens, conventional signage, and a tabling campaign. We have made significant efforts in recent years to increase the visibility of the RGASC, and we now appear to be a victim of our own success. Clearly, the RGASC must adapt so that the rest of its operations can accommodate this increased demand.

2) *Student Feedback*

Student feedback on our face-to-face and online appointments is collected once per week. All students who had an appointment are sent an email invitation to complete an online survey (hosted by SurveyMonkey). The survey was revised dramatically this year in response to feedback from the RGASC Advisory Committee, Writing Instructors, and other members of the RGASC team.

In general, student feedback was very positive. Of the 185 students who responded to the weekly Appointment Feedback Survey, only 16 students (8%) indicated the “Quality of the Assistance” they received at the RGASC was poor or adequate; approximately 92% rated

the support they received as either “good”, “very good”, or “excellent”. Over 30% stated that the quality of assistance at the RGASC was “excellent” (see Chart 3 below). Perhaps most importantly, when asked whether they would use the RGASC again, the vast majority of students (over 90%) answered “yes” and only a handful said they would not. The rest were unsure (see Chart 4 below).

The results were similar when respondents were asked whether they would recommend the RGASC to another student. Approximately 93% said they would recommend the Centre; just under 4% said they were “not sure”; and 7 students (less than 4%) said they would not advise a peer to visit the RGASC (see Chart 5 below). When asked what they found “most helpful” in their appointment, students mentioned a wide variety of strategies and topics.

The data in Tables 2 and 3 below provide a more detailed breakdown of students’ perceptions of the quality of support they received during face-to-face consultations with Writing Instructors. Please note that the number of responses below is significantly higher than the 201 respondents who completed the survey because many students identified multiple topics when offering feedback. Similarly, the % of respondents exceed 100 because many respondents identified more than one kind of support as helpful.

Charts 3, 4, and 5: Summary of Student Appointment Feedback (2019/2020)

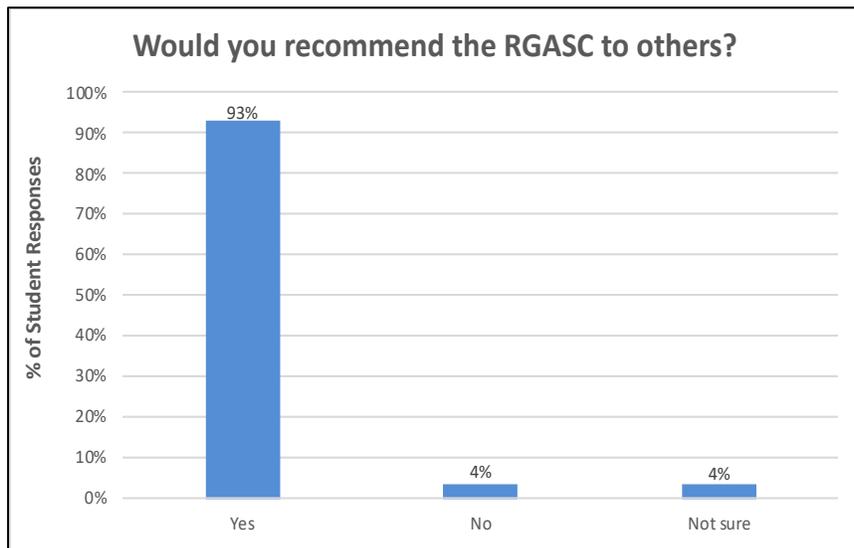
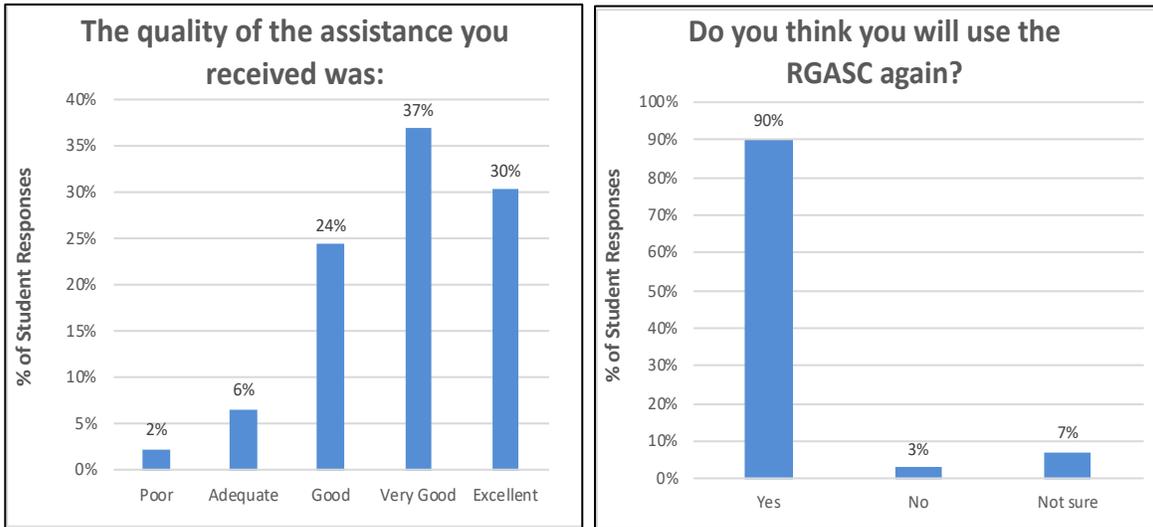


Table 2: Student Appointment Feedback 2019/2020 (Most Helpful Areas of Support)

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
Feedback and advice on writing assignments	38	18.9
Brainstorming/discussing ideas	10	5.0
Structure/organization/format	17	8.5
Grammar/spelling/style	26	12.9
Referencing/citing sources	2	1.0
Thesis statement	9	4.5
Feedback on math support	18	9.0
Detailed explanation	6	3.0

Background knowledge of the content	1	0.5
Additional resources provided	1	0.5
Reviewing assignment guidelines and requirements	21	10.4
Instructors' interpersonal skills/approachability	29	14.4
Instructors' ability to respond to students' specific needs	23	11.4
General tips/advice	14	7.0
Appointment format	8	4.0
Miscellaneous	5	2.5

As the table above suggests, students identified a wide variety of topics in their responses to the question “Please describe what you found most useful in this session.” Of course, it is not surprising that the majority of students (19%, or 38 students) identified “feedback and advice on writing assignments” as the most helpful part of their sessions—this is precisely what the vast majority of students are looking for in their appointments. That said, it is reassuring to know that students generally find this kind of support to be useful. We were somewhat surprised, on the other hand, that almost 13% (26) of respondents indicated that they received useful advice and support on lower order issues such as grammar, spelling, and style. Our instructors generally avoid focusing on these kinds of concerns during appointments, and always avoid “editing” or “proof-reading” students’ writing. Any feedback students receive with regards to sentence-level concerns generally comes in the form of a mini-lesson or question-and-answer discussion where the student identifies and fixes an error and the instructor confirms that the correction is, indeed, correct.

The appointment feedback data also suggest that students appreciated the opportunity to review the assignment guidelines and requirements in order to interpret them correctly (10% or 21 students). There was also a significant number of positive comments regarding instructors’ ability to respond to student concerns (11% or 23 students) and instructors’ interpersonal skills (14% or 29 students). For the first time, a full 9% of respondents (18 students) highlighted math support as a helpful area of support in their feedback.

Table 3: Student Appointment Feedback 2019/2020 (Areas of Improvement)

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>% of Respondents</i>
No suggestion/satisfied with service	78	38.8
Improve availability/number of appointments / numbers of drop-in hours	13	6.5
More flexibility with time per appointment/better time management	38	18.9
Interactive online appointments	2	1.0
Improve booking system/better notifications	2	1.0

Change content of appointments	28	13.9
More detailed/specific feedback	16	8.0
Prioritize most problematic areas	3	1.5
More tips/general advice	2	1.0
Better explanation/give examples	2	1.0
Provide written copy of feedback	1	0.5
Grammar/edits	3	1.5
Have instructor familiar with discipline/assignment	16	8.0
Review assignment outline before appointment	3	1.5
More information about services	10	5.0
More specific details about appointments (skills)	2	1.0
Better advertising	2	1.0
More resources available	4	2.0
Negative experience	3	1.5
Miscellaneous	6	3.0
Meaning unclear	1	0.5

The table above provides an overview of students' suggestions for improvement. While most students (almost 39%) were satisfied with their experience at the RGASC, approximately 19% of respondents requested more flexibility with time per appointment (usually longer).

Another subset of respondents (~14% or 28 students) made reference to the actual content of appointments, although suggestions varied widely. Examples of some repeating themes include providing more general advice or tips that they can apply outside of a specific assignment, prioritizing the most problematic areas of their assignment, and wanting more detailed feedback.

A small proportion of students (~8% or 16 respondents) also wanted more discipline- or assignment-specific assistance, with a few suggesting that the RGASC permit students to upload the assignment guidelines ahead of time so instructors could review them before the appointment.

We were heartened to discover that, when compared to previous years, significantly fewer students (5% or 10 students) requested more information about the Centre's services through marketing or through interactions with the Front Office. We attribute this to the significant investments we have made over the past two years in marketing and social

media. In fact, we are in the process of hiring a Communications Assistant to continue these promotional efforts.

3) *Writing Retreats*

We continued to offer Writing Retreats for a fourth consecutive year. These sessions were intended to not only 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.

This year, we held the Writing Retreats in the RGASC Conference Room on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Fall Term and on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the Winter Term. Sessions ran from 4:00pm through 7:30pm in both terms. As in previous years, the Writing Retreats were facilitated by a Writing Instructor who provided feedback on writing in progress and encouraged students to stay and write for as long as they liked. Snacks and coffee were offered to attendees. A total of 63 students attended the Writing Retreats held between September 2019 and April 2020, a decrease of over 50% from the 133 who attended the Retreats last year. We attribute some of this decline in attendance to the closure of campus in the middle of March. Unfortunately, we also had some challenges this year with disruptive students who discouraged other students from attending the Retreats and who eventually had to be asked to leave. We provided alternative forms of support for these students, and in one case relied on the advice of staff members from the university’s Student Crisis Response team when providing these accommodations.

As is typical with this kind of support, many of the students who participated in the Retreats were repeat visitors. The kinds of questions typically addressed during these types of sessions are very similar to those that are brought to a formal, booked appointment (e.g., a range of lower and higher order concerns). Some students attended the Retreats because they had put themselves on strict deadlines and were using the hours in that space as a way of holding themselves accountable. Still others attend as an alternative to drop-ins when there are no booked appointments available.

Table 4: Writing Retreat Program Overview (2017 – 2020)

<i>Session</i>	<i>Total Number of Attendees</i>	<i>Total Number of Unique Attendees</i>
2017 Fall	41	34
2018 Winter	45	26
2018 Fall	132	82
2019 Winter	70	51
2019 Fall	50	28

2020 Winter (Jan. to Mar.)	63	37
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The instructors who led the Writing Retreats this year agree that one of the pedagogical strengths of this model of writing is its open-endedness. Students are encouraged to come without any preparation; once they are there, they can start writing, articulate their concerns or ask their questions, and find a solution. This is different from a booked appointment, where students are encouraged to come prepared with specific questions about writing they have already completed.

Another strength of this approach is that it can provide students who have writing anxiety or problems focusing with a supportive environment where they actually see other people (including the instructor) getting writing done. Of course, the Writing Retreats did not have this effect when students with anxiety issues attended a session that was also attended by a loud or disruptive student.

Finally, students often come to Writing Retreats with friends and thus feel more at ease and are more productive than they might otherwise be when working alone.

4) *Math Drop-Ins*

In the 2019/2020 academic year, the Numeracy Specialist along with sessional Math Instructors provided Math Drop-ins for undergraduate students. Most sessions were attended by students in first-year mathematics courses. The drop-ins provide students with an opportunity for last-minute assistance, primarily before a quiz, test or exam in a course. Instructors who see these students determined that students seek this just-in-time help for one of two reasons: 1) they are not good at planning and judging when they will need assistance; and 2) the material in the course often moves at a fast pace and students need to grasp the concepts in a short period of time.

The focus of the math drop-in sessions is on foundational mathematical background knowledge. The sessions are not at all intended to address or re-lecture concepts that are covered in the university mathematics or statistics courses.

The Numeracy Specialist was available for drop-ins between 5 to 7.5 hours per week while a sessional Math Instructor worked between 2.5 to 4 hours per week. The drop-in sessions last between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the topic. Typically, the pedagogical strategy employed in these meetings involves an informal and confidential discussion between the instructor and student that helps to develop the students' confidence and fill in the gaps in their foundational knowledge of math.

The instructor also directs the student to various resources available, such as the Math Tip Sheets found on the RGASC website (see below "Math Tip Sheets") and other educational

documents, depending on the kind of challenges that the student faces.

Below is a table comparing the support numbers from the 2016/2017 academic year up to and including the 2019/2020 academic year.

Table 5: Year Over Year Comparison of Students Attending Math Drop-In Sessions

<i>Academic Year</i>	<i>Math Drop-In Support Attendance</i>
2016/2017	147
2017/2018	152
2018/2019	167
2019/2020	207

The number of math drop-ins likely increased this year because the RGASC dedicated more hours to this form of support and because we have used more effective, targeted promotional strategies on social media and elsewhere. Unfortunately, however, the utilization rate for Math Drop-ins lowered dramatically once the university was shut down due to the coronavirus pandemic. Only four students booked a drop-in appointment online even though dozens were available for booking at this time.

The Numeracy Specialist and Math Instructor conducted all of their online drop-in appointments via Zoom rather than WCONLINE because the tools (i.e., online whiteboard) in the WCONLINE application did not permit them to communicate mathematics efficiently and effectively to the students. Using Zoom, the instructors were able to use a tablet and stylus which permitted them to simulate a chalkboard, whiteboard, or paper and pencil in their teaching.

We anticipate increasing the number of synchronous online math drop-in appointments in the future. We will also continue to improve upon the use of tablets with styluses and video-conferencing as a means for discussing math with students. Such an approach will be useful not only when the RGASC offices are closed, but also as a strategy for improving access to math support for all students when the RGASC resumes normal in-person operations.

Part Two: Core Focus Areas

In addition to offering individualized support for undergraduate students in writing, numeracy, and general academic skills, the RGASC has six core focus areas for its programming and service delivery:

- 1) Writing Support;
- 2) Numeracy Support;
- 3) English Language Learner Support;
- 4) Graduate Student Support;
- 5) Faculty Support
- 6) Experiential Learning

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 Writing Development Initiative (WDI), which provides financial and organizational support for departments to enhance the writing components in their courses. This is done through discrete projects, usually linked to a particular course, but potentially impacting several courses. To ensure that these projects are appropriate in terms of program and discipline, and that they respond to authentic needs, individual faculty members or Departments are encouraged to take the initiative to submit proposals for interventions to improve the development of writing in their programs. The RGASC's Writing Specialists (a second was added in August 2019; see below for details) provide support as needed in the development of proposals, and the completed proposals are adjudicated by the Writing Development Initiative Committee, whose members include faculty representatives from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences, as well as the RGASC and the Library.

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 2019/2020, 21 courses across the campus with total enrolments of almost 7,000 students were directly supported. A few of these courses (in Historical Studies, Biology, and Sociology) now receive base-funding for their writing projects, but the rest are annually-funded WDI projects overseen by the WDI Committee. The number of proposals for new projects had been declining over the past several years, but seems to have made a turnaround this year, despite the pandemic-related chaos: in 2019 there were three new proposals, while this year there were six. Given the number of courses already supported, the decline that we had

experienced was to be expected, as UTM does not have an unlimited number of courses with instructors who are invested in enhancing their writing support. In future the WDI will continue to support promising proposals generally, and we continue to especially welcome proposals from departments with no courses currently receiving WDI support, so as to help broaden UTM's writing community, both in terms of students and faculty—for instance, in this last year a project was run in CHM110, a course and a department that has not been involved in the WDI for many years, and two of the new proposals this year came from Mathematical and Computational Sciences, a large department with only one WDI-funded project last year.

Once approved, projects are often repeated, and the WDI encourages faculty to reflect on and develop their projects over time. 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. Thus, the WDI should be seen as a mechanism through which innovative uses of writing instruction and instruction through writing can be supported, and through which faculty innovation and reflection can be encouraged and rewarded. It should be noted as well that: a) many of the faculty working with the WDI are also involved in other teaching and learning initiatives supported by the RGASC and Teaching-Learning Collaboration Group; and b) TAs in WDI-supported courses are trained in writing skills and writing assessment. Thus, the WDI is a key part of the teaching and learning community at UTM.

Over the past several years, one particular concern for the WDI has been the enhancement of our project assessment process, which has been made possible through the ongoing support from the Office of the Dean. This Office provides the RGASC with the financial resources to design, administer, and run a “basic assessment package” involving pre- and post-assessment of student writing (focusing on skills targeted by the funded interventions), the collection of student views on the interventions and their own writing, as well as formal interviews with instructors and TAs (see the Annual Reports for the past two years for more details). This year, we continued to refine this process so that it could respond to the particularities of each project. For instance, in CHM110 we are analyzing writing samples from each of five lab reports that students submit during the term, taking advantage of this repeated writing task to give us a nuanced view of the development of student abilities over time; in BIO205, our analyses focus not just on students' ability to respond to sentence-level feedback, but also on their ability to integrate that feedback on specific pieces of writing into their editing process for other writing tasks.

Previously, assessment data and overviews of the writing development in courses was only provided to the instructors of those courses, with the expectation that they would use this data for their Final Reports. In many cases, however, instructors did not use or underused this data; accordingly, this year we have begun providing the data and the overviews

directly to the members of the WDI Committee as well as instructors, so as to ensure that it is taken into consideration. The assessments of student writing showed improvements in every case; the nature of the improvements varied with the project, but one consistent area of improvement had to do with students' abilities to use and integrate their evidence into their own writing. This improvement showed up in courses from across the disciplinary spectrum, including CIN101, CSC290, HIS101, POL200, PSY290, and SOC205.

We anticipate that the most significant foreseeable development for the WDI in the coming years (i.e., not including the effects of the current pandemic) will be its integration with ISP100H, the new foundational writing course, discussed below (pp. 22).

TA Training

In order to support WDI-funded courses, the RGASC works closely with TAs, a group that is often underappreciated in the development of pedagogical initiatives. At the start of both the Fall and Winter terms, we offered seven-hour Writing TA Training Sessions, at which TAs 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. The Writing TA Training Sessions were attended by a total of 46 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. In addition to these training sessions, the RGASC provides ongoing support to TAs during the term as they design, deliver, and assess writing work.

Overall, TAs appreciated the training. When asked in a survey to rate the training's usefulness out of 5, 28% (11) of the respondents (N=39) rated it as 5, 13% (5) as 4.5, 46% (18) as 4, 8% (3) as 3.5, 2.5% (1) as 3, and 2.5% (1) as 2—and this last TA noted that this rating was because they were very experienced and hence little of the material was new to them; most of the other TAs found much of the material to be new. As has generally been the case, TA survey responses indicate that they especially appreciated the sessions on assessment best practices, sentence-level issues, and working productively with ELL students. There were several requests for more discipline-specific training sessions, which is something that we have considered in the past. While we appreciate the benefits (and comfort) of working only with those in one's home discipline, we feel that there are also benefits to venturing out of one's comfort zone and finding the similarities, and differences, in writing-related challenges across the disciplines. As well, students themselves are often coming from different disciplines, and so it is useful for TAs to have some exposure to ways of thinking that are characteristic of other fields.

Our work with TAs extends beyond the WDI: in addition to the WDI-related training session mentioned above, in 2019/2020, we ran 12 writing-focused training or

benchmarking sessions (typically two or three hours in length), integrated with course material or assignments.

Instructor Support

In addition to the WDI, the RGASC also offers support to instructors for course and assignment design. In 2019/2020 we were able to directly contribute to the creation, integration and execution of writing-based tasks in the following courses: ANT313, ANT403, CLA230, CLA237, ECO373, ENG202, FAH101, HIS210, HIS230, PHL103, POL443, PSY290, SOC205, SOC336, SOC349, SOC336, SOC447, and SSM1100. This total does not include consultations with faculty preparing projects for WDI proposals, nor does it include development work for ISP100, discussed below.

These contributions often included assisting with the development of assessment criteria (and associated rubrics) that helped improve feedback, consulting on assignment design (typically creating scaffolded assignments), and helping develop tools to assess the efficacy of writing instruction, such as student surveys and analyses of student writing. Of the courses with WDI projects, we were particularly heavily involved with BIO205, for which rubrics and assessments were redesigned as part of a research project on the effects of feedback on sentence-level writing, and two new WDI projects in BIO434, in which we assisted the instructor in the development and assessment of a series of writing workshops, and in CHM110, in which we worked with the instructor to redesign one of the assignments and develop new criteria and rubrics.

Direct Student Assistance

In addition to regularly scheduled 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 2019/2020, we ran drop-in sessions for the following courses: ANT313, ANT403, BIO152, BIO153, BIO205, BIO434, CCT109, CCT110, CCT208, CCT209, CCT222, CCT420, CHM110, CLA237, CIN101, CSC290, ECO320, ECO373, ECO400, ENG110, ENV201, ERS111, ERS211, FAH101, HIS101, POL200, RLG101, RLG315, SOC100, SOC205, SOC209, SOC221, SOC336, SOC349, SSM1100, VCC101, and WGS202. (These drop-ins are included in the total number of appointments reported above in Part One: General Undergraduate Support.) These sessions involve short meetings 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 appointments; they also were enthusiastically embraced by faculty and helped keep the RGASC up to date with activities in these courses. These are significant benefits and make them worth continuing. They were somewhat better attended than last year, until the

university shutdown in March as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The remaining drop-ins after that were shifted online, but attendance suffered nonetheless.

The two Writing Specialists also gave 71 writing-focused presentations or workshops, almost all in credit-bearing courses from across the disciplines (this number does not include any co-curricular offerings, such as the workshop series discussed directly below). The presentations and workshops covered topics such as academic integrity, paragraph structure, thesis statements, critical reading and thinking, and exam writing.

Elements of Academic Reading and Writing Workshop Series

In the 2019/2020 year we ran four iterations of a six-week workshop series focused on academic reading and writing. In previous years, there were two separate workshops: one focused on academic writing, which was an eight-week series, and the other focused on academic reading, which was a six-week series. This year these two topics were combined into a single six-week series called The Elements of Academic Reading and Writing. Each week focused on different elements of academic writing by looking at examples of published research. In the Fall term, we ran three iterations of the series, one for students from the Humanities, a second for students from the Social Sciences, and a third for students from the Sciences. The Sciences series was cancelled, however, due to low attendance—likely because it took place on a Friday afternoon. In the Winter term, we ran two iterations of the series, one for the Social Sciences and Sciences, and the other for the Humanities. Students who completed the series received a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) notation on their transcripts; this required them to attend five workshops, complete four homework assignments, and write a final reflection.

Table 6: Elements of Academic Reading & Writing Workshop Attendance 2019/2020

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Humanities</i>		<i>Social Sciences and Sciences</i>	
	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Fall</i>	<i>Winter</i>
Why Do Academics Write Articles	5	4	7	8
Quick and Efficient Reading Strategies	4	3	11	9
The Article in the Context of its Field of Research	4	4	7	6
Identifying and Critiquing Arguments and Counter-Arguments	4	4	6	5
The Basic Element of Academic Thought: The paragraph	3	5	6	7

Words, Expressions, and Nuance: Getting the most information out of every sentence	5	N/A	6	8
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N/A – Cancelled due to COVID-19

Student feedback on this initiative, drawn primarily from the final reflections, was very positive. For example, one student wrote: “I believe almost all of the concepts learned have been applied as I read pieces of texts and work on assignments as my grades have improved and my confidence has definitely increased.” Similarly, another student wrote: “In the workshop I learned how to read journal articles more effectively. ... I had been reading articles ineffectively for 4 years, and after this workshop I realized what a difference it makes.” Despite the positive feedback from participants, attendance for the workshops was low, with an average attendance of six students per workshop. In the Winter term, however, greater efforts were spent promoting the series on social media, and through in-person announcements in a number of writing-intensive courses. This led to a slight increase in numbers, even though participation typically declines in the Winter term; in the Fall term eight students completed the series while in the Winter term 10 students completed it. For next year, we will continue these promotional efforts, particularly the in-person invitations in courses with a significant writing component. Additionally, next year we will offer three sections of the series each term, to better address the scheduling needs of UTM students from across the curriculum.

A Second Writing Specialist

From August 2019, the RGASC’s writing support was enhanced by a second Writing Specialist, Jonathan Vroom, with a 75% appointment (see Organizational Chart on page 9). This new appointment did not come with any specific new duties; rather, its goal was to address growth in demands for writing support, permit the RGASC to expand and enhance its existing writing support, as well as to enable the other Writing Specialist, Michael Kaler, to take on new responsibilities. The additional Writing Specialist at the RGASC allowed for the redesign of several of the RGASC’s key writing support projects (including the Elements of Academic Reading and Writing series and the WDI Writing TA Training), the development of new processes for running dedicated drop-in sessions, and a review and expansion of the RGASC’s existing relationships with instructors.

In short, the hiring of a second Writing Specialist enabled the RGASC to expand its writing support, even while initiating and contributing to new research projects (discussed below), as well as supporting the development of the Foundational Writing course ISP100H (also discussed below).

ISP100H: Writing for University and Beyond

Over the past year, the RGASC has been deeply involved in developing the new Foundational Writing course, ISP100H: Writing for University and Beyond. For the past two years, the RGASC Director and Writing Specialist were members of the Foundational Writing Skills Working Group, which established the broad parameters for the course and clarified how it would be integrated into the curriculum. This year, along with the second Writing Specialist, they developed a syllabus template for the course (including possible readings, learning outcomes, and assessment methods). This work will assist the ISP100 Curriculum Committee when they develop the course for delivery in Fall 2020.

ISP100 will significantly affect the RGASC's writing support in several ways. It may replace some of the existing first year WDI projects, and it will certainly involve rethinking and redesigning all WDI projects, as the course will provide an eventual campus-wide foundation for writing instruction at UTM that departments can both count on and build on. For example, ISP100 will likely affect the current WDI projects in the main DVS first year courses (CIN101, FAH101, VCC101). More generally, it will affect how the RGASC designs and delivers writing presentations and workshops for all courses across the curriculum. The Writing Specialists will be able to plan on and complement instruction they know all students have had. We also anticipate that the course will create departmental enthusiasm for building on this instruction in their second and higher year courses. As well, we look forward to a great many opportunities to work with the faculty who will be hired to teach this course. All of them will be focused on writing pedagogy, and we anticipate many fruitful collaborations with them in the new Institute.

COVID-19

Writing support has so far been less affected by the pandemic-related changes in University practice than many other aspects of the RGASC's operations. Almost all of the scheduled writing-related presentations and workshops had already been completed when social distancing came into effect; only two workshops had to be cancelled. A number of course-specific drop-in sessions for writing support were moved online but poorly attended, in spite of additional promotional efforts.

To support instructors who may be teaching online or in-person, we are planning to develop a number of easily adaptable workshop or presentation modules for our more popular topics (such as thesis statements and academic integrity), and to create a version of the Elements of Academic Reading and Writing workshop series that can be deployed online. We expect that there will be somewhat less demand for writing workshops and presentations in online courses than in standard in-person courses, but we hope there will be opportunities to integrate writing support more fully into online courses.

With regard to the rest of our programming, we anticipate being called on for extra support for WDI projects making the transition to remote teaching, and of course all our TA training will need to be adapted. This adaptation of materials—training and also workshop materials—will also mean that we will be building up a library of teaching modules, learning objects, and so on, which we anticipate will become a valuable resource, for us and for others. To judge from anecdotal reports from faculty members, this already seems to be happening with the materials put online as part of the WDI Archive.

Research Contributions

Through its research and outreach work, the RGASC contributes to the ongoing development of writing pedagogy at UTM: this year, particular areas of focus in writing research have included writing program assessment, giving effective feedback on writing, and teaching critical writing and reading skills. We put this research to work for UTM not only in our own teaching, counselling, and training, but also through the projects we organize and support. For more information on writing-focused research projects, see the RGASC Research and Scholarship section of this Report (Appendix B).

2) Numeracy Support

General Mathematics Support

The RGASC provides general mathematics support for students at UTM. This support is provided in three different ways: one-on-one appointments, online resources (primarily Math Tip Sheets), and faculty support delivered through the Numeracy Development Initiative.

Experience has demonstrated that the most effective and efficient way to organize one-on-one appointments for students is regularly scheduled drop-in sessions. These are described in detail in Part One section 4 above (pp. 15-16).

Math Tip Sheets

The Numeracy Specialist and a sessional Math Instructor created and published 16 new Math Tip Sheets in 2019/2020. In Summer 2019, nine sheets focused on Mathematical Reasoning and three on Linear Algebra. An additional four sheets on Advanced Math for Physics were published in Fall 2019. The need for these Tip Sheets was identified by the Numeracy Specialist during her one-on-one appointments with students.

The Math Tip Sheets are available [here](#).

Foundational Math Workshops: Winter 2020

In Winter 2020, with the support of the Department of Mathematical and Computational Sciences, the Numeracy Specialist developed and coordinated foundational mathematics workshops for students enrolled in MAT132H5 (Differential Calculus for Life Sciences)/MAT135H5 (Differential Calculus) and MAT134H5 (Integral Calculus for Life Sciences)/MAT136H5 (Differential Calculus). Two Teaching Assistants were hired and trained to help deliver the workshops.

The same two two-hour workshop sessions were run each week for six weeks. At the beginning of a session, the TA gave a mini-lecture on a particular foundational mathematics concept that aligned with the material in the calculus courses. Then, the TA presented a foreshadowing segment, where the students were shown where this particular foundational mathematics concept would be used in future course material. The foreshadowing segment was to show how the foundational mathematics reviewed in the session served as a stepping stone to bigger ideas and how learning mathematics should not be compartmentalized and disconnected. The students then had ample time to work on specifically selected examples with the TA and their peers that would help them understand more advanced mathematics topics in their calculus course. For the first four weeks of the workshops, students were also given an opportunity to work more informally on exercises delivered through Kahoot.

Table 7: MAT 132/135 Workshop Attendance Winter 2020

<i>Module</i>	<i>MAT 132/135</i>	
	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Inequalities and Absolute Values	23	11
Graphs and Properties of Functions	38	8
Trigonometry and Inverse Trigonometry	24	7
Limits and How it Applies to the Derivative	4	3
Working with Differentiation Techniques	12	6
Total	101	35

Table 8: MAT 134/136 Workshop Attendance Winter 2020

<i>Module</i>	<i>MAT 134 / 136</i>	
	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>

Reviews of Limits and Summation	27	19
Antiderivatives and General Idea of Integrals	50	33
Graphing for Area Between Two Curves and Solids of Revolutions	31	23
Limits (as needed) and Partial Fraction Decomposition	14	9
Best Strategies for Sequences and Series	18	N/A
Total	140	84

N/A – Cancelled due to COVID-19

The data in Tables 7 and 8 demonstrate that many students register for these workshops but do not attend. Efforts will be taken next year to address this problem.

This was a successful initiative that we hope to continue next year with continued support from Mathematical and Computational Sciences. If necessary, these workshops can be delivered remotely.

Surveys were created to assess student beliefs and attitudes toward math and the usefulness of these workshops, but the disruptions caused by COVID-19 discouraged many students from completing these surveys (especially the post survey, which was distributed by email after campus had closed). We do not, therefore, have any meaningful assessment data to share regarding students' perceptions of the value of this initiative.

Master of Management of Innovation (MMI) Calculus Review Workshop Series

The Numeracy Specialist designed and delivered a workshop series for MMI graduate students. The workshop reviewed material from calculus (as seen in differential and integral calculus courses) and statistics. The workshop had four two-hour sessions, each of which included a mini-lesson accompanied by in-class exercises.

Numeracy Development Initiative (NDI) Program

Modelled on the successful Writing Development Initiative (WDI) and English Language Learner Support Initiative (ELLI), the Numeracy Development Initiative (NDI) was created in 2019/2020. The Numeracy Development Initiative (NDI) works with instructors to support projects that integrate instruction and learning activities on numeracy (quantitative literacy) into core courses across the curriculum. A large portion of the support typically takes the form of supplemental TA hours, allowing for additional training in the delivery of the quantitative literacy instructional activities and assessment within the boundaries of a course. The objective of the program is to help students gain and improve their ability and

confidence to employ quantitative reasoning skills which include mathematical, computational, or statistical approaches, when engaging with specific course content, as well as beyond.

The NDI's first Call for Proposals went out in January 2019, with five projects receiving funding for the 2019/2020 academic year. The NDI impacted students from across the curriculum, with projects being run in first- and second-year courses in Geography, Biology, Physics, Linguistics, and Math.

Full details on the NDI program can be found [here](#).

Numeracy Module for PASS

The Numeracy Specialist collaborated with RGASC staff to develop and coordinate a new numeracy module for the Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS) program. The module is two-hours long, offered two or three times each term, and is designed to improve students' confidence in working with quantitative information.

The Numeracy Specialist trained a Program Assistant (a senior undergraduate student) to facilitate the module each term. The module introduces the students to a definition of numeracy and provides them with a range of examples of how numbers appear in their studies and everyday life. The students then engage with concepts such as number sense or approximating/estimating and practice these in groups using games and a series of resources designed especially for the PASS course.

Data Software and Numerical Skills Working Group

The Numeracy Specialist participated in the Data Software and Numerical Skills working group in March 2020. The objective of the working group is to find ways to better assist undergraduate and graduate students with data software as well as interpret and analyse the outputs of the data from various statistical and computational software. More work is to be done with this working group throughout the next academic year.

Outreach

The Numeracy Specialist is the main editor of the First-year Math and Stats in Canada (FYMSiC) Newsletter. The objective of the Newsletter is to share the creative and inspiring work of the FYMSiC community, primarily by shining a spotlight on research, celebrating teaching career milestones, sharing classroom teaching resources, and announcing upcoming workshops and conferences. The Newsletter can be accessed [here](#).

The Numeracy Specialist secured funds from both the Fields Institute and the UTM Teaching & Learning Conference and Colloquia fund to host the First-year Math and Stats in Canada:

Creating Epsilons of Improvement Conference in May 2020 at UTM. Unfortunately, this conference has been postponed due to COVID-19.

Research

The Numeracy Specialist has been involved in a number of research projects that inform the math programming and support offered to students at the RGASC. Many of these ongoing projects have received local funding (LEAF, TDI, etc.), while others have been published in academic journals and newsletters or presented at relevant conferences. See Appendix B below for full details.

3) *English Language Learner (ELL) Support*

The 2019/2020 year was a transitional one in terms of English Language Learner (ELL) support. There were fewer international students for the fall intake of 2019, and the 1182 new students represented approximately 29% of the new student population. This was a decline from the previous year where 1347 international students were admitted, totaling 33% of the new intake. Despite the decline, both of these numbers are significantly higher than previous years, creating an increased need for ELL support across the curriculum. Fortunately, the RGASC was able to retain the second ELL Specialist (75% LTA) hired in 2018 to support the increased numbers of ELL students on campus. This additional support allowed the RGASC to expand ELL programming related to the English Language Learner Initiative (ELLI), to continue to offer the Professional English Language Skills (PELS) workshops, and to introduce online synchronous appointments through the new WCONLINE platform.

ELL Specialists conducted 528 appointments in 2019/2020, a significant overall increase over the 238 appointments they conducted in 2018/2019. These appointments are included in the total numbers of appointments reported above in the General Undergraduate Support (pp. 7-10). Each appointment offers a safe space where students can voice their challenges or concerns in relation to academic skill development. The subsequent interactive dialogue is designed to engage learners in critical thinking processes that address their concerns. We estimate that approximately 65% of students who book with ELL Specialists are actually ELL students.

As ELL programming continues to expand across UTM, the English Language Learner Initiative (ELLI) also saw moderate growth in 2019/20 through the addition of one new funded project in Geography. ELLI seeks to provide financial support for instructors who wish to implement specific ELL programming within their courses. Much of this support is directed at supplemental TA hours, which could allow for additional training, workshops,

marking of written materials, or assessment of oral communication. For the new course, ENV100, the focus was on creating collaborative group work projects, each led by a TA. The ENV100 collaborative group-work tasks offer ELL students the opportunity to engage in communication in low-stakes situations, thus building community and inclusion while also fostering critical thinking and writing skills. The ELL Specialists provided three hours of training for the TAs in all three ELLI-funded courses to provide them with strategies for supporting ELL students. Final reports on the ELLI projects have not yet been submitted, so the impact of these interventions is not known. Anecdotal feedback from instructors does, however, suggest positive results.

The ELL Specialists continued to offer the Professional English Language Skills (PELS) workshop series. In addition to offering PELS in CIN101, FAH101, RLG101, and VCC101, which offered targeted ‘just in time’ skill development for ELL students, a generic version of PELS was also offered for any students not enrolled in the courses previously noted. One additional course, CCT110 was added to the PELS suite of offerings in the Winter Term at the request of the course instructor and department Chair. Functioning largely the same as the other course-specific PELS sessions, the CCT110 PELS attempted to align workshops with the scaffolded components of the 10-page research paper due in the course. Attendance for PELS courses for the current year was as follows:

Table 9: PELS Workshop Attendance – FAH101

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Attendance</i>
Sept 11	How to take FAH 101	33
Sept 18	Note-Taking Skills	46
Sept 25	Preparing for Midterms	42
Oct 2	Interpreting Facts	34
Oct 9	Culture of Learning	41
Oct 23	Learning from your Instructors’ Feedback	33
Oct 30	Critical Thinking	42
Nov 6	Academic integrity	39
Nov 11	Time Management	39
Nov 20	FAH 101 Final Exam Preparation	37
Total		386 (526 in 2019)

Table 10: PELS Workshop Attendance – CIN101

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Attendance</i>
Sept 13	Strategically Learning to Learn	21

Sept 20	Preparing to Write	26
Sept 27	Writing an Effective Introduction	23
Oct 4	Body Paragraphs (1)	20
Oct 11	Body Paragraphs (2): Argumentation and Analysis	27
Oct 25	Editing and Revising (1)	20
Nov 1	Editing and Revising (2): How to Make Your Sentences Shine	25
Nov 8	Critical Thinking: What Professors Really Want	19
Nov15	Time Management	20
Nov 22	Test Taking Tips	12
Total		213 (197 in 2019)

Table 11: PELS Workshop Attendance – CCT110

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Attendance</i>
Jan 16/17	Critical Reading Skills	144
Jan 23/24	Essay Plan Development	151
Jan 30/31	Essay Introductions	193
Feb 6/7	Paraphrasing and Summarizing	178
Feb 13/14	Writing Body Paragraphs	171
Feb 27/28	Concluding an Essay	183
Mar 5/6	Editing and Revising	186
Mar 12/13	Time Management	171
Total		1377

Table 12: PELS Workshop Attendance – VCC101

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Attendance (Winter)</i>
Jan 17	Strategically Learning to Learn	31
Jan 24	Preparing to Write	36
Jan 31	Writing an Effective Introduction	39
Feb 7	Body Paragraphs (1)	30
Feb 14	Body Paragraphs (2): Argumentation and Analysis	31

Feb 28	Editing and Revising (1)	33
Mar 6	Editing and Revising (2): How to Make Your Sentences Shine	31
Mar 13	Critical Thinking: What Professors Really Want	23
Mar 20	Time Management	14 (Make-up)
Mar 27	Test Taking Tips	10 (Make-up)
Total		278 (198 in 2019)

Table 13: PELS Workshop Attendance – RLG101 (Fall and Winter courses)

<i>Date (Fall)</i>	<i>Date (Winter)</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Attendance (Fall)</i>	<i>Attendance (Winter)</i>
Sept 9	Jan 15	Strategically Learning to Learn	13	10
Sept 16	Jan 22	Preparing to Write	16	15
Sept 23	Jan 29	Writing an Effective Introduction	16	15
Sept 30	Feb 5	Body Paragraphs (1)	14	14
Oct 7	Feb 12	Body Paragraphs (2): Argumentation and Analysis	9	19
Oct 21	Feb 26	Editing and Revising (1)	13	18
Oct 28	Mar 4	Editing and Revising (2): How to Make Your Sentences Shine?	10	29
Nov 4	Mar 11	Critical Thinking: What Professors Really Want	13	18
Nov 11	Mar 18	Time Management	16	N/A
Nov 18	Mar 25	Test Taking Tips	21	N/A
Total			141 (209 in 2018-19)	138 (93 in 2018-19)

N/A – Cancelled due to COVID-19

Table 14: PELS Workshop Attendance - Generic

<i>Date (Fall)</i>	<i>Date (Winter)</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Attendance (Fall)</i>	<i>Attendance (Winter)</i>
Sept 16	Jan 20	Strategically Learning to Learn	5	6
Sept 23	Jan 27	Preparing to Write	8	4
Sept 30	Feb 3	Writing an Effective Introduction	12	3
Oct 7	Feb 10	Body Paragraphs (1)	12	5
Oct 21	Feb 24	Body Paragraphs (2): Argumentation and Analysis	9	Cancelled due to the conference
Oct 28	Mar 2	Editing and Revising (1)	8	9
Nov 4	Mar 9	Editing and Revising (2): How to Make Your Sentences Shine	11	16
Nov 11	Mar 16	Critical Thinking: What Professors Really Want	12	N/A
Nov 18	Mar 23	Time Management	7	N/A
Nov 25	Mar 30	Test Taking Tips	8	N/A
Total			92	43 (13 in 2018-19)

Numbers in PELS remained relatively stable. The decline in some PELS numbers can be explained by changes to course frameworks, where incentives to attend were no longer offered in the same way. Yet, despite the lower numbers in some areas, the addition of the CCT110 PELS resulted in excellent overall numbers. There were 248 unique attendances for the course, and 186 students completed the requirements to receive bonus points corresponding to participation. Responses on the final survey were positive and included comments such as:

The class on proofreading [was most helpful] because I've always struggled in finding ways to successfully finalize my essays. Plus, I can use the skills I learned in other course.

Walking through the examples of how things should look like [was most helpful] (i.e. editing)

The prof has been really helpful throughout the whole semester with my assignment.

Despite this success, we were somewhat hindered in the Winter term by the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw PELS sessions end abruptly in Week 9 of the term.

ELL Advice Files

Twenty new online resources were designed and developed specifically for ELL students. Each handout provides brief explanations related to different core skills (reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking), offers simple examples of language-related challenges and how these might be corrected, and includes a quiz. While many relate to grammar (e.g., dangling modifiers, articles, comma splices, etc.), others focus on broader components of language (e.g. developing reading skills, expanding academic vocabulary, word choice, etc.). Most of these handouts have been published on the RGASC website and are available [here](#).

Future Challenges and Directions

While changes were made in 2019/20 that addressed some of the challenges experienced in the previous year, there were still some significant issues surrounding attendance. The ELL drop-in schedule was adjusted in an effort to accommodate more students, but the utilization rate for these appointments was still low. Moreover, many of the students who did attend were not usually ELL, but were students seeking grammar support in writing. We also introduced online synchronous online appointments focused on ELL students; however, again, the demographic that was participating in these initiatives was, largely, not ELL students. After consulting with partners on other University of Toronto campuses, it appears that this lack of participation is not a unique problem to UTM, but a more widespread phenomenon across the university, and more broadly, across Ontario.

Another challenge confronting ELL Specialists at the RGASC are shadow courses and other supports offered by private companies to ELL students at UTM. These companies offer tutoring sessions in students' native languages and so compete with the RGASC for students' attention.

Finally, the ELL Specialist worked this year on the development of ISP010H: The Basics of Writing in English (BoWiE), which will be offered to students for the first time in Fall 2020. ISP010 is a non-credit bearing course designed for students who are unlikely to be successful in ISP100H: Writing for University and Beyond, the credit-bearing course discussed in the Writing Support section above (pp. 22) that will be required for entry to a number of major and specialist programs in Visual Studies, Anthropology, and Chemical and Physical Sciences. At least six sections of ISP010 will be offered in 2020/2021, all of which will be taught by the ELL Specialist and other RGASC faculty members. Designed for and marketed to an ELL audience, this course will provide a much more visible option for ELL support than other RGASC programming. We anticipate that it will bring more ELL students to the Centre and therefore address some of the challenges with attendance discussed above.

Collaborative Programming – ACE

For the third year in a row, the RGASC partnered with the Office of the Registrar (OR) and the School of Continuing Studies (SCS) to run the Academic Culture and English (ACE) Program in Summer 2019. ACE is designed to support incoming first-year students who have not yet fulfilled the language requirement for entry into UTM. Students attend full-day classes for eight weeks in July and August. This year, there were 263 new students and 42 returning students (those repeating ACE for a second time), comprising 13 separate classes. The RGASC was responsible for Friday afternoon classes, and held five three-hour workshops during the summer. Program Assistants (PAs) were hired to facilitate these classes and each class focused on the following topics: (1) library skills; (2) academic integrity; (3) peer mentorship; (4) academic wellness; and (5) a faculty panel. These sessions were designed to introduce ACE students to the skills they would need to be successful at UTM.

While ACE is a valuable experience for incoming students, it also provides an excellent professional development opportunity for the PAs facilitating the sessions. In their written reflection on their experiences working with the ACE program, the PAs offered the following comments:

I really wanted to connect with [ACE students] in a way where they felt comfortable and welcomed especially that they were coming from far away and some without their family as well. Giving them tips on how to succeed in university was definitely something I wish I had when I was in first year but seeing how much I've grown and how many changes I've made helped me want to share my knowledge.

I enjoyed going around and visiting various classes, and it was a valuable experience to figure out how to adapt to the different temperaments of each group of students. I also enjoyed being able to teach different topics each week.

When assessing the impact of ACE overall, the students were surveyed at the end of the term and asked to provide feedback on their experience. The following is a summary of students' perceptions of the ACE sessions run by the RGASC. Of the new students, 76% agreed with the statement, "Academic Skills Sessions on Fridays helped me understand Canadian University expectations," while 78% indicated that they felt they were effectively able to practice their English speaking, writing, reading and listening during these sessions. For the returning ACE students, 90% found the Friday afternoon sessions helped to improve their study skills.

At the time of writing, the future of ACE 2020 is uncertain, as travel restrictions and other constraints related to COVID-19 are still in place. At this point, planning is underway to facilitate Friday ACE workshops and to increase the offerings from five workshops to six, but all stakeholders recognize that these plans could change in any number of ways.

Additionally, this year ACE students were introduced to a pilot of the Basics of Writing in English (BoWiE) course. In this iteration of BoWiE, students were divided into three streams, based on their planned area of entry: Humanities/Social Sciences, Sciences, and Management/Commerce. Students were automatically enrolled in BoWiE by the ACE Manager, although actual attendance of the classes was optional. Students who successfully completed eight classes in the Fall Term were eligible for CCR credit. This BoWiE pilot was facilitated by a Program Assistant, who was a former student from the University of Toronto with a background in education. The Program Assistant received initial training from the RGASC, and then participated in weekly in-service training sessions to help prepare for each of the sessions. Materials were designed by the ELL Specialist and catered to the specific needs of students entering each of the above three streams. The BoWiE curriculum was designed in part through consultations with representatives of several departments who provided input on the most common challenges experienced by ELL students. While attendance in these sessions was not as high as expected, 30 ACE students completed BoWiE and successfully received the CCR notation.

4) Graduate Student and TA Support

The RGASC supports graduate students 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. This year, the RGASC also piloted a number of graduate workshops that had been requested by the graduate community with the intention of having the workshops GPS-accredited in the future. Low registration and attendance at graduate student workshops have been significant challenges for the RGASC in the past. However, we continue to address these challenges by determining programming priorities through consultation with UTMAGS, departmental graduate student groups, graduate supervisors, and UTM-wide graduate student surveys. Other ways the RGASC supports graduate students is by offering one-on-one appointments for writing support as well as weekly writing retreats.

A major development this year was the piloting of the Graduate Student Support Strategist's (GSSS) role as a 100% position (up from 50% in previous years). The GSSS's role is to coordinate academic and professional skills support to UTM graduate students, conduct research on UTM's current graduate student programming, and identify opportunities for growth and development of graduate student programming at UTM. Additionally, the increased capacity of the GSSS's role led to collaborations with the Associate Dean, Graduate in projects such as the creation of a graduate events calendar, the production of video abstracts, and a 3-day writing retreat.

Graduate Programming Research

The continued growth and expansion of the RGASC's graduate programming is informed by data collected from UTM's graduate community. The RGASC continues to collect and review graduate student feedback from previously offered programming and needs assessment surveys. Additionally, in 2018/2019, the RGASC undertook the UTM Graduate Programming Qualitative Needs Assessment Report, a comprehensive research project to acquire a better understanding of the needs of the graduate community at UTM. The data collected through this project shaped the RGASC's graduate programming offerings in 2019/2020. A summary of the research methods and data are included below, but a full copy of this Report is posted on the RGASC website and can be accessed [here](#).

The findings of the graduate research project clearly demonstrate that UTM graduate students want more workshops on campus as well as improved communication between the RGASC and the UTM graduate community. Graduate students and supervisors alike suggested discipline specific workshops and workshop topics related to writing, presentations, computer programming, and time management. They also suggested one-on-one appointments, writing cafés, and conferences as means of providing this support.

In addition to the graduate research project, the GSSS distributed a needs assessment survey to graduate students through the UTM graduate student listserv and through communication with graduate supervisors in December 2019. The goal of the survey was to help determine the RGASC's graduate programming priorities for the current year. A total of 108 graduate students completed the online survey, an increase of 18 participants from the 2018/2019 survey. All degree types (MA, MSc, PhD, and professional graduate degrees) and numerous Departments (Anthropology, Biology, Chemical and Physical Sciences, Computer Science, Faculty of Medicine – Occupational Therapy, Geography, Language Studies, Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations, Psychology, Sociology, and IMI) were represented in the data. The survey asked students to indicate their level of interest in a range of professional development topics and their preferences regarding session format, timing, and method of communication. The most popular workshop topics were related to oral and written communication, career management, and computer programming. The survey data confirmed that workshops of two to three hours, conferences, and writing boot camps / retreats were the preferred session format. The majority of respondents indicated that they preferred sessions scheduled between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Lastly, the survey established that the UTM graduate student listserv continues to be the preferred method of communication for most respondents, with communication through supervisors being a close second.

Academic and Professional Skills Supports

The RGASC offers programming 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. The GPS programming key priority this year was to pilot a second Graduate Professional Development Conference (GPDC) in the Winter term's reading week, in addition to the regular GPDC during the Fall term's reading week. These two-day conferences offered numerous GPS-accredited workshops.

The GPDCs were organized by the GSSS in collaboration with UTM's Office of the Dean, the School of Graduate Studies (SGS), the Graduate Centre for Academic Communication (GCAC), the Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP), the Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre (Grad CRC), the UTM Career Centre, and the UTM Library. Each GPDC is a two-day event with workshops and seminars designed to enhance graduate students' professional and academic skills, to better prepare them for their studies and the competitive job market. Students who participated in the events could earn up to four GPS credits per conference. The Graduate Expansion Funds (GEF) awarded by the Associate Dean, Graduate provided financial support for the events.

The table below lists the Fall GPDC workshops and their respective attendance.

Table 15: Fall 2019 GPDC Workshop Attendance

<i>Workshop Title</i>	<i>Facilitator(s)</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Graduate Wellness: Path to Resilience	Cristina Domingues, Lead Counsellor, Health & Counselling Centre, UTM	Cancelled
Writing Literature Reviews	Peter Grav, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Graduate Centre for Academic Communication	26
Writing an IMRD Research Article	Peter Grav, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Graduate Centre for Academic Communications	12
Python Skills for Graduate Students	Michael Liut, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, CLTA, Mathematical and Computer Sciences, UTM	28
Time Management for Graduate Students	Kerrie Martin, Program Strategist, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre, UTM	14
Using Mendeley and Zotero to Manage your Research	Andrew Nicholson, Graduate Student Liaison Librarian, Library, UTM	20
Cultivating a Multilingual Teaching Team and Learning Community	Cristina D'Amico, Curriculum Developer and Kristen Bos, TA Trainer, Teaching Assistants' Training Program, University of Toronto	3
Career Panel and Networking Dinner with Industry Professionals	Anne Gaiger, Assistant Director and Ramya Uthayakumar, Coordinator, Events and Employment Services, Career Centre, UTM	20

A total of 110 individuals registered for the Fall GPDC while 76 attended. Almost half of the attendees (45%) attended more than one workshop, and no students attended the full two days of offerings.

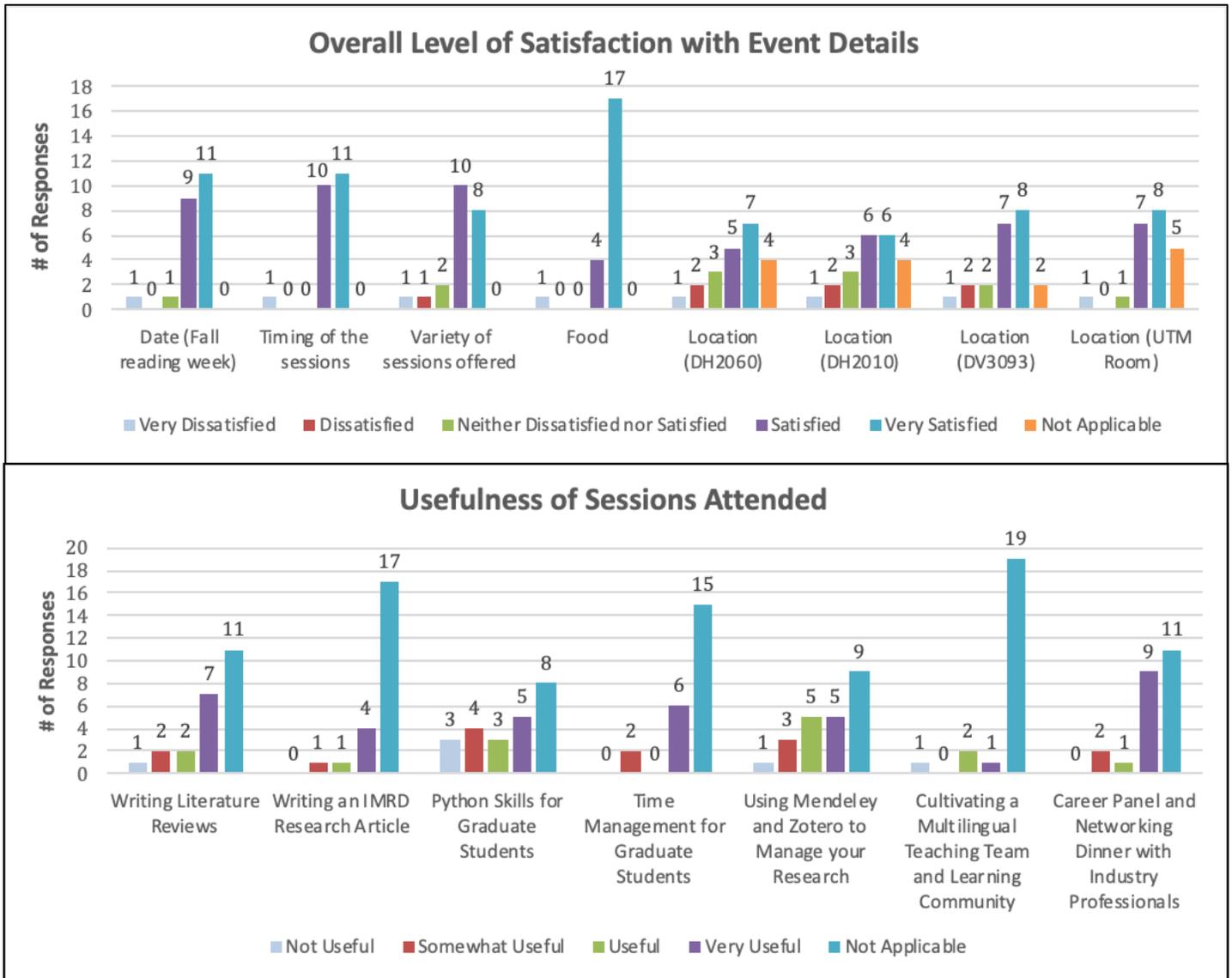
Most of the GPDC participants were PhD (45%) and MSc students (33%). Additionally, four postdocs, three MA students, two MBIotech students, two MEd students, and one Master's student from Accounting, MMI, OISE, Occupational Science, and Occupational Therapy also attended. Approximately 42% of the attendees were from Chemical and Physical Sciences and 23% were from Biology. The remaining students, from largest percentage to smallest, were from Geography, Anthropology, Psychology, UTM's Professional Graduate Programs, OISE, Accounting, Computer Science, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering, Occupational Therapy, and Sociology.

Following the event, all students who attended were invited to complete a feedback survey. When asked what they liked most about the event, the majority of survey respondents highlighted the range of topics as well as the Career Panel and Networking Dinner with Industry Professionals. Respondents also appreciated the quality of the presentations, the

food, and the opportunity to learn new skills at UTM. When respondents were asked what they liked least about the event, the majority of respondents indicated that sessions were too introductory and requested for more intermediate level workshops.

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with various aspects of the event as well as the usefulness of each session attended. The results are shared in the charts below.

Chart 6 and 7: Summary of Fall 2019 GPDC Feedback



All survey respondents indicated that they would attend GPDC again.

When asked how they heard about GPDC, the majority of respondents heard about the event through the UTM graduate student listserv (approximately 57%). Attendees also heard about the event through UTMAGS, their supervisor, the GPS listserv, and through the RGASC. Students were also made aware of the event through internal department communications, posters around campus, and by word of mouth.

Table 16: Winter 2020 GPDC Workshop Attendance

<i>Workshop Title</i>	<i>Facilitator(s)</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Creating your Statement of Teaching Philosophy	Michal Kasprzak, Assistant Director, Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation, University of Toronto	15
Maximising your Oral Presentations	Peter Grav, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Graduate Centre for Academic Communication, University of Toronto	16
The Publishing Process	Jonathan Vroom, Writing and Study Skills Instructor, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre, UTM	13
Strategies for Setting Boundaries and Managing Responsibilities in Graduate School	Hifza Buhari and Melissa Hunte, G2G Peer Advisors, Graduate Conflict Resolution Centre, University of Toronto	7
Visualize your Research Data with Excel and Tableau	Andrew Nicholson, Graduate Student Liaison Librarian, UTM Library	11
Focus on Skills	Malou Tywnan, Career Counsellor, UTM Career Centre	9
LinkedIn Essentials for Graduate Students	Ron Wener, Employment Strategist, UTM Career Centre	8

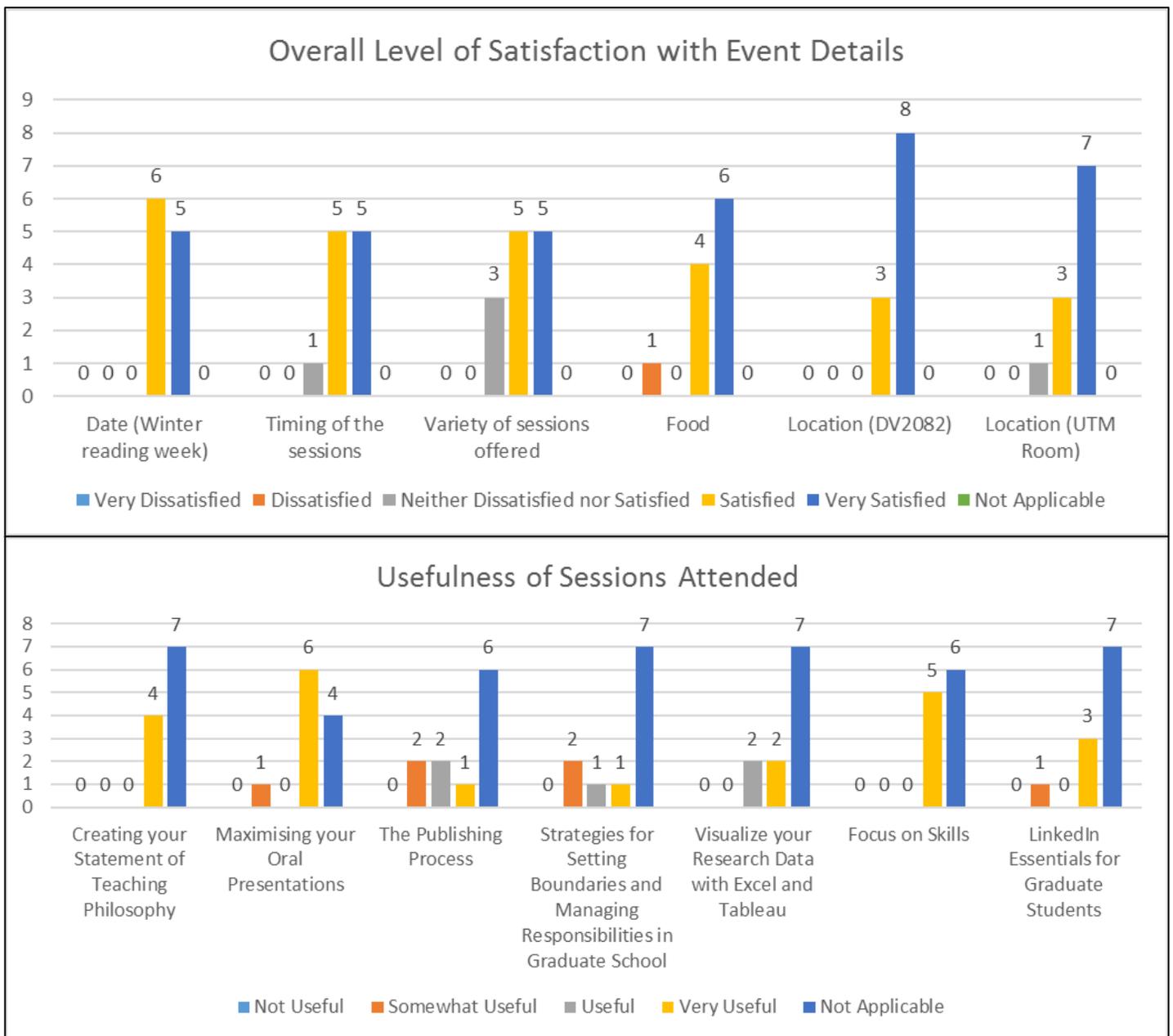
A total of 61 individuals registered for the Winter GPDC while 44 attended. Approximately 39% of attendees attending more than one workshop at the event. One student attended the full two days of offerings.

Similar to the Fall GPDC, the majority of the Winter GPDC participants were PhD (57%) and MSc (23%) students. There were also three postdocs, and one student each obtaining a Master of Information, MBiotech, MScBMC and MScSM. Approximately 27% of the attendees were from Chemical and Physical Sciences and 25% were from Biology. The remaining students, from largest percentage to smallest, were from Psychology, Anthropology, UTM's Professional Graduate Programs, Faculty of Information, Geography, and History.

GPDC attendees were invited to complete a feedback survey following the event. When asked what they liked most about the event, the majority of survey respondents highlighted the range of topics. Respondents also appreciated the UTM Career Centre’s sessions, and the food. When respondents were asked what they liked least about the event, the majority of comments echoed those from the Fall GPDC, namely that sessions were introductory and that they would prefer intermediate level workshops.

Respondents were also asked to rate their satisfaction with different aspects of the event as well as the usefulness of each session attended. The results are shared in the charts below.

Charts 8 and 9: Summary of Winter 2020 GPDC Feedback



Approximately 91% of survey respondents indicated that they would attend GPDC again with the remaining 9% reporting that they would like to but will not be on campus next year.

When asked how they heard about GPDC, the majority of respondents heard about the event through the UTM graduate student listserv (approximately 64%) and their supervisor (approximately 36%).

Other RGASC Graduate Workshops

Informed by UTM Graduate Programming Qualitative Needs Assessment and feedback received from previously offered graduate programming, the RGASC offered the following graduate workshops in 2019/2020.

Table 17: RGASC Graduate Workshops Attendance

<i>Workshop Title</i>	<i>Date & Time</i>	<i>Facilitator(s)</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Project Planning and Goal Setting Workshop using the Bullet Journal Method	August 21, 2019 11:00 am – 1:00 pm	Jessica Carlos, Graduate Student Support Strategist, RGASC, UTM	12	5
Writing a Grant/Research Proposal	September 19, 2019 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Michael Kaler, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream & Writing Specialist, RGASC	8	6
Writing a Literature Review	September 26, 2019 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Michael Kaler, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream & Writing Specialist, RGASC	9	3
Presenting your Research in Three Minutes	November 27, 2019 10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Cristina D’Amico, Curriculum Developer, Teaching Assistants’ Training Program, University of Toronto	10	6
Introduction to R and R Studio – Part 1	January 13, 2020 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Raheleh Saryazdi, PhD Candidate, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto	16	11
Introduction to R and R Studio – Part 2	January 20, 2020 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Raheleh Saryazdi, PhD Candidate, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto	25	13
Writing an Abstract	January 21, 2020	Jonathan Vroom, Writing and Study Skills	8	3

	12:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Instructor, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre, UTM		
Data Visualization using R	March 23, 2020 10:00 am – 12:00 pm	Raheleh Saryazdi, PhD Candidate, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto	16	N/A
Writing a Discussion	April 14, 2020 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Jonathan Vroom, Writing and Study Skills Instructor, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre, UTM	0	N/A

N/A – Cancelled due to COVID-19

Paper feedback surveys were distributed to participants after each workshop. In the event that a paper survey was not distributed, the survey was sent out to participants over email. Paper feedback surveys had an average response rate of 85% while surveys distributed online had a response rate of 42%. Overall, the overwhelming majority of graduate student attendees found the workshops they attended to be relevant, useful, and would recommend them to other graduate students. In terms of improving the workshops, the most common feedback was for more time to practice and implement what they learned in the workshop to their own work.

Feedback surveys provided another opportunity for the RGASC to learn about what else the RGASC should offer graduate students. Most frequently requested topics included computer programming software (e.g., Python, and R), writing, and presentation skills. Moving forward, future graduate programming will focus on development of skills and the practical application of those skills. This year, the RGASC recommended that graduate students bring their work to workshops, but very few followed this advice. Future programming will explore ways getting graduate students to apply the learning from the workshops to their own work during the sessions.

Teaching Assistants' Teaching 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 three extensive training programs for new TAs – the first in August 2019, the second in September 2019, and the third in January 2020. A total of 59 TAs attended UTM's TA Day in August, 46 attended in September, and 48 attended in January.

Teaching & Learning Collaboration Events for Graduate Students

The Teaching and Learning Collaboration (TLC) at UTM hosts professional development opportunities for UTM faculty and instructors. With the transition from in-person to online courses over the summer term due to COVID-19, the TLC received requests from faculty supervising TAs to provide support for TAs teaching online. From these requests, the TLC developed a webinar series focused on the TA perspective: Helping Teaching Assistants Prepare for Supporting Students in an Online Environment. The webinar series included two webinars focused on good pedagogical practices:

Table 18: TLC TA-Focused Webinars

<i>Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date & Time</i>	<i>Facilitator(s)</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Classroom Management & Cultivating Community in an Online Environment	April 30, 2020 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Fiona Rawle, Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology, UTM Jessica Carlos, Graduate Student Support Strategist, RGASC, UTM	103	106
Grading & Giving Effective Feedback in an Online Environment	May 1, 2020 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Fiona Rawle, Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology, UTM Jessica Carlos, Graduate Student Support Strategist, RGASC, UTM	83	83

Participants of both webinars were invited to complete a feedback survey, but the participation rate was very low, so we are unable to share any assessment data here.

Graduate Writing Cafés

Graduate Writing Cafés are weekly group writing sessions restricted to graduate students. They are informal events designed to help graduate students connect to a larger community, stay focused, and to continue making writing progress. Each Graduate Writing Café is hosted by an RGASC Writing Specialist. In the Fall 2019 semester, Graduate Writing Cafés were held on either a Tuesday or Wednesday from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. in a small conference room (MN 4107). Only one graduate student attended the Café in the Fall term.

In the Winter 2020 semester, the RGASC collaborated with the Office of the Vice-Principal, Research's Collaborative and Digital Research Space (CDRS) and combined the RGASC's Graduate Writing Cafés with the CDRS's weekly Just Write sessions, which were held every Tuesday from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. A total of seven unique graduate students attended the Cafés in the bright, open, and spacious café-like working areas of the CDRS. The change in space may have contributed to the increase in attendance.

One-on-one Appointments for Graduate Students

Graduate students have the opportunity to meet with RGASC staff and faculty one-on-one for writing support. RGASC faculty conducted a total of 23 appointments with UTM-affiliated graduate students in 2019/2020. Appointments for graduate students focused on their course work, grant applications, and theses.

One-on-one Appointments for Graduate School Applications

The RGASC provides support for undergraduate students applying to graduate school. RGASC faculty conducted a total of 115 appointments on undergraduate students' graduate school applications including letters of intent and personal statements.

Graduate Programming with the Associate Dean, Graduate

The Graduate Student Support Strategist's position increase from 50% to 100% was a result of the collaboration between the RGASC and the Associate Dean, Graduate and led to a number of new initiatives including a graduate events calendar, video abstracts, and plans to pilot a graduate writing retreat. The Graduate Student Support Strategist also assisted in coordinating UTM's preliminary heat for U of T's Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition.

Graduate Events Calendar

With the demand for improved communication among stakeholders in the UTM graduate student community, one of the Associate Dean, Graduate's priorities this year was to develop a calendar highlighting all graduate events taking place at UTM. The graduate events calendar is hosted on the [Office of the Dean's website](#) and mirrored on UTM's Engage App. The graduate events calendar includes department-specific events and events open to all graduate students. The graduate calendar currently includes events from the following departments: Anthropology, Chemical and Physical Sciences, Centre for Urban Environments, Geography, Historical Studies, Language Studies, Mathematical and Computational Sciences, Psychology, and the Institute for Management and Innovation. The calendar also promotes graduate events hosted by support units including the UTM

Library, the RGASC, the TATP, and the University of Toronto Mississauga's Association of Graduate Students.

Graduate Video Abstracts

The primary goal of the graduate video abstracts initiative was to provide graduate students with a three-to-five minute, professionally-produced video that would showcase their research. A total of five students signed up for 30-minute timeslots. On the day of filming, three graduate students participated with each timeslot taking about one hour. The three graduate students expressed appreciation for the opportunity and planned to post their video on their own personal websites. Participants in this project noted the challenge of having a concise script and wanting to have the contents of the video be understandable to a general audience. The Associate Dean, Graduate and the RGASC hopes to schedule another date to shoot video abstracts because the original date for filming was the last day the UTM campus was open prior to the COVID-19 school closure.

Future Directions

The Graduate Student Support Strategist position has been approved as a 100% continuing position within the RGASC beginning August 2020. The RGASC will be able, therefore, to continue to offer a wide range of workshops for UTM-based graduate students. Informed by the surveys, interviews, and focus group data collected throughout the 2019/2020 year, more targeted workshops will be offered to the UTM graduate community in 2020/2021. Over the summer semester, the GSSS plans to map graduate programming to be able to better articulate the benefits of participating in academic and professional development opportunities, identify missing programming, and create further collaborations with departments and units to develop and improve graduate programming.

The summer semester will also provide a time to reflect and plan graduate programming in the online environment. In light of COVID-19, graduate programming offered through the RGASC will see significant changes based on factors including but not limited to interest or support among our collaborators, participation among graduate students, and available resources.

5) Faculty Support

Individual Consultations

In 2019/2020 the RGASC's Educational Developer provided individualized support for 60 instructors and post-doctoral fellows. These consultations do not include those related to the WDI, ELLI, or NDI. This number is an increase from last year as the COVID-19

campus closing and the move to a remote delivery modality has required more individualized support in relation to course redesign, syllabus review, editing of learning outcomes for remote delivery, and redesigning assessments that can be delivered online. The Educational Developer supported 28 instructors between September 3, 2019 and March 15, 2020; this number increased to 60 by April 30, 2020 as instructors worked to get their courses online. Consultations with instructors focused on the topics outlined below:

1. New course development
2. Course redesign
3. Syllabus Review
4. Learning Outcomes
5. Aligning and redesigning assessments and activities for inclusion
6. Rubric design and creation
7. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research projects
8. Teaching philosophy statement and diversity statement design

The Educational Developer also conducted seven teaching observations for instructors and one teaching observation for a teaching assistant. One teaching observation for an instructor and another for a teaching assistant were scheduled for the middle of March but canceled due to COVID-19. The teaching observations comprise a pre-observation meeting, a teaching observation either for one or two hours, and a post-observation consultation meeting where feedback was provided along with formative questions to help guide the instructor's or teaching assistant's pedagogy. This feedback averaged three-four pages in length.

The Educational Developer also provided feedback on seven teaching dossiers and their constituent components such as teaching philosophies and diversity statements, and assisted with six teaching and learning grant proposals.

Teaching and Learning Collaboration Events

UTM faculty, instructors, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students participate in professional development opportunities hosted by the Teaching and Learning Collaboration (TLC) and coordinated by the RGASC's Educational Developer. The Teaching and Learning Collaboration provides many workshops, webinars, and day-long events for UTM faculty, instructors, and graduate students to meet and connect with colleagues who share an interest in teaching and learning and wish to supplement their pedagogical practice. During the 2019/2020 the TLC hosted the following 23 events listed below. The final six webinar events in April and May were created to help support faculty, instructors, and graduate students with their transition to remote teaching by focusing on topics that were of

the most importance and value in a delivery mode pivot. A total of 662 people attended TLC workshops, webinars, and panel events from July 9 2019, to May 1 2020.

Table 19: TLC Events (2019/2020)

<i>Workshop or Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Prepare to Teach: Syllabus Clinic (Webinar)	July 9, 11am-12pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology Dianne Ashbourne , Educational Developer, RGASC	31	12
Prepare to Teach: Inspiration and suggestions for using Quercus (Webinar)	July 16, 11am-12pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology Dianne Ashbourne , Educational Developer, RGASC Simone Laughton , Head, Library & Instructional Technologies, UTM Library	31	25
Prepare to Teach: What do I do if?: Dealing with difficult issues in the classroom (Webinar)	July 23, 11am-12pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology Andrea Carter , Assistant Dean, Student Wellness, Support & Success	32	15
UTM Ready, Set, Teach Day	September 3, 9:30am-4pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology Dianne Ashbourne , Educational Developer, RGASC Daniel Guadagnolo , Sessional Lecturer, Department of Visual Studies	82	66

<i>Workshop or Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
		<p>Vivienne Luk, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream Forensic Science</p> <p>Judith Poë, Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Chemical & Physical Sciences</p> <p>Katherine Rehner, Associate Professor, Department of Language Studies</p> <p>Teresa Lobalsamo, Associate Professor Teaching Stream, Department of Language Studies</p> <p>Ken Derry, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Historical Studies</p> <p>Elizabeth Coulson, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Language Studies</p> <p>Helene Wagner, Professor, Department of Biology</p> <p>Sarah Richardson, Lecturer, Department of Historical Studies</p> <p>Barbara Murck, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Geography</p> <p>Michael Kaler, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream & Writing Specialist, RGASC</p> <p>Paul Piunno, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Chemical & Physical Sciences</p> <p>Tenzin Yindok, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Economics</p> <p>Andrijana Burazin, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Mathematical & Computational Sciences & Numeracy and Scientific Literacy Specialist, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre</p> <p>Elizabeth Parke, Lecturer, Department of Visual Studies</p>		

<i>Workshop or Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
		Alex Rennet , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Mathematical and Computational Sciences		
Setting Up Student Teams for Success: A Workshop on the Agile Method of Project Management as Applied Team-Based Undergraduate Research Projects (Workshop)	October 10, 1pm-3pm	Paul Piunno , Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Chemical & Physical Sciences	11	8
Mid-Term Instructor Fall Check-In (Webinar)	October 16, 11am-12pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology Ann Gagné , Educational Developer, RGASC	8	5
Tips for Preparing A Teaching Development & Innovation Grant Proposal (Seminar)	October 24, 1-2pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology	7	7
UTM Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Showcase (Lightning Talks)	October 24, 11am-12pm	Andrijana Burazin , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Mathematical & Computational Sciences & Numeracy and Scientific Literacy Specialist, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre Xinli Wang , Sessional Lecturer, Department of Mathematical and Computational Sciences Michael Kaler , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream &	11	11

<i>Workshop or Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
		<p>Writing Specialist, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre</p> <p>Chester Scoville, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of English and Drama</p> <p>Steve Szigeti, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Institute of Communications, Culture, Information and Technology</p> <p>Christoph Richter, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology</p>		
Indigenous Lunch and Lunch: Reconciliation (Panel)	November 14, 11am-12pm	<p>Maria Hupfield, Assistant Professor Department of Visual Studies and Department of English & Drama, Canada Research Chair in Transdisciplinary Indigenous Arts</p> <p>Robin Gray, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology</p> <p>Nicole Laliberte, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Geography</p>	25	23
Faculty Showcase: Innovative Assessment (Lightning Talks)	November 18, 11am-12pm	<p>Daniel Guadagnolo, Sessional Lecturer, Department of Historical Studies</p> <p>Lindsay Schoenbohm, Associate Professor & Chair, Earth Science, Department of Chemical & Physical Sciences</p> <p>Liz Coulson, Lecturer, Department of Language Studies</p> <p>Rosa Hong, Assistant Professor Teaching Stream, Department of Language Studies</p> <p>Andrew Petersen, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Mathematical & Computational Sciences</p>	17	14

<i>Workshop or Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Inclusive Pedagogical Strategies (Lunch Talk)	January 23, 12pm-1pm	Ann Gagné , Educational Developer, RGASC	20	19
How You Can Help Students Develop Their Foundational Academic Skills (Lightning Talks)	January 28, 11am-12pm	Andrijana Burazin , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Mathematical & Computational Sciences & Numeracy and Scientific Literacy Specialist, Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre Michael deBraga , Associate Professor, Teaching Stream & WIL Faculty Liaison, RGASC Tyler Evans-Tokaryk , Associate Professor, Teaching Stream & Director, RGASC Michael Kaler , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream & Writing Specialist, RGASC Thomas Klubi , Learning Strategist and Program Manager, RGSAC Kerrie Martin , Program Strategist, RGASC Xiangying Huo , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, ELL Specialist RGASC	27	21
Mid-Term Instructor Check-In (Webinar)	February 20, 2pm-3pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology Ann Gagné , Educational Developer, RGASC	8	5

<i>Workshop or Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Encouraging Attendance, Engagement, and Preparation (Panel)	February 26, 11am-13pm	Jade Atallah , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology, Rosa Hong , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Language Studies Steve Szigeti , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Institute of Communications, Culture, Information and Technology	13	9
Demystifying the Dossier Series: Preparing the Teaching Dossier (Workshop)	March 12, 11am-1:30pm	Megan Burnett , Associate Director, Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto	21	14
Curriculum Mapping (Webinar)	March 25, 1pm-2pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology	16	10
Curriculum Mapping (Webinar)	April 21, 11am-12pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology	16	13
An Intro to Online Teaching and Learning: The ADDIE Model (Webinar)	April 9, 11am-12pm	Ann Gagné , Educational Developer, RGASC	88	74
Learning Outcomes for Online Courses (Webinar)	April 14, 11am-12pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology	101	75
Inclusive Assessment and Academic Integrity (Webinar)	April 23, 12pm-1pm	Ann Gagné , Educational Developer, RGASC	112	73

<i>Workshop or Webinar Title</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Facilitators</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Just-In Time Syllabus Clinic (Webinar)	April 28, 12pm-1pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology	100	75
Classroom Management & Cultivating Community in an Online Environment (Webinar)	April 30, 2pm-3pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology	141	102
Grading & Giving Effective Feedback in an Online Environment (Webinar)	May 1, 2pm-3pm	Fiona Rawle , Associate Dean, Undergraduate & Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology	112	83

Instructors, librarians, staff, and post-doctoral fellows from across campus attended TLC events this year.

Table 20: Departmental Participation in TLC Events (2019/2020)

<i>Department</i>	<i>Participation in TLC Events</i>
Anthropology	6%
Biology	9%
Centre for Student Engagement	1%
Chemical and Physical Sciences	5%
Economics	1%
English and Drama	2%
Forensic Science	2%
Geography	6%
Historical Studies	4%
Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology	7%
Language Studies	13%
Management	4%
Mathematical and Computational Sciences	9%

Office of VP	1%
Political Science	3%
Residence	1%
RGASC	6%
Sociology	4%
UTM Library	3%
Visual Studies	7%
Women and Gender Studies	1%

In response to COVID-19, the TLC also hosted a series of drop-in webinars which were held three times a week from the middle of March to the beginning of April and then continued with a once week format for April, May and onto June. The RGASC's Educational Developer and the Associate Dean, Undergraduate co-facilitated these drop-in webinars. The drop-in webinars are delivered in Zoom and allowed faculty, instructors, staff, and graduate students to ask questions about pedagogy, assessment, or technology related to remote teaching. Attendance at the drop-in sessions ranged from nine to 25, with an average of 12 participants.

A number of TLC events were cancelled or postponed until the Fall of 2020 because of COVID-19.

Table 21: TLC Events Cancelled or Postponed due to COVID-19

Workshop Title	Registered	Cancelled or Postponed
Indigenizing and Decolonizing the Curriculum (2 Day Workshop)	18	Postponed to Fall 2020
Compassion Fatigue Workshop	13	Postponed to Fall 2020
Community Engaged Learning (Workshop)	13	Postponed to Fall 2020
Teaching with Technology Showcase	5	Postponed to Fall 2020
ALC Showcase	5	Cancelled
End of Year Celebration	4	Cancelled

Topics for sessions were based on both formal and informal needs assessment review sent to TLC members during 2018/2019. After each session, participants were emailed resources as well as a feedback survey where participants had the opportunity to discuss the workshop as a whole or particular aspects of each workshop. Participants are also given the

opportunity to propose new TLC programming themes in the feedback form. The average response rate for feedback surveys was 24%, where the highest response rate of 79% was when paper feedback forms were given directly following the workshop event. This suggests that in order to have a better response rate the TLC should use paper forms or a hybrid model to collect feedback going forward. Of the feedback received from the respondents on the 2019-2020 TLC programming, 75% of respondents rated the session “excellent”, with the remaining respondents rating the sessions as either “very good” (15%), “good” (7.5%), or “fair” (2.5%). Feedback was positive in regards to the new lightening talk format and the most common feedback was the need to have more time for questions and discussion.

Before COVID-19, the priority focus for 2020-2021 TLC programming was on the following areas:

1. Indigenous pedagogy and Indigenous ways of knowing
2. Inclusive pedagogical practices
3. Mental wellness

However, with COVID requiring a shift in the modality of delivery, the TLC will be making remote teaching and hybrid (or flexible) pedagogy considerations a priority for future programming.

The TLC also held monthly Learning Exchange Lunches where faculty, instructors, graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows could meet to discuss strategies they were using in their courses or workshop ideas for particular approaches to certain topics. The lunches were lively, and averaged 10 participants per event.

Data Software and Numerical Skills Special Interest Group

The RGASC’s Educational Developer also supported the creation of a Data Software and Numerical Skills Special Interest Group whose mission is to explore supports that would address gaps in student skills in relation to data software and applications. The Special Interest Group has 11 members representing four different departments at UTM including Mathematical & Computational Sciences, Biology, Geography, Language Studies, as well as the RGASC, I&ITS, and the UTM Library.

Inclusive Pedagogy Discussion Group

The Educational Developer also started an Inclusive Pedagogy Discussion Group as a direct response to feedback from an event on inclusive pedagogy held by the TLC in January 2020. The discussion group had two meetings in February drawing five participants from Language Studies, Mathematical & Computational Sciences, the RGASC, and the UTM Library. There was another meeting of the group to be held in April which

was cancelled due to COVID. This discussion group will continue in the Fall term either in a blended or online format.

Pedagogical Reading Groups

The Educational Developer also organized four pedagogical reading groups, two in Fall 2019 and two in Winter 2020. The groups met biweekly with a set chapter selection for each meeting. Participants were encouraged to share how the readings intersected with their pedagogical practice or how the readings suggested strategies that they would implement in their course delivery. The four books were as follows:

1. *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories Behind Effective College Teaching* by Joshua Eyler
2. *Deep Work* by Cal Newport
3. *Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning* by Thomas J. Tobin and Kirsten T. Behling
4. *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* by Caroline Criado Perez

Due to COVID-19, the last meetings of the Winter 2020 term were conducted via Zoom. There were a total of eight faculty members, four sessional instructors, two staff members, and one librarian who participated in the reading groups. The following departments were represented: Mathematical & Computational Sciences; Anthropology; Language Studies; Chemical and Physical Sciences; Sociology; Forensic Science; Biology; Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology; and Visual Studies. The participants of the Pedagogical Reading Groups provided positive feedback about the pedagogical strategies and community building that the groups allowed, especially in light of COVID-19. A summer term reading group which will read Flower Darby's *Small Teaching Online* is scheduled to begin in the middle of May.

TLC Website and Communications

The TLC website has been supplemented with three new People Profiles, including a profile on Shay Fuchs (UTM's SoTL Fellow for 2019/2020), and Paul Piunno (recipient of the President's Teaching Award this year). COVID-19 has inspired a new section on the website called "Online Learning Resources."

The TLC newsletter is published once a term and allows faculty, instructors, and sessional lecturers to showcase their teaching and learning innovations, award and grant successes, and SoTL projects. The TLC Newsletter is sent via MailChimp and the number of opens for the newsletters in 2019/2020 is up 8% from last year.

The TLC Twitter account added 45 followers (an increase of 17%) in 2019/2020 and now has a total of 271 followers. All TLC programming is announced through the Twitter feed as well as other RGASC news for faculty, instructors, graduate students, and postdoctoral candidates.

Active Learning Classrooms

The Educational Developer helped support the Active Learning Classrooms in the Maanjiwe nendamowinan building. In collaboration with the UTM Library and Information and Instructional Technology Services (I&ITS), the Educational Developer coordinated and facilitated training for instructors and Teaching Assistants on Active Learning Classroom use. This year, the Educational Developer supported five ALC Instructor and Staff Orientation Sessions and 10 ALC Teaching Assistant Orientation sessions.

The Educational Developer also worked to compile Active Learning Classroom Resources that also address the importance of inclusive pedagogical design. This resource, which is already 37 pages long, is scheduled for completion in Fall 2020. Work on this initiative has slowed due to COVID-19, but the use of ALCs in a flexible delivery model will be an important part of future curriculum delivery considerations at UTM.

Online and Hybrid Learning

COVID-19 has required the Educational developer to shift her focus to the creation and curation of resources, webinars, and workshops related to online pedagogy. The workload demands this will continue to put on the Educational Developer have yet to be fully determined, but it is important to flag this area as an area of increased expansion and need in terms of faculty support.

Outreach

The Educational Developer worked to foster inter-campus and intra-institutional community and founded a SoTL reading group with Educational Developers at other educational institutions in southwestern Ontario. This reading group, conducted through Slack, has seven members from Western University, McMaster and the University of Waterloo. This reading group will continue through the summer term and will be assessed again for Fall in terms of expanding members and next steps, including SoTL research based on the reading group.

6) *Experiential Learning*

The 2019/2020 academic year has been a watershed moment for everyone at UTM. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has forced numerous changes to established procedures and has pushed the world to adapt and face what very well could become a “new normal”. In an effort to recognize how changes to protocol have impacted on the Experiential Learning (EL) portfolio, this section of the Annual Report is separated into pre- and post-COVID-19 periods.

Pre-Covid-19 EL

Background

Last year we reported on how the new position of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Faculty Liaison was established at the RGASC. Its aim was to provide support to faculty involved with WIL and to help situate the RGASC as a resource in anticipation of the continued growth of WIL programming. The initial progress of the WIL support at the RGASC was limited to an exploration of the existing literature and of the methods currently in use across the Canadian WIL landscape. The key priority targeted was to establish a working relationship with the Experiential Education Unit (EEU). As such, much of the work associated with the position of the WIL Faculty Liaison was one of exploration. As part of this exploration, forays into the classroom resulted in RGASC & course instructor collaborations that were reported at conference presentations in the summer and fall term of 2019. For more details, see Appendix B: RGASC Research and Scholarship, below

Current Focus

The growing collaboration between this position and the EEU and the growing dialogue with the University of Toronto’s Centre for Community Partnerships (CCP) led to a realization that the “WIL Faculty Liaison” title might represent too restrictive a portfolio because WIL is typically understood to be a component of Experiential Learning more generally. This led to a discussion around the possible revision of the role of the WIL faculty Liaison. In open discussion with both the EEU and CCP, and in an attempt to raise awareness of the WIL Faculty Liaison position, it was decided that the title should be changed to better reflect the diversity of EL at the University. A decision was reached and approved by the Vice-Dean Teaching & Learning to rename the position as the Experiential Learning Faculty Liaison. The rationale for this decision focused on the fact that WIL is a component of EL and as such EL should be viewed as the umbrella portfolio to house all other experiential programs.

In a concerted effort to gain expertise in the delivery of EL courses, the EL Faculty Liaison taught JCB487, an advanced interdisciplinary research laboratory course in Chemical & Physical Sciences (CPS). JHB487 has, from its inception, combined students from different science specialties to tackle project-based investigations. The EL Faculty Liaison had been

associated with the course throughout most of its tenure as a member of the support team charged with supporting team building exercises through various means, including the training of the students in the skills delivered through the Kolb Learning Styles Inventory (KLSI). KLSI represents a pedagogical tool that has been used to help provide background to learning styles and mitigate potential group related challenges that invariably crop up. As the course instructor, the EL Faculty Liaison coordinated the JCB487 (AIRLab) teams and collaborated with additional faculty members who served as the supervisory disciplinary experts in the course. This experience provided the EL Faculty Liaison with the requisite experience to better guide the development of EL programming at UTM.

EL in BIO354

The EL Faculty Liaison contributed to the redesign of BIO354 to incorporate more EL components. Part of the re-design involved a collaboration with a Biomedical Communications (BMC) faculty member who wanted to develop a virtual dissection guide that would help simulate the study of comparative anatomy.

This guide was intended to use a virtual platform to increase students' active engagement with dissection through the use of a virtual platform. The course had required students to perform actual dissection, but this approach had recently become compromised by limited availability of materials – notably organisms for dissection. In fact, in recent years, students in the course seldom had the opportunity to dissect all of the relevant organisms, which resulted in reducing the hands-on aspect of the lab that is critical to the study of comparative anatomy.

Throughout the course redesign process, the EL Faculty Liaison provided constructive feedback on the design proposals and assessed the design of the simulation so that it would provide the best possible alternative to an actual dissection. A major focus was to ensure that when developing the virtual dissection guide for the cardiovascular system, that the systems were integrated in such a manner so as to emphasize the evolutionary transitions between the major vertebrate groups. This emphasis on transition was essential in order to ensure that students recognized the links between vertebrate groups and so were able to experience a more thorough understanding of the science of comparative anatomy. This approach should provide students with an approximate simulation of how the professionals in the field study evolutionary processes. Progress to this point has focused on the completion of a series of visuals and associated formative exercises targeting the understanding of differences in the structure of the vertebrate heart as well as the steps in the evolution from the most basal vertebrate cardiac design to that which is found in mammals.

EL in BIO356

The EL Faculty Liaison facilitated a one-hour discussion in BIO356 every Monday throughout the Winter Term. These discussions simulated the peer-review process inherent in scholarly debate of topics introduced earlier in the class. The focus of the hour was to introduce students to the controversies that exist in the discipline and to share with them the idea that the scientific method is healthiest when it encourages debate. To further these discussions, students were assigned weekly sets of questions that explored topics from the course and notably those topics that generated controversy. While this intervention was rather limited from an EL perspective, it was only the beginning of a longer-term plan to transform BIO356 into a field course.

Other Course Support

The EL Faculty Liaison provided support for reflective writing exercises in VST410H, MGT480H, and ECO400Y. For each of these courses, a protocol for deep reflection was provided through in-class presentations as well as through the development of resources (i.e., tip sheets). These resources are available on the RGASC [website](#) and on the EEU [website](#).

Experiential Learning Working Group

The EL Faculty Liaison participated in the University of Toronto's Working Group (ELG) this year. The ELG met for the first time on September 10th to begin the process of measuring the reach of EL at UTM and across UofT. The ELG met once a month from September through December and again in February and March. The focus of the ELG throughout this year was to assess EL by developing a comprehensive survey that was delivered to faculty, staff, and students. Data from this survey were collected in February and a preliminary analysis of the data was completed by the EL Faculty Liaison and submitted to the ELG for further discussion at the end of February. The committee will be meeting in the summer to discuss the survey data.

In addition to the contributing to the development of the survey and undertaking the preliminary analysis of the recovered data, the EL Faculty Liaison has also collaborated with the EEU to examine how best to combine academic and logistical criteria in supporting the delivery of EL. These types of collaborations are essential in order for the RGASC to become a major contributor to the support of EL on campus. See Appendix B for the details on this and other research conducted this year in support of EL at UTM.

Part Three: RGASC Programs

In addition to its core focus areas, the RGASC provides academic support to UTM undergraduate students through four formal programs:

- 1) Head Start;
- 2) Facilitated Study Group Program;
- 3) Program for Accessing Research Training (PART); and
- 4) Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS) Program.

The following is a brief overview of each program's activities in 2019/2020.

1) *Head Start*

Head Start 2019 maintained the same model as in the previous year, offering skills-based programming in the last few days of August, prior to the beginning of Orientation Week (O-Week). Registration numbers for 2019 were unusually high, which meant that faculty from across a wider range of departments had the opportunity to participate in the programming. As an example, the faculty panel was divided into two sessions, one for the Sciences and another for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Unfortunately, the actual attendance numbers did not match the registration numbers, which was particularly disappointing. While we cannot completely explain the difference between the registration and attendance numbers, we attribute some of the complications to the way students were using registration tool; students may have been accidentally registering for sessions that they would not be able to attend because they were before O-Week. We continue to work with the centralized Orientation Committee to update this registration tool to resolve this issue.

Table 22: Comparative Head Start Attendance Data

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Attendance</i>	<i>Unique Attendance</i>	<i>Presenters</i>	<i># of Total Sessions</i>	<i># of Total Hours</i>
2015	1642	322	37	35	51.5
2016	828	246	26	35	40
2017	1319	287	23	26	14
2018	2698	539	23	24	14
2019	3094	592	33	24	14

The two main 2-hour workshops attracted strong numbers. The *Creativity, Collaboration and Problem-Solving* session attracted 457 students (363 in 2018) while the *Reading & Writing*

for Success session had 339 students (295 in 2018). Attendance numbers for the concurrent sessions were as follows.

Table 23: Comparison of Attendance from 2018 to 2019 for Workshop Sessions

<i>Session Name</i>	<i>Attendance 2019</i>	<i>Attendance 2018</i>	<i>% difference</i>
Reading and Writing Focus			
Academic Integrity	14	31	-55%
Academic Vocabulary	65	36	+81%
Creativity, Collaboration, & Problem-Solving	457	363	+26%
Critical Reading	22	54	-59%
Critical Writing Skills*	131	66	+98%
Lab Report Writing	149	128	+16%
Library 101*	133	117	+14%
Reading and Writing for Success	339	295	+15%
Numeracy Skills			
Advanced Problem-Solving Strategies	95	78	+22%
First Year Science Uncovered	157	104	+51%
Sneak-a-Peek: First Year Math Tests	195	165	+18%
General Skills			
Note Taking*	215	242	-11%
Study Planning	70	84	-17%
Time-Management*	180	148	+22%
Student Panel	410	290	+41%
Faculty Panel	315	296	+6%
Game Based Sessions			
Critical Thinkers	14	31	-55%
Problem Solvers	27	23	+17%
Strategy Lovers	28	28	+0%
Escape Room	78	70	+11%

* Workshops that were held multiple times

Due to a variety of factors, the survey for Head Start 2019 was distributed in March when COVID-19 was beginning to impact the university. As a result, the participation rate in the survey was unusually low (N=52, which is less than half the number who completed the survey last year)). However, of the responses received, most were very positive. The comment below is typical of the feedback we received:

Fantastic program, very helpful and I would recommend to any first year student who is able. Great opportunity to meet new people and start making those connections needed in university, along with learning your way around the school along with some advice from students and faculty members. Overall an incredible experience.

Head start was a wonderful experience for me and I think the only thing that could be added to improve the program is to add more game-based sessions so that students get the opportunity to meet more first years.

In future, we will continue to work with our partners on campus to better estimate the number of students who intend to participate in Head Start and work to expand programming that currently has caps on enrolment.

2) *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 only offered in support of courses in which there is active collaboration between the course instructor and the RGASC.
- FSGs target historically difficult courses rather “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 volunteer or 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 facilitator 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

1) Initial training

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

- I. 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 TA acts in the role of a "content expert" in a course, the facilitator learns to see her/himself as a "course expert", with meta-cognitive awareness of how to be successful in a course.
- II. 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.
- III. 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.

2) In-service training

In-service training is offered once per term, and each session is one hour. The objectives of the in-service training are:

- I. To correct misconceptions about Supplemental Instruction for facilitators. While facilitators have received their initial training, applying Supplemental Instruction techniques in practice can be challenging. The in-service training

is an opportunity for facilitators to reflect upon the challenges they have faced, the actions they took, and how they can improve moving forwards.

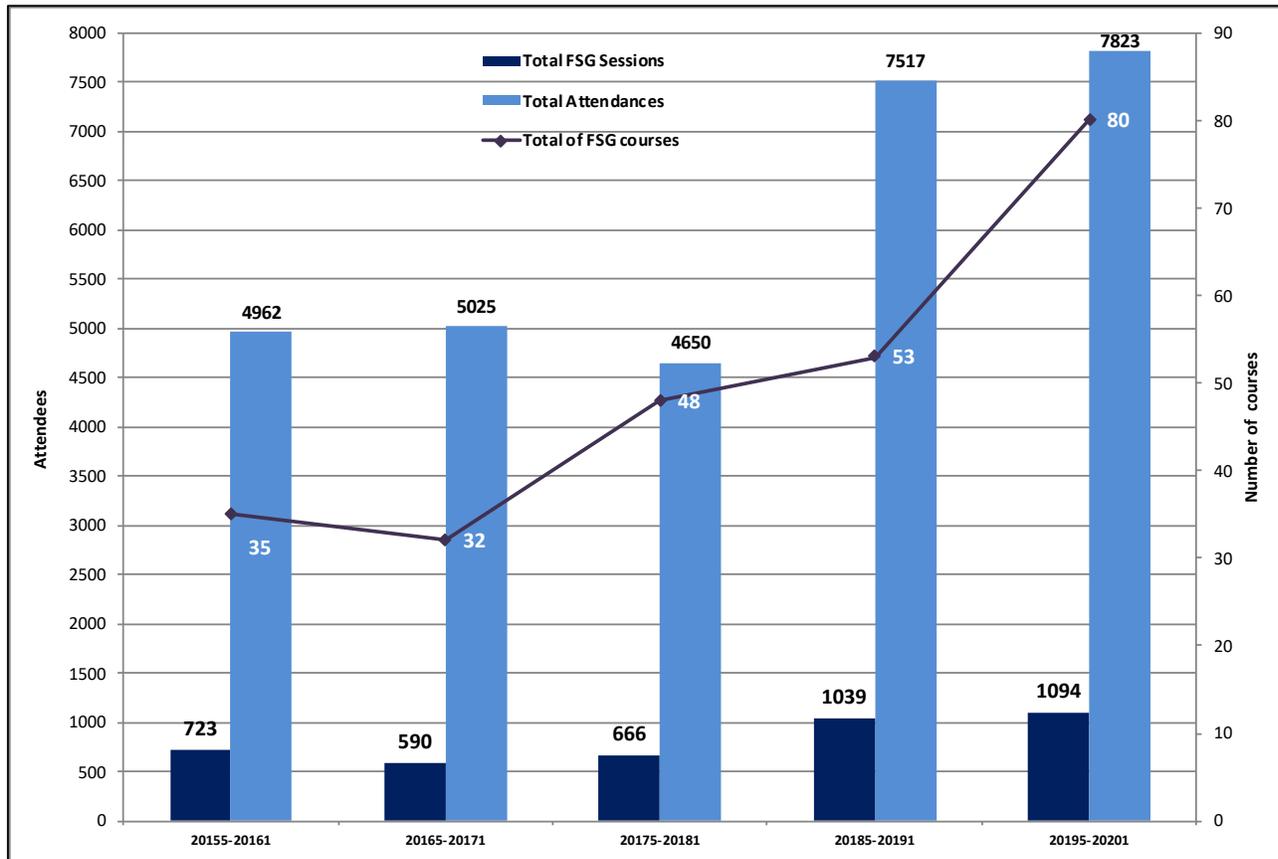
- II. To develop additional strategies to implement Supplemental Instruction techniques. Based on the facilitator experiences, the Supplemental Instruction techniques are re-visited and their application is discussed.
- III. To share best practices for Supplemental Instruction. Facilitators and Program Assistants share best practices in leading FSGs and working with students (Supplemental Instruction techniques, overcoming challenges with students, engaging activities, advertising strategies, etc.).
- IV. To collect qualitative data based on facilitator experience to improve training processes. Facilitators are surveyed by the Program Assistants on their current experiences with leading sessions and communicating with the RGASC (resources, use of Quercus, suggestions for improvement, etc.).

All in-service training takes place over a one to two-week period in the middle of the term, with multiple sessions occurring throughout the day. The emphasis on generic training meant that the program was not dependent upon specific Program Assistant availability.

Program Results

In 2019/2020, there were **7,823 total attendances** at Facilitated Study Groups for **1,094 FSG sessions** in **80 courses**. Included in this total are 91 attendances in FSG sessions within Living Learning Communities within two programs (Residence PALs and LLCs, and Language Conversation Circles within the International Education Centre, and Italian, French and Spanish Conversation Circles within the Department of Language Studies). As Chart 10 below demonstrates, this is a slight increase over last year, and a significant increase over previous years.

Chart 10: FSG Aggregate Summer 2015 – Winter 2020



The number of Facilitators for 2019/2020 was **294 (+15 PALs in the Residence)**, compared to 277 Facilitators in 2018/2019, and 176 in 2017/2018. The following courses participated in the FSG Program in 2019/2020.

Table 24: FSG-Supported Courses

ANT101	CHI103/104	CHM242 (Fall/Winter)	CHM243 (Summer /Winter)	FSL105	LIN101	MAT 135	PSY270
ANT102	CHI 203/204	CHM243 (Summer)	ENG102	FSL106	LIN102	MGT120 (Fall/ Winter)	PSY 346
BIO152	CHM110 (Fall/Winter)	CHM211	PSY210	GGR214	MAT102 (Fall/ Winter)	PHY 136	RLG101 (Fall/Winter)
BIO153	CHM120 (Winter/ Summer)	CSC148	ENV100	ITA100	MAT 132 (Fall/Winter)	PHY 137	PHY 147
BIO207 (Winter/ Summer)	CHM211	ECO100	ERS101	ITA200	MAT133	PSY 100	SOC 100 (Fall/Winter)

BIO210	BIO 202	BIO 200	GGR 214	MAT136	MAT134	PSY 290 (Fall/ Winter)	SPA 100
BIO200	WGS 101	ECO 220 (Summer/ Fall/Winter)	ERS111	FRE272	FRE383	CCT 419	SPA 220
FSL 206	FSL 305		ERS111	ELCC	FLCC	SLCC	ILCC

Maintaining a Sustained Growth in the FSG Program

The program results from 2019/2020 represent a steady increase in the growth of the FSG program, despite the disruption caused in mid-March by the sudden transition to an online environment.

The FSG program continued to focus on introducing greater efficiencies within the program through improvements to the Facilitator training process, the increased effectiveness of the Quercus Learning Management System and a focus on scheduling FSG sessions only during optimal times during the week. However, there are two main factors that would account for the increase in participation:

- 1) A shift of the FSG program to base funding early on during the fiscal year 2018/2019, which has continued to allow the program to recruit, hire and train a cadre of Program Assistants at earlier stage in the new academic year. This funding shift has allowed the program to essentially create its training and administrative infrastructure by July, well before the start of the Fall term. Facilitators can be trained, FSG sessions can be scheduled, and the program can be advertised to incoming first-year students well before the start of classes, resulting in a high level of attendance in the first several weeks of classes. For 2019/2020, this high attendance level was maintained throughout the entire 2019/2020 Fall/Winter session (up until the March 13 disruption).
- 2) A concerted attempt by the RGASC Front Office to develop a comprehensive and sustained advertising campaign before and during the academic year that highlights the FSG program. This involved targeted marketing during Head Start and Orientation, the expanded use of social media, and continued exposure throughout the year with multiple weekly pop-up tabling events across the campus.

These two factors not only continued to propel the FSG attendance numbers in 2019/2020, but sustained the exposure of the program through the entire academic year. If not for the

mid-March disruption, the program would have been on track to produce the best attendance in the program's 16-year history. The benchmark for the program has always been 2006/2007, with a total FSG attendance of 7942 total attendances in 834 sessions, whereas the attendance in the FSG program by mid-March of the 2019/2020 academic year already stood at 6,996 attendances in 1,067 sessions. After a hiatus of approximately two weeks, the FSG program was able to convert 13 of its course-related FSGs to an online format, and managed to generate 827 additional attendances in 27 online FSG sessions by the end of the academic year.

Several modifications have been made to the FSG operations that should facilitate and sustain this recent burst in program growth.

Program Assistant Recruiting and Hiring

Because of the earlier hiring cycle, Program Assistants are now assigned early during the summer to manage their Facilitators by "course clusters", and they work closely with their fellow PAs to liaise with course instructors, monitor FSG sessions and generate documentation of the FSG sessions in the form of session plans, session maps and attendance.

Adoption of Microsoft Teams

Microsoft TEAMS was implemented in 2017/2018 as a tool for the Program Assistant cadre to facilitate information sharing and collaboration on shared documents, and the generation and sharing of files to more easily track attendance, session mapping, etc. TEAMS facilitates a greater level of communication and coordination between Program Assistants, as the PAs can see updates in real time on their phones. This has resulted in issues being resolved faster, as communication is open to the whole team. Since 2018, its use has been greatly expanded as the primary tool for communication among the PA cadre.

Quercus

Quercus has allowed the FSG program to set up separate "sandboxes" to house different types of Facilitators. This use of Quercus served as a model for the EDS325 course – that is, the course-based Facilitators were attached to the EDS sandbox, in addition to the sandbox for all Facilitators. As well, Quercus is used as a hub for Supplemental Instruction Resources, collaboration to share best practices, and as the central location for submitting reflections and session plans.

In addition, Quercus has allowed for the collection of facilitator data (attendance, session plans, and reflections), and allowed Facilitators to receive feedback on a more regular basis. Quercus has allowed us to define expectations for session plans and reflections, and

to emphasize connections to professional development. In addition, grading schemes and success criteria for Facilitator portfolios can be supplemented with examples of Facilitator submissions of different qualities to highlight program expectations. Training on how to use Quercus and suggestions for best practices were also integrated into the Program Assistant training.

The shift to Quercus has also allowed the PAs to more closely monitor Facilitator engagement, and to alert the Program Manager and Program Strategist so that they can address potential problems within the Facilitator course clusters, or within a particular FSG session. There was also a renewed focus on attendance tracking, as it allowed us to better spot and address gaps in attendance submissions and make appropriate corrections to the FSG schedule in a timely manner.

Training

The initial Facilitator training has been continually modified to increase its efficacy and efficiency. Starting in 2018/2019, the training plan was radically revised to focus on expanding the breadth of the initial training to increase the number of facilitating techniques that could be applied in practice. Role-play scenarios were used to illustrate difficult situations to encourage problem solving and re-direction to resources. On-line training modules were used to introduce the basic conceptual and pedagogical elements (wait time, redirect, check for understanding, etc.) of Supplemental Instruction, strategies for managing sexual violence and mental health issues, and techniques for working with at-risk students. In addition to better equipping Facilitators for challenging situations through the sexual violence and mental health training, covering the basic pedagogical components online allowed the trainers more time to emphasize skill building in the training sessions. The experiences of Program Assistants and Senior Facilitators were also incorporated into the training to highlight challenges they have observed in order to share best practices for overcoming these difficulties. In 2019/2020, initial FSG training was only offered at specific times (e.g., before each semester, during Reading Week), leading to greater numbers of Facilitators at each session and encouraging more collaboration and sharing of ideas.

Session Maps

A critical tool in managing the growth of the FSG program is the continual generation of session maps to document FSG sessions throughout the academic year. These observations combined with the visual and verbal feedback the session maps provide allows the Program Assistant to almost instantly correct misconceptions with Supplemental Instruction (e.g., teaching vs. facilitating) and to support real-time challenges (e.g., sexual harassment, mental health issues). The session maps can serve as discussion pieces for professional development and improving Supplemental Instruction practices. During 2019/2020, session

maps were closely integrated into both initial and in-service training as a means of both modelling and discussing best practices for Supplemental Instruction. In addition, Quercus provides tools for tracking facilitator mapping alongside the tracking of attendance, session plan submissions and reflection submissions.

Program Assistant Manual

Although a PA manual has been available for the training and guidance of Program Assistants since 2013, the manual was greatly expanded during 2019/2020 to incorporate new material on the monitoring and mapping of FSG sessions, monthly and end-of-year reports, in-service training, e-Portfolios, attendance tracking (both students and Facilitators), sample Facilitator feedback for the PA for FSG sessions and reflections, and sample materials for the online pre-training modules and the in-person training sessions. The Manual currently stands at 83 pages, but material will still have to be added to address various the aspects and issues of adapting FSGs to an online environment.

Partnership with Experiential Learning Faculty Liaison

In 2019/2020, the FSG program collaborated with the RGASC's Experiential Learning Faculty Liaison in an effort to explore new ways to encourage Facilitators to give more priority to their professional development. The EL Faculty Liaison worked with program staff to train Facilitators in reflective writing. An online portfolio development model was introduced into the In-Service Training process, followed by in-person workshops, as a precursor to the ongoing development of an e-Portfolio within the FSG Quercus shell. The FSG PA program manual and the FSG Quercus shell has already incorporated sample reflections, session plans and session maps as examples of the building blocks of an effective e-Portfolio.

Improvements in FSG Program Reporting Format

In partnership with the Office of the Registrar, improvements were made to the way data is collected for the FSG program to allow us to identify three different modes of studying in students' academic lives:

- I. an "embedded" mode of study – that is, a study routine that is integrated within learning community-based programming
- II. a "distributed practice" mode of study – that is, a study routine spread evenly across the term
- III. a "just-in-time" mode of study – that is, a study routine concentrated in the days just before an exam

For 2020/2021, this collaboration with the Office of the Registrar will continue, focussing on an additional section of the FSG database that will reflect a “learning community” mode of study – that is, a study routine built along social or disciplinary lines.

Outreach and Program Support

The FSG program continued to expand its model of academic support beyond the FSG program to a number of different areas: 1) Residence Peer Academic Leader (PAL) program; 2) Academic Societies, Exam Jam, and Living Learning Communities in the Residence; 3) the International Education Centre; and 4) the LAUNCH program. The RGASC continued to provide Facilitator training and FSG academic support for the Peer Academic Leaders in the Residence, with one day devoted to facilitator training for the 15 Residence PALs in August 2019. The PALs also supported and advertised RGASC FSG sessions. During 2019/2020, the RGASC trained members from three academic Societies, the UTM Anthropology Society, the Erindale Biology Society, and the J. Tuzo Wilson Geology Club, to deliver FSGs within several first-year ANT, BIO and ERS courses. The RGASC and the Centre for Student Engagement have also continued to work closely in planning for the end of term Exam Jam. This resulted in an increase in the number of FSG sessions (for the Fall term) that could be integrated into the wider Exam Jam advertising. It also led to the sessions being scheduled into rooms that were closer to other events and rooms which were more conducive to high quality facilitation. During the 2019 Fall term, the fourth week of the LAUNCH program was co-facilitated by RGASC Facilitators and the LAUNCH Leaders. The RGASC provided support in the form of one Program Assistant and 37 Facilitators in the 22 LAUNCH sessions, all of which were conducted in the RGASC conference room.

FSG Program Projects for 2020/2021

The unprecedented disruption caused by the urgent need to shift the FSG program to an online environment has completely changed the complexion of the future of FSG program delivery. The priority for the 2020/2021 academic year is the complete and permanent replacement of the current FSG program model with one that will be specifically designed for online (as well as hybrid in-person/online) delivery. This will involve:

- extensive testing of the Quercus Bb Collaborate Ultra platform and any additional pedagogical resources;
- determining the criteria for maintaining an **effective** (compared to the previous in-person model) level of facilitation for FSGs in an online environment;
- providing demonstration sessions, a survey of recent literature, and FAQs in order to establish the validity of an online SI model and to persuade faculty who are unsure about whether to continue their partnership with the FSG program;

- developing new methods for monitoring and providing feedback of FSGs to ensure quality control;
- developing new faculty liaison methods with instructors, as well as new in-service training and liaison methods with Facilitators in order to provide ongoing modifications in the development of this new model of FSG delivery;
- developing and delivering a Facilitator training plan adapted to the online environment;
- developing new methods for documenting and supporting the professional development of Facilitators
- realigning the FSG program to maintain effective support of the EDS325 course
- Revising the Program Assistant Manual to incorporate new procedures and best practices for conducting the FSG program in an online environment.
- Developing new methods for collecting attendance for online FSGs that are in line with current FIPPA guidelines

3) 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).

The PASS Program comprises a seven-week course (non-credit-bearing) in one term followed by individualized 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).
- An hour-long PASS Facilitated Study Group providing students with an opportunity to practice the skills introduced in the preceding class.
- Two reflective writing exercises.

In addition, all PASS participants are required to attend both an intake and exit interview. The exit interview includes a one-on-one consultation with a writing instructor to discuss their post-PASS writing assessment.

Enrolment and Completion Data

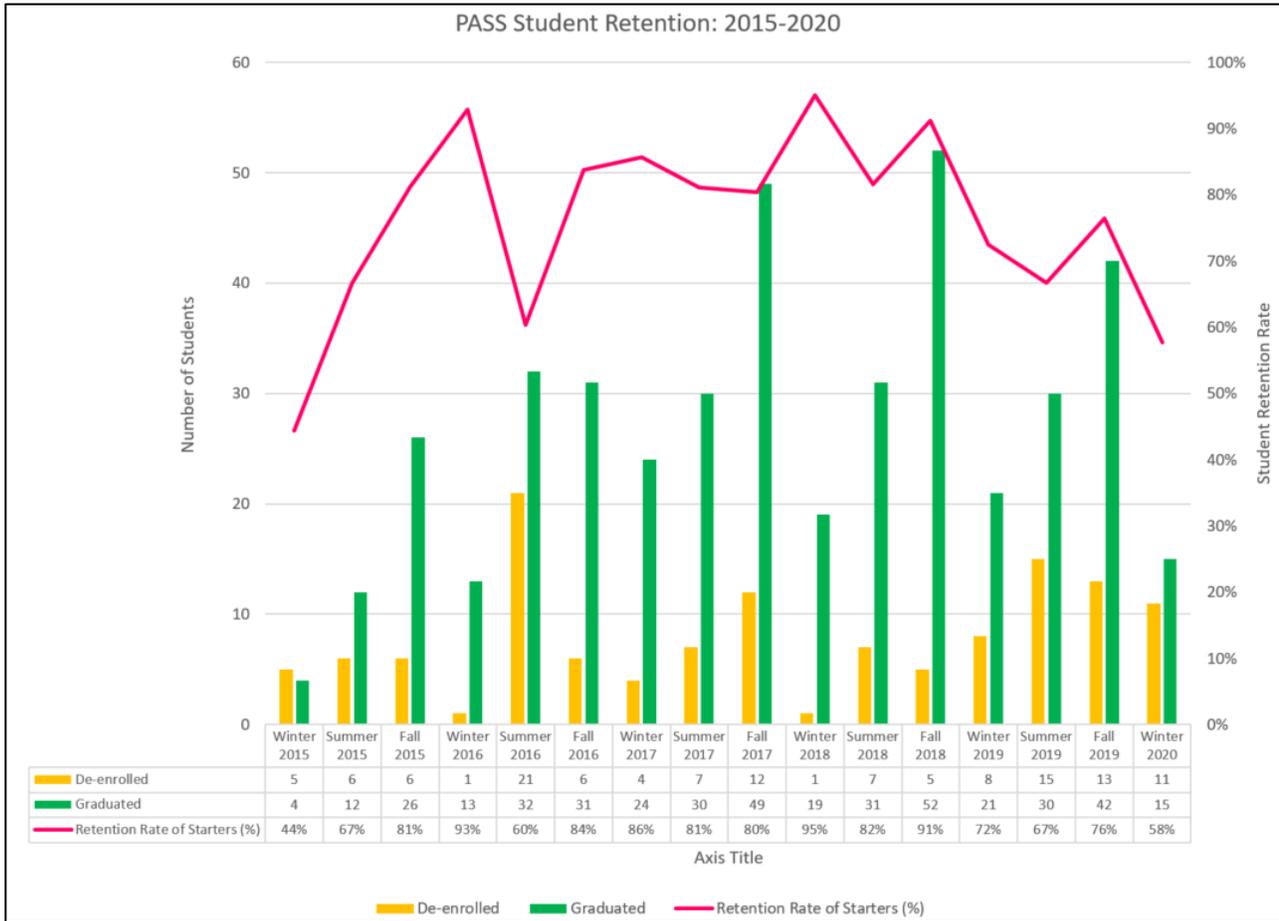
PASS has run 16 times, and the data generated by the PASS program is sufficiently large that the program can be measured for its effectiveness, both quantitatively and qualitatively. One metric used to assess PASS is to compare it with the Bounce Back Retention Program (BBRP) at San Diego State University, on which the PASS program is modelled. The 2011 report on the BBRP compared three groups of students among its at-risk population: students who had graduated from the BBRP; students who had started the BBRP, but failed to complete the program; and students who were invited to join the BBRP, but did not take part in the program. While for BBRP, 65% of students who started the course completed it, for the sixteen versions of PASS, the average completion rate is 77%. In 2019/20, the PASS Program was offered three times (summer, fall, and winter), with a total of 129 students enrolled and 88 completing the program, leading to a 69% completion rate for the current academic year, compared to 85% in 2018-19.

The Office of the Registrar also considers the completion of the PASS program when assessing whether a student's suspension status should be lifted. In 2019/2020, following referrals by the Office of the Registrar, 19 students with a conditional suspension lift were enrolled in PASS, 14 of whom successfully completed the program.

Table 25: PASS Completion Rates (2018/2019 and 2019/2020)

	Students Enrolled	Students Completed	Retention Rate
Summer 2018	38	31	82%
Fall 2018	57	52	91%
Winter 2019	28	21	71%
Summer 2019	45	30	67%
Fall 2019	55	42	76%
*Winter 2020	26	15	58%
<i>*PASS was suspended at the end of Week 5 on March 16th, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Weeks 6 and 7 were completed online.</i>			

Chart 11: PASS Student Retention: 2015 to 2020



Changes to the PASS Program in 2019/2020

As a result of the closure of the university in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the PASS program was suspended at the end of the Week Five classes. The decision was made to convert the content from Weeks Six and Seven into an online format so the program could be completed by the end of the term. Both weeks would typically include live presentations from guest speakers, which meant that significant changes were required, as scheduling online presentations was too challenging when considering the time remaining before the end of the term.

The Week 6 session, which focuses on the writing process, was adapted to include three scaffolded exercises based on published research on pandemics. Each exercise was released in stages and a Writing Specialist who created the exercises provided written feedback on each submission on Quercus. In addition to the individualized written feedback, students were also able to attend online drop-in sessions with the Writing Specialist where they could receive additional insight into how the exercises were graded, and they could ask questions about upcoming assignments. While the exercises created for the modified Week

Six modules were new, each focused on the skills and concepts that would have been discussed in the live Week 6 session had it taken place.

Week Seven of PASS usually includes a presentation from staff from the Career Centre, Office of the Registrar, and the Health and Counselling Centre. Each of these campus partners were asked for copies of the presentation they had planned to deliver, along with any related materials. PASS staff then used the content to create a series of reflective questions for students to submit as assignments.

At the end of the PASS program, all students who have attended all the sessions and submitted all of the assignments are invited for an exit interview with the Program Strategist and the Writing Specialist. In the interview with the Program Strategist, students discuss their experience of the PASS program and review their goals for themselves. In the meeting with the Writing Specialist, students would typically get additional feedback on their post-PASS writing assessment, which would take place at the end of the Week Seven session. Due to the Week Seven session being delivered online, it was decided that a writing assessment should not take place and instead that the writing component of the exit interview would focus on the three Week Six writing exercises that the students completed. Both parts of the exit interview were scheduled on Quercus and all 15 of the booked interviews were successfully conducted online using Zoom.

While it is not possible to draw a firm causal relationship between COVID-19 and attendance, it is worth noting that since the start of the PASS program in the Winter term of 2015, the average student retention for the Winter term of PASS was 78%. For the Winter term in 2020, the retention rate was just 58%.

New Numeracy Session

In the Summer 2019 term of PASS, a seventh week of PASS was added which focused on critical thinking through numeracy. The session was created in collaboration with the RGASC's Numeracy Specialist and a numeracy Program Assistant, who was primarily responsible for leading the in-class activities. Critical thinking has always been a part of the PASS curriculum, but comments from students in math- and science-based programs led PASS staff to believe that the program would be improved by a focus on the development of skills for interpreting quantitative information to problem solve and make informed decisions. The numeracy session was placed in Week Four of PASS and was run in all three terms. In addition to the continued development of the session activities, in 2020/2021, PASS staff aim to increase the volume of math- and science-based examples used throughout the PASS program.

Demerit Points

At the end of the Fall 2019 term, PASS staff and Program Assistants noted that there was an increasing number of students who had multiple outstanding assignments at the end of the PASS program. Students were also attending the exit interview without having completed all their work, which meant the exit interviews had to be rescheduled at short notice. In response to this trend, it was decided that all students would be required to meet all assignment deadlines and attend every class in order to remain in the PASS program. Concerns were also raised in regard to the persistent use of mobile devices in class and the late arrival to sessions by students. In response to these concerns, a demerit point system was implemented where students would be removed from the PASS program if they accumulated four demerit points. Demerit points could be given by PASS instructors for being more than 30 minutes late to a class, having outstanding work at one of three assignment check-in deadlines in Weeks Three, Five, and Seven, and for persistent use of mobile devices during class. The demerit point system was explained to students in the Week One session, and outlined in the PASS syllabus.

In the Winter 2020 term, no students were removed from the program for demerit points, but PASS instructors and Program Assistants did note that more students were up-to-date with their assignments by Week Five than had typically been the case in previous terms. Once PASS was suspended at the end of Week Five, the demerit point system was also suspended so it is difficult to fully assess the impact its implementation had. The plan is to continue with the demerit point system in 2020/2021 as it is felt that the formalized monitoring of student submissions provides additional mentoring opportunities by the Program Assistants and reinforces the principle of distributed practice that is discussed throughout PASS.

PASS Term Two

In 2019/2020 the RGASC received confirmation of funding for a second term of PASS, with the first classes launching in 2020/2021. Studies of the Bounce Back Retention Program (San Diego State University) indicate that follow-up activities such as “PASS Term Two” contribute to improved grade point average (GPA) and persistence to graduation. The additional term of PASS aims to provide continued support and skill development to students who remain on academic probation or suspension after the completion of the current version of PASS. The new term will build on the curriculum of term one with additional focus on numeracy and the application of positive study skills. PASS Term Two will also provide additional professional development opportunities for the PASS Program Assistants who will be taking a more prominent role in leading the sessions.

Referrals

The PASS program currently receives informal referrals from a range of campus partners including Accessibility Services; Student Housing & Residence Life; the Office of the Registrar; Recreation, Athletics & Wellness; and the Academic, Culture, & English (ACE) program. In 2020/2021 the RGASC will more proactively track how students are being connected with the PASS program by including a related question on the intake consent form. Developing a clearer awareness of how and from whom students are finding out about the PASS program can help PASS staff to better target communications about the PASS program to campus partners. Next year clearer and earlier communication online and directly to our campus partners of PASS registration and session dates will be a further priority so as many students as possible are made aware of PASS.

Data Analysis on the Impact of PASS on Academic Performance

Previous assessment of the PASS program has focused on the impact completion of the program has on students' annual grade point averages (AGPA). For example, a study in 2018 compared the pre-PASS and post-PASS AGPAs for three cohorts of students (those who had completed PASS, those who partially completed PASS, and those who registered, but did not attend any PASS sessions) and found that the AGPA of all three increased after PASS. In 2020/2021, two graduate students from OISE will be working with the PASS staff to further analyze both quantitative and qualitative data from the PASS program as part of their post-graduate work.

COVID-19 and Future Directions

While COVID-19 caused significant disruption to the end of the Winter 2020 term, the need to move some aspects of the program online presented some new opportunities to improve program efficiency and support. The online drop-in sessions offered on Blackboard Collaborate to support students working on the Week Six writing exercises provided an effective way to provide general writing feedback to multiple students at the same time. Students who attended the drop-ins communicated that they were helpful in providing further direction to their writing, and so providing a similar, optional drop-in session when students are working on writing assignments will be considered.

Before the suspension of PASS in mid-March, the instructors and Program Assistants were discussing ways to increase contact with students, and student drop-ins were highlighted as a favourable option. As the Blackboard Collaborate writing sessions worked well, similar Program Assistant online drop-ins will be offered each week for students to be able to ask questions about upcoming assignments or to receive general mentoring support. While

students can ask questions and receive additional help during and at the end of PASS classes, program staff feel that having these additional points of online contact each week could help the program to improve retention numbers, which decreased in all three terms in 2019/2020.

The decrease in student retention coincided with the increase in the number of PASS sessions from six to seven. This decrease in retention may be a result of students having to commit to a further week of attendance and more assignments than ever before. Providing more opportunities for students to connect with PASS staff and Program Assistants may, therefore, be useful in helping to maintain student focus and commitment.

4) Program for Accessing Research Training (PART)

PART is a research training program designed to prepare UTM students for possible participation in research opportunities on campus and provide students with the opportunity to acquire foundational skills needed for graduate studies. PART currently includes thirteen distinct training modules and a separate module on preparing for an ROP. Modules are categorized into three types of research methods: Core, Quantitative, and Qualitative. Each training module comprises of four hours of classroom instruction and a homework exercise or assessment. Classroom instruction includes both conceptual discussion and hands-on practice of research methods.

In the summer of 2019, the RGASC's Graduate Student Support Strategist (GSSS) assumed responsibility for the PART program. The decision was made to add PART to the GSSS portfolio because most modules are taught by graduate students and so the program provides a valuable professional development opportunity for UTM-based graduate students.

PART modules were offered once a week throughout the Fall and Winter terms. Additionally, based on discussions with the PART Advisory Committee, the RGASC piloted offering Core modules during the Fall reading week and the most popular modules during the Winter reading week as a way to increase student attendance. Due to COVID-19, the PART Summer Institute, a compressed format of the program during the last week of April and first week of May, was cancelled.

This year, PART had a total of 131 registrations and 81 attendances (excluding the reading week modules) for the Fall and Winter, whereas PART had a total of 188 registrations and 73 attendances for the same terms in 2018/2019. Though PART saw a decrease in the number of registrations, there was a slight increase in the number of actual participants.

The tables below show PART attendance during the Fall/Winter 2019/2020 and Fall and Winter reading weeks.

During the Summer 2019 semester, the PART Summer Institute had a total of 228 registrants and 247 attendances, a significant decline in participation from the Summer 2018 semester which saw a total of 345 registrants and 466 attendees.

Table 26: PART Attendance 2018-2020

<i>Module</i>	<i>Summer 2019</i>		<i>Fall/Winter 2019/2020</i>	
	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review	38	58	8	5
Conducting Archival Research	N/A	N/A	12	*
Conducting Interviews	14	7	6	2
Conducting Literature Searches	38	53	8	10
Data Analysis	27	18	14	7
Lab Protocols	14	10	13	6
Leading a Focus Group	6	10	11	8
Research Design in Humanities	4	4	6	5
Research Design in Sciences	17	12	6	4
Research Design in Social Sciences	9	3	1	0
Research Ethics	28	26	18	12
Statistics	26	36	16	13
Transcribing and Coding	7	10	12	9

N/A – Session not offered

* - Cancelled due to COVID-19

Table 27: PART Fall 2019 Reading Week Attendance

<i>Module</i>	<i>Fall 2019 Reading Week</i>	
	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review	9	12

Conducting Literature Searches	9	12
Research Ethics	9	7

Table 28: PART Winter 2020 Reading Week Attendance

<i>Module</i>	<i>Winter 2020 Reading Week</i>	
	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>
Data Analysis	13	10
Research Design in the Sciences	12	7
Statistics	9	6

Students who complete all three Core modules, at least two of the Quantitative or Qualitative modules, and a Reflective Writing Exercise receive a CCR annotation as either a Qualitative Methods or Quantitative Methods PART participant. Table 29 presents the CCR data for Summer 2019.

Table 29: Summer 2019 PART Summer Institute CCR Status

<i>Stream</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Qualitative	10
Quantitative	14
Total	24*

* - 4 students completed both streams

Over the past five years, PART has not seen a steady increase or decrease of attendants during the Fall/Winter term or the PART Summer Institute. That said, we would like to improve upon the most recent attendance numbers. Table 30 below shows PART attendance from 2015 – 2020. At the program level, a dramatic increase in attendance can be seen in the Fall/Winter 2016/17, 2017/18, and Summer 2018, relative to the term. Additionally, participation rates in the PART Summer Institutes have been much higher in comparison to PART modules facilitated during the Fall/Winter terms. The higher number of participants may be due to a number of factors, including but not limited to the Summer Institute’s schedule coinciding with UTM’s Research Opportunity Program or students’ availability to attend program modules. At the module level, Core modules have the highest attendance while modules such as Research Design in the Social Sciences and Research Design in the Humanities have not gained the same level of interest.

Module	Fall/Winter 2015/16		Fall Winter 2016/17		Fall/Winter 2017/18		Fall/Winter 2018/19		Fall/Winter 2019/2020		Total Module Attendance
	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	
Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review¹	42	9	45	30	42	23	13	11	8	5	78
Conducting Archival Research	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16	4	15	3	12	N/A	11
Conducting Interviews	19	12	46	5	16	9	13	1	6	2	29
Conducting Literature Searches	21	5	44	29	41	21	12	11	8	10	76
Data Analysis²	22	3	44	11	19	15	20	5	14	7	41
Lab Protocols	24	7	42	10	39	18	7	2	13	6	43
Leading a Focus Group	21	8	46	8	15	9	21	2	11	8	35
Research Design in Humanities³	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	2	6	5	7
Research Design in Sciences⁴	N/A	N/A	38	15	45	15	14	5	6	4	39
Research Design in Social Sciences⁵	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8	0	1	0	0
Research Ethics	23	12	61	36	50	31	23	23	18	12	114
Statistics	29	9	48	11	21	15	18	3	16	13	51
Transcribing and Coding¹	48	10	42	8	10	3	19	5	12	9	35
# of Students Awarded CCR	N/A		7		7		4		8		
Total # of Students Registered and Attended	249	75	504	167	321	163	192	73	131	81	

Table 30: PART Fall/Winter Attendance 2015-2020

- 1 Separate modules in 2015/16
- 2 Module previously called Data Management in 2015/16
- 3 Module added in Fall 2018
- 4 Module previously called Experimental Design before Fall 2017
- 5 Module added in Summer 2018

Table 31: PART Summer Institute Attendance 2016-2020

¹ Separate modules in 2015/16

<i>Module</i>	<i>Summer 2016</i>		<i>Summer 2017</i>		<i>Summer 2018</i>		<i>Summer 2019</i>		<i>Summer 2020</i>		<i>Total Module Attendance</i>
	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	<i>Registered</i>	<i>Attended</i>	
Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review¹	41	35	26	21	44	82	38	58	Cancelled due to COVID-19		196
Conducting Archival Research	N/A	N/A	11	7	12	4	N/A	N/A			11
Conducting Interviews	10	8	16	3	24	37	14	7			55
Conducting Literature Searches	46	33	24	20	42	75	38	53			181
Data Analysis²	24	22	23	15	29	40	27	18			95
Lab Protocols	18	15	19	7	32	41	14	10			73
Leading a Focus Group	13	9	13	9	11	12	6	10			40
Research Design in Humanities³	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	4			4
Research Design in Sciences⁴	26	18	23	15	39	65	17	12			110
Research Design in Social Sciences⁵	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13	4	9	3			7
Research Ethics	38	35	25	21	48	47	28	26			129
Statistics	24	22	23	15	29	40	27	18			112
Transcribing and Coding¹	14	10	15	7	17	13	7	10			40
# of Students Awarded CCR	27		7		19		24		N/A		
Total # of Students Registered and Attended	254	207	212	133	345	466	228	247	N/A		

² Module previously called Data Management in 2015/16

³ Module added in Fall 2018

⁴ Module previously called Experimental Design before Fall 2017

⁵ Module added in Summer 2018

PART Participant Feedback

A total of 12 students provided feedback on the PART Program. The feedback survey was distributed during the early days of the university closure due to COVID-19 which may have resulted in the low response rate.

In general, participants' perceptions of the program were very positive. All 12 survey respondents were either slightly satisfied or extremely satisfied with the PART module they attended. Additionally, the majority of survey respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the module they attended was intellectually stimulating (92%), provided a deeper understanding of the topic (100%), and provided an opportunity for "hands-on" experience in terms of research, case studies, or real-world situations (83%).

The survey also asked respondents about the strengths and weaknesses of the module they attended. The respondents identified the module's content, the level of interactivity, the small group of students, and the instructor as strengths. The main weakness reported was insufficient time.

Future Directions

As participation rates for PART continue to be disappointing, the RGASC will be doing an in-depth review of all the feedback provided by undergraduate students who have participated in PART over the past several years. The RGASC has also reached out to PART instructors and ROP faculty for their insight to improve PART. With the collected feedback, the RGASC will present the key findings and provide suggestions on how PART should move forward at the next PART Advisory Committee meeting.

Another topic that will be addressed over the summer term is how PART modules can be shifted to an online environment.

Part Four: Course Teaching

At present, the RGASC does not offer its own credit-bearing courses. The RGASC has, however, been involved in the development and delivery of two courses:

- UTM118H: The Science of Learning
- EDS325H: Supplemental Instruction in Higher Education: The Impact of Peer Facilitated Study Groups

1) *UTM118H: The Science of Learning*

Since the 2017/2018 academic year, RGASC faculty have taught UTM118H: The Science of Learning, an experiential learning course offered as part of the utmONE program run by the Centre for Student Engagement. Like all utmONE courses, UTM118H is designed to support students' transition to university, provide students with a solid foundation for further success, and help students develop transferable academic skills such as critical thinking, note-taking, and critical writing. All utmONE classes are interdisciplinary, focussed on a different theme, and capped at 55 students.

The official course description of UTM118H reads as follows:

This interdisciplinary course encourages students to take ownership of their education through a focus on the process of learning how to learn and by cultivating the habits of mind for lifelong achievement and success. Student will explore theories of learning and research on the strategies students should employ to reach deep understanding. Science of Learning is designed to help students develop their critical thinking, university-level oral and written communication, critical reading, and other foundational academic skills. As part of this course students will participate in a series of tutorials that will introduce them to essential elements of a holistic student experience (such as career exploration, health and wellness, and co-curricular engagement).

The course learning outcomes for UTM118H are for students to be able to:

- Propose solutions to address academic challenges commonly faced by university students.
- Apply collaborative learning strategies and reflect on their usage.
- Identify and critically evaluate academic source material.
- Plan, write and revise academic texts in which ideas are informed and supported by appropriate sources.

- Use self-assessment and reflection as a tool to fuel academic success.

The focus of UTM118H is on active learning. Students spend the majority of their time in each class practicing the academic skills to which they are introduced through short lectures on peer-reviewed scholarship that defines specific skills and presents research demonstrating how and why specific approaches to skills development are effective.

In 2019/2020, the RGASC increased the number of sections of UTM118H from three to four (three sections in the Fall and one in the Winter). Each section was led by a different RGASC faculty member (Andie Burazin, Michael DeBraga, Tyler Evans-Tokaryk, and Michael Kaler), but many of the individual lectures (for example, on Note-Taking or Academic Writing or Problem-Solving) were taught by guest lecturers from the RGASC who are specialists in these areas. Enrolment ranged from 41 to 47 students per section with a total of 180 students completing the course in 2019/2020.

UTM118H continues to be a successful collaboration between the RGASC and the Centre for Student Engagement. We plan to offer four sections of the course again in 2020/2021, although the courses will likely move to the new EDU-A (the Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy) in July 2020 along with a staff member to support their delivery.

2) *EDS325H: Supplemental Instruction in Higher Education*

To the best of our knowledge, no university or college in Canada has offered a credit-bearing course in Supplemental Instruction (FSGs) running alongside a Supplemental Instruction (FSG) program. However, the FSG program's infrastructure in terms of scalability, sustainability and measurability make this type of course possible at UTM.

EDS325H has been designed to introduce students to the theory and practice of Supplemental Instruction (SI) in higher education. The course focuses on the history and evolution of SI, the rationale for its use, current research, and tools and resources that Facilitators need to run study groups. The course incorporates a mandatory internship component, through which each student is placed within the FSG program in the RGASC. Each student must go through an approval (vetting) process before being formally enrolled in the course.

Essentially, the RGASC FSG program provided the logistical infrastructure for the internship. This included extensive collaboration with the course instructor in:

- Recruitment of students for course enrollment
- Enrollment control (vetting of students) and placement of students in FSG-supported courses
- Program Assistant support of EDS325 placements according to discipline
- Initial and in-service training of each EDS325 student

- Enrollment of each EDS325 student in the FSG program Quercus shell
- Scheduling of FSG sessions for EDS325 students (room bookings, advertising, enrollment of the EDS325 student within the Quercus shell of the FSG-supported course)
- Monitoring, providing feedback, recording of attendance, and mapping (documenting) support for each EDS325 student's session. (Note, this process provides material for students' course portfolios.)
- Facilitating the EDS325 course instructor's observation of sessions
- Ongoing support for each EDS325 student's preparation of their FSG sessions
- Program Manager's participation in EDS325 lectures
- Program Manager and Program Strategist's participation in poster presentations
- Analysis of both the quantitative (attendance) and qualitative (feedback) data from each EDS325 student's FSG sessions
- Participation on the development of a marketing strategy for the course

Approximately 70 students were recruited for EDS325 with 51 students completing the course. All students were successfully placed as Facilitators within discipline-related courses. The increase in course enrollment between 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 (from 23 to 51) has resulted in the expansion of EDS325 to incorporate both a Fall and Winter term section. One beneficial aspect of the EDS course that had not been foreseen was how effective the course would prove in producing well-trained and motivated Program Assistants for the FSG program. For 2020/2021, the FSG program will consider enrollment in the EDS325 course as a pre-requisite for becoming a Program Assistant in the FSG program.

During 2019/2020, five additional students acted as Facilitators for the FSG program on a for-credit basis: two students/Facilitators doing a placement within LIN101/102, one student/Facilitator doing a placement within ITA100, one student/Facilitator doing a placement within CHI204, and one student/Facilitator doing a placement within FRE283.

Part Five: Collaborative Programming

This final section of the Report focuses on those collaborative initiatives that have not been addressed above. Here, we address the RGASC's increasingly important collaborations with Accessibility Services, work with multiple campus and community partners on Game-Enhanced Learning, and involvement with UTM's many different student organizations. Please note that other collaborative work has been identified in other sections of this Report if it falls within an individual faculty or staff member's portfolio.

1) Accessibility Services

One-on-One Learning Strategy Appointments

The RGASC offers support to students registered with Accessibility Services in the form of weekly one-on-one learning strategy appointments. Two full-time, permanent RGASC staff members offer this support, with the Program Strategist taking most appointments and the Program Manager providing additional coverage when needed. Appointments typically focus on helping the students to develop effective study skills and habits primarily through modelling. Common areas of focus include note-taking, reading comprehension, memory strategies, exam and test-taking techniques, and study planning.

In 2019/2020, the Program Strategist booked 169 hours of learning strategy appointments with Accessibility Services students, although due to cancellations and students failing to attend, only 91 hours of appointments were completed. In contrast, in 2018/2019, 190 hours of appointments were scheduled, and 94 hours of appointments were completed. The appointment utilization rate therefore increased from 49% in 2018-19 to 54% in 2019/2020.

The decrease in the total number of appointments in 2019/2020 may be explained by the university closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. In 2018/2019 there were 38 booked appointments in March and April, compared to just 16 in 2019/2020. Following the university closure, 5 online appointments were booked in March and April with Accessibility students, using the application Zoom and all 5 students attended their appointments.

Accessibility Services On-Demand Workshops

In 2018/2019, RGASC writing instructors collaborated with Accessibility Services to design and deliver two workshops on time-management and test-taking skills, with 24 students registered with Accessibility Services attending. In 2019/2020, the writing instructor-led sessions were replaced by sessions created by the Program Strategist who offers one-on-one student appointments. This decision was made to provide another

opportunity for students to receive targeted learning strategist support and to build a consistent sense of community through regular sessions. Registration averaged above 10 students per session; however, these numbers did not convert into attendance as only 11 students attended the 3 sessions on time management, note-taking, and reading comprehension. One explanation for the low attendance in 2019-20 could be the increase in the number Peer Mentor Learning Community (PMLC) events, which covered a variety of related study skills topics. In 2020/2021, the program strategist will work closely with the Accessibility Services Volunteer Coordinator to review the ongoing programming needs of the Accessibility population, while scheduling activities in a way that avoids content duplication.

Summer Academic Skills Institute

The Summer Academic Skills Institute (SASI) transition program aims to equip mainly incoming students registered with Accessibility Services with the academic skills and strategies to make a successful transition to postsecondary education. RGASC staff organized and delivered over 10 hours of programming over two days to 19 unique students along with the support of two faculty members, one librarian, one Accessibility Services staff member, two Accessibility Services advisors, and 14 peer mentors. In the subsequent student satisfaction survey, 82% of respondents said the sessions highlighted skills they believe will help them achieve university success, 71% said they would like additional programming like SASI, and 76% felt more confident about succeeding at university.

Accessibility Services Peer Mentor Learning Communities and Game Cafés

Following SASI in August 2018, the RGASC and Accessibility Services decided to work together to provide Accessibility students with a series of activities throughout the year to build on the skills developed in SASI. The agreed-upon initiative known as Peer Mentor Learning Communities (PMLCs) comprised of a series of peer-facilitated sessions on specific learning skills and game cafés to help build a sense of community among Accessibility students. It was agreed that peer mentors would lead the PMLC activities, and so a Program Assistant was jointly hired by the RGASC and Accessibility Services to train and supervise the peers. In 2018/2019, three learning skills sessions and one game café were run, whereas in 2019/2020, six learning skills sessions and five games cafés were run. Total attendance to the learning skills sessions was 40 in 2018/2019 and 120 in 2019/2020, with the number of unique students in attendance totaling 20 and 37 respectively.

This year, 93% of mentors participated in PMLC events, compared to just 24% in 2018/2019. The increase in mentor participation is likely to be related to two changes in 2019/2020; 1) it became mandatory for all mentors to receive PMLC training, so they were better equipped to lead sessions, and 2) Co-curricular Record (CCR) recognition was based on mentors completing a minimum number of hours of participation per term. 100% of

mentors said their experience benefitted their professional development and 83% of mentors said they plan to mentor again in 2020/2021.

In 2020/2021 it is likely that the Program Assistant role will be shared by two students so a wider variety of support hours can be offered to peer mentors. The training for peer mentors will also be extended to include more content on supplemental instruction (SI) as SI is viewed to be a key element of the learning process in the PMLC learning skills sessions. In 2019/20 attendance to the game cafés was not formally tracked using student numbers, at the request the Accessibility Service Volunteer Coordinator. A headcount was taken, however, and the average attendance for the five game café’s was 22 students. For 2020/2021, it has been agreed that attendance will be fully recorded so a clearer measure of student participation can be assessed

2) *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. This year, the RGASC worked with UTMSU to revise the way in which funding is delivered to UTM societies, clubs and associations who provide academic skills programming for their members. The result of this collaboration was the new “UTMSU Clubs and Associations Academic Skills Development Fund.”

The process by which this funding is allocated has been formalized to include the distribution of a Call for Proposals and a Committee (with representation from UTMSU, the RGASC, and CSE) that adjudicates proposals and evaluates final reports. Unfortunately, the Committee’s work has been disrupted by COVID-19. The Committee has not yet met to approve the final reports and a number of reports have not yet been submitted. The events included in the table below have received funding and support from the “UTMSU Clubs and Associations Academic Skills Development Fund”.

Table 32: RGASC Partnership with UTMSU Executive

<i>UTMSU Initiative</i>	<i>Description of Activity</i>
UTMSU Orientation Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skills Workshops and FSG training for Societies and Clubs • Collaboration with Clubs and Societies for tabling event
UTMSU Academic Advocacy Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate in distribution of UTMSU/RGASC “Six Essential Skills for Success” booklet

UTMSU De-stressor Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTMSU Club Collaboration De-stressor Event: Exam Preparation • Tabling to promote RGASC support
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Table 33: RGASC Partnership with UTMSU Academic Societies

<i>Academic Society Name</i>	<i>Description of Activity</i>
Undergraduate Commerce Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam de-stressor activities
Psychology Association of Undergrad Students of Erindale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exam de-stressor activities
With Caffeine & Careful Thought	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop: Journal Editing
The Society: Sociology and Criminology Undergraduate Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop: Journal Editing

Table 34: RGASC Partnerships with UTMSU Clubs and Associations

<i>Club / Association Name</i>	<i>Description of Activity</i>
UTM Scribes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for event – Writer’s Career Event which enables students to explore key skills in the job field and ask questions
UTM Against Dragons (UTMAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for networking and de-stressor initiative
Boss Women UTM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for event specific Indigenous Woman with a panel discussion
Tamil Students' Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support event providing information on Career paths for students interested in pursuing medicine after undergrad
Middle Eastern Students Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Film Festival with short films and panel discussions after the film is viewed
Free Tibet @ UTM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for meditation events throughout the fall and winter terms
UTM Psych Talks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for event re: mental health awareness
Cobra Muay Thai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to activities and events building awareness and self-defense skills
UTM Global Brigades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for event - Let's Talk: Being a Global Citizen - at UTM
Creatives for a Change Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for event - The Careers for Creativity, an event for aspiring creative students wanting to

	break into the creative industry open to all students across UTM
Erindale Gaming Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for networking and de-stressor initiative
UTM Anime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for networking and de-stressor initiative
UTM eSports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development and funding for de-stressor initiative
Erindale Chemical and Physical Science Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided support to science student focused “Student Success Event” with workshop and event support
J Tuzo Wilson Geology Club/ UTM Physics Club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development workshops and support event activities re: STEM SOS Event
Digital Enterprise Management Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support activities for the Young Entrepreneurs Conference and contribute to prizes for competition
Association of Palestinian Students (APS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support event hosting panelist discussing “Conversations About Colonization”
STEM SOS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly Writing Workshop
UTM Debating Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support debating activities and practice sessions taking place weekly on the UTM campus

3) *Game Enhanced Learning*

The use of board games as pedagogical tools has a wide range of benefits. Previous applications of this game-based approach consistently show that students acquire a deeper understanding of the core curriculum content, and that students experience an expansion in their motivation and level of engagement within the course. In addition, the application of games fosters the building of learning communities which can help to boost resilience. Several projects were launched during 2017/2018, and have continued throughout 2019/2020. The pedagogical and social benefits of these game-based projects are supported by four assumptions:

- Learning is collaborative.
- Learning is active and experiential.
- Learning is meta-cognitive.
- Learning proceeds through scaffolding.

GEL-related Activities (2019/2020)

In 2019/2020, efforts continued to build a scalable and sustainable capacity for GEL on the campus. This approach continues to focus on:

- building new partnerships through regular game-related events across the campus (as well as creating an institutional memory for game-related events) and to build a mentorship base that could act in the future as a resource for supporting GEL initiatives within courses.
- establishing a home site that would act as a “clearing-house” for coordinating game-related initiatives across the campus and at the same house a sufficiently large amount of game resources and literature on GEL.
- exploring a metric that would measure the effectiveness of game-related activities, which could also form the basis for future initiatives.
- working closely with faculty to expand GEL activities in UTM courses. For example, **CCT419** received ongoing support from the RGASC in 2019/2020 for playtesting and for assessment of its effectiveness. Similarly, this year, **Marc Laflamme’s** ongoing “Microcosm” game design project (which had already gone through several ROP iterations) has evolved into a **LEAF seed grant project** (in collaboration with two faculty from the St. George campus). This will move into its first stage of game design in 2020/2021 as they evaluate its potential application to a curriculum. Additionally, in 2019/2020, **JCB 487** worked with the RGASC to establish regular team-building exercises (using collaborative games) within the course curriculum.

Boardgame Café

To address the need to build capacity, a Boardgame Café was launched by the RGASC in 2018/2019 to foster student and faculty interest in GEL on campus. During 2018/2019, the Boardgame Café conducted 23 game-related events with 990 total attendees. In 2019/2020, **eleven general Game Cafés** were conducted, with **980 total attendees**:

- September 24th (CCIT Atrium 1 PM-4 PM): ~100 Attendees
- October 8th (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~110 Attendees
- October 22nd (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~100 Attendees
- November 4th (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~100 Attendees
- November 19th (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~80 Attendees
- December 3rd (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~90 Attendees
- December 5th (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~40 Attendees (Exam Jam Destressor)
- January 14th (Maanjiwe nendamowinan Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~60 Attendees
- January 28th (IB Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~90 Attendees
- February 11th (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~80 Attendees
- February 25th (CCIT Atrium 12 PM - 4 PM): ~100 Attendees

As well, **five Game Cafés** with **112 total attendees** were conducted during 2019/2020 for **Accessibility students:**

- September 15th : 16 Attendees
- November 1st: 27 Attendees
- December 4th : 10 Attendees
- January 22nd: 32 Attendees
- February 10: 27 Attendees

The Game Café has also supported several new student orientation events in collaboration with the Relationship Manager in the **Professional Development & Learning Centre (PDLC) in the Department of Management**. A total of eight events were held between October 19, 2019 and March 12, 2020 with attendance at each ranging from six to ten students.

The Game Café also supported **Residence events** such as Game Nights and Faculty Field Trips (which were also boardgame events) during the 2019 Fall term. A total of eight events were held between September 24, 2019 and November 29, 2019 with attendance at each ranging between ten and 15 (including Peer Academic Leaders and faculty).

Other boardgame events that were supported by the Game Café included the **ACE (Academic & Cultural English)** Program Game Night (November 29th) and **IMACC (International Mentoring in Academics & Canadian Culture;** January 28, 2020 and March 4, 2020). Average attendance at these events was **two to three students**.

Pizza was offered to those who attended the Game Café to incentivize participation. Over the course of the year, many of the people attending these events became regulars. During the year, the RGASC Game Café was also approached by several organizations and clubs wishing to co-sponsor or participate in the events. These included Hart House, Health & Counselling Centre, UTMSU, Erindale Gaming Organization, UTM Anime Club, UTM E-Sports Club, Club of Newcomers and Explorers of Canada & Toronto (CoNECT), Students Offering Support Club (SOS), Peer2Peer, UTM Chess Club, Math and Computational Sciences Club (MCSS), UTM Pre-Med Club, Accessibility Services Peer Mentor Program, and Community on Campus.

The involvement of each of these organizations at Game Café events in turn allowed the RGASC to further expand its gaming social network. At each event, a sign-up sheet was used, generating a list of students who were interested in being involved in the Cafés in a variety of ways, such as:

- helping to run the Boardgame Café;
- acting as “Playtesters” for Faculty-designed boardgames;
- testing out games with a potential application within a course curriculum;
- helping to run a game-based FSG; and
- facilitating RPG events within the Residence

These volunteer lists were used throughout the year and by the end of the year, the Game Cafés were regularly staffed by an average of six to ten volunteer game facilitators. The students on the lists were regularly notified about upcoming events through a social media platform called “Discord.” A number of these volunteers have acted as playtesters for different projects and provided support for the Residence PAL training in August, which has as its focus the use of game-related activities to build learning communities in the Residence.

To measure the social impact of these Boardgame Cafés, a short survey form was developed in 2019 and distributed at each event. Five questions were used to determine a demographic (i.e.: year of study; number of cafés attended; timing of the café attended; primary campus), and five questions were used to measure the social impact of the game café experience. Using a Likert scale of one to five, with one representing “Strongly Disagree” and five representing “Strongly Agree,” the results from this survey were as follows:

- “Playing games has increased my confidence in being social”: **3.88**
- “These events gave me opportunities to broaden my friend circle”: **3.86**
- “My Game Café experience helped me engage with new people”: **3.76**
- “My Game Café experiences encouraged me to go to more events on campus”: **3.78**
- “My Game Café experiences helped me to relax”: **4.3**

To provide regular updates, as well as to improve the social network involving students and staff interested in promoting Game Café events across the campus, a weekly Game Café newsletter was started in Fall 2019.

Game-Enhanced Learning Page on the RGASC Website

The primary purpose of the GEL page is to promote Game-Enhanced Learning at UTM. Sections have been devoted to documenting GEL initiatives in courses such as ECO200, the PASS program, and the AIRLab. There is also a bibliography of publications (46 listed so far) with a focus on Game-Enhanced Learning as well as a “Ludography,” which is a catalogue of approximately 300 available games at UTM, which are held both at the RGASC and at other organizations on the campus. Each game listing within this

Ludography is linked to a review, in order to provide faculty with some idea of the game's potential usefulness and level of difficulty.

Game-Enhanced Collaborations with UTM Faculty

- **CCT419: User Experience Design – UXD and Board Games**

The RGASC provided logistical support by supplying boardgames for hands-on demonstrations during lectures and by providing veteran boardgamers (drawn from the Game Café volunteer lists) who demonstrated game mechanics and assisted in the playtest of the students' prototypes. Facilitated Study Groups were also set up in support of the CCT 419 course – seven Facilitators were recruited and trained, and three weekly FSG sessions were run in support of the course during the Fall term.

- **JCB 487 Advanced Interdisciplinary Research Laboratory**

The RGASC provided five workshops over the course of the academic year, built around collaborative games and reflection exercises designed to train the students in teamwork-building skills and creating a context for positive reflection on this process. A variety of games were employed (escape room, role playing, cooperative and double-blind games), each providing a different perspective on teamwork building. Teams of veteran boardgamers, drawn from the Game Café volunteer list, acted as facilitators for each team-building event.

- **“Developing Game-Based Learning Approaches for Undergraduate Education”** (Principal Investigators: Daniel Gregory, Marc Laflamme, Melissa Anderson, Thomas Klubi)

This is a LEAF-funded research project exploring an innovative game-based teaching approach that promotes student engagement and active learning. The project proposal will involve:

- 1) creating game-enhanced learning environments using commercially available discipline-specific cooperative board games in undergraduate Earth Sciences courses;
- 2) student-led development of a new board game to enhance Earth Science education via gamified mineral exploration; and
- 3) thorough assessment of learning outcomes to develop best practices for other applied science courses.

The RGASC will provide design and development support in the form of playtesting and development feedback during phase two of the project.

Appendix A: RGASC Advisory Committee Members (2019/2020)

Seat	Individual	Term Expiry
UTMSU Representative	VP University Affairs	N / A
Undergraduate Student	Tiger Wu	2021
Graduate Student	Ayah Abdeldayem	2021
Teaching Assistant	Janina Kowalski	2021
Humanities Instructor	Mairi Cowan	2022
Social Sciences Instructor	Alan Walks	2022
Sciences Instructor	Paul Piunno	2021
Management / Prof. Schools Instructor	Raphael Chiuzi	2022
Manager, Orientation, Transition, and Engagement	Jackie Goodman	N / A
Librarian	Rob Makinson	2022
Undergraduate Advisor: Social Science / Humanities	Ania Joly	2022
Undergraduate Advisor: Sciences	Christina Fortes	2022
Office of the Registrar	Michelle Kraus	2022
RGASC Staff / Faculty Member	Kerrie Martin	2022
RGASC Coordinator	Cliona Kelly	N / A
Director, RGASC	Tyler Evans-Tokaryk	N / A

Appendix B: RGASC Research and Scholarship (2019/2020)

The following is a list of recent news and successes accomplished by RGASC staff and faculty, including peer-reviewed pedagogical research, conference presentations, and more! For more details on RGASC faculty and staff academic accomplishments, see the “Recent News & Successes” section of the RGASC Website (which is updated regularly and has an archive of older items): <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/recent-rgasc-news-successes>.

- Daniel Gregory, Marc Laflamme, Melissa Anderson and **Tom Klubi** received a University of Toronto Learning and Education Advancement Fund (LEAF) Grant for a teaching project entitled “*Developing Game-Based Learning Approaches for Undergraduate Education*” (April 2020).
- **Ann Gagné** facilitated a workshop entitled “Inclusive Curriculum and Instructional Design: Building Marketable Skills” at the Northeast Modern Language Association Conference in Boston, MA (March 2020).
- **Andie Burazin**, Veselin Jungic, and Miroslav Lovric published an article “Collaborating to enhance undergraduate math education” in University Affairs Newsletter (February 2020).
- **Andie Burazin** presented “Numeracy Initiatives at UTM” at the Mathematics Community of Practice at Sheridan College Mississauga Campus (February 2020).
- **Andie Burazin**, Veselin Jungic, and Miroslav Lovric published a paper “Three Countries, Two Continents: Common Challenges and Opportunities in Teaching First-year Mathematics” in the *Notice of the American Mathematics Society* (January 2020).
- **Michael Kaler** published an article “The Rebirth of Improvisation as a Site for Religious Studies Research” in the Online First section of the journal *Studies in Religion* (January 2020).
- **Andie Burazin** co-organized with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario a numeracy workshop “Upgrading Numeracy Skills of Secondary Students Working Conference” at the Fields Institute in Toronto, ON (December 2019).
- **Ann Gagné** presented “Mental Health and Well-Being for Students: It Starts with the Syllabus” with Fiona Rawle at the Research in Teaching and Learning Conference at the MacPherson Institute, McMaster University (December 2019).
- **Ann Gagné** facilitated a workshop entitled “A Holistic Framework for Inclusive Research and Pedagogy” at the Research in Teaching and Learning Conference at the MacPherson Institute, McMaster University (December 2019).

- **Michael DeBraga** and Adriano Pasquali presented “Experiential Learning – How to Combine Academic and Logistical Criteria for Success” at the Research in Teaching and Learning Conference at the MacPherson Institute, McMaster University (December 2019).
- **Andie Burazin** and Marc De Benedetti published an article “Supplementary Mathematics and Physics Sessions for Undergraduate Physics Student” in the *Canadian Mathematics Society Notes* (December 2019).
- **Kerrie Martin** co-hosted a roundtable discussion (with Maggie Roberts, UTSC and Kimm Khagram, Guelph University) on “*Canadian SI: Towards 2022*” at the Learning Specialists Association of Canada (LSAC) Eastern Regional Conference in Toronto, ON (December 2019)
- **Jonathan Vroom** presented an invited paper “Why was the Torah Treated as Law by Ezra but not by Nehemiah?” at the Society of Biblical Literature’s Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA (November 2019).
- **Jonathan Vroom** gave a public lecture “Reconsidering Ezra’s Place in the History of Jewish Law” at Virginia Tech State University in Blacksburg, VA (October 2019)
- **Michael Kaler** presented the paper “ELLI and the WDI: Integrating Writing and ELL Support Through Two Initiatives” (cowritten with **Laura Taylor**) at the Academic Writing and English Language Learners (AWELL) conference, (October 2019).
- Taras Gula, Miroslav Lovric, and **Andie Burazin** received the Fields Institute General Scientific Activity Grant to organize and host the “Health Numeracy for Better Health: Mathematics and Health Education Working Together” Conference at the Fields Institute in Toronto, ON (October 2019).
- **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** and **Michael Kaler** published an article “Reflecting on Assessment: Strategies and Tools for Measuring the Impact of a Canadian WAC Program” in the *Canadian Journal for Studies in Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie* (October 2019).
- **Andie Burazin** presented “How do we write a mathematical solution or a proof?” at STEM SOS: Student Success in Mississauga, ON (September 2019).
- **Andie Burazin** and Tyler Holden received the UTM Teaching and Learning Conference & Colloquia Grant to host the “2020 First-Year in Math and Stats in Canada: Creating Epsilons of Improvement” Conference at UTM (July 2019).

- **Michael DeBraga** presented “Using and Assessing Reflective Practice: A Practical Guide” at the University of Western Ontario Conference on Science Education in London Ontario (July 2019).
- **Xiangying Huo** presented “Feedback in Second Language Writing: Problems and Challenges” at the Canada International Conference on Education at the University of Toronto Mississauga (June 2019).
- **Laura Taylor** presented “Communication among Cultures’ as Taught Through Game Based Learning” at the International Conference on Language, Innovation, Culture and Education in Seoul, South Korea (June 2019)
- **Xiangying Huo** presented “Legitimacy of Non-Native English Varieties: From the Perspective of World Englishes” at the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia (June 2019).
- **Laura Taylor** presented “The Impact of the Graded Response Method on English Language Learners” at the International Conference on New Achievements and Developments in Multidisciplinary Academic Research in Seoul, South Korea (June 2019).
- **Xiangying Huo** presented “The Problem of a Lack of Interactivity in Computer Assisted Language Learning” at the Canada International Conference on Education at the University of Toronto Mississauga (June 2019).
- **Michael DeBraga**, Harriet Sonne de Torrens, and **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** presented the poster “Reflected Practice as means to sustain Student Engagement in an Experiential Learning Course” at the Society for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (STLHE) Conference in Winnipeg, MB (June 2019).
- **Andie Burazin** and Miroslav Lovric published a paper ‘Rethinking Teaching First-year Mathematics in University’ in the *Proceedings of the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Mathematics Education Study Group* (June 2019).
- **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** presented the paper “Teaching & Learning as Campus Activism: Students Take the Lead.” *Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Conference* in Winnipeg, MB (June 2019).
- **Michael Kaler** published “Thinking about Transformative Aspects of Gnostic Writing Pedagogy” in *Religious Studies and Theology* (June 2019).
- **Michael Kaler** took part in a roundtable “‘One Participates Fully’: Engaging Pedagogies in the Study of Religion” at the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion meeting at Congress in Vancouver, BC (June 2019).

- **Michael Kaler** presented “The Rebirth of Improvisation as a Site for Religious Studies research” at the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion meeting at Congress in Vancouver, BC (June 2019).
- **Michael Kaler** presented “Building Community through offering Dedicated Drop-Ins” at the Canadian Writing Centre Association meeting at Congress in Vancouver, BC (May 2019).
- **Michael DeBraga**, Harriet Sonne de Torrens, and **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** presented “Reflective Practice – A Model for how best to implement it?” at the Conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching in Calgary, Alberta (May 2019)
- **Michael DeBraga**, M, Harriet Sonne de Torrens, and **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** presented the poster *How to Implement and Assess Deep Reflection in an Experiential Learning Course*. At the Designing, Teaching & Assessing Experiential Learning conference in Guelph, Ontario (May 2019).
- **Andie Burazin** and Marc De Benedetti presented “Supporting our physics students to succeed in university” at Ontario Association of Physics Teachers Conference at the Institute of Quantum Computing, Waterloo, ON (May 2019)
- **Andie Burazin** presented “Understanding and Assisting our Students in Math” at Queen’s University Math Education Seminar in Kingston, ON (May 2019).
- Vincent Bouchard, **Andie Burazin**, Shawn Desaulniers, Veselin Jungic, and Miroslav Lovric received the Pacific Institute for the Mathematical Sciences Grant to organize and host the “First-Year University Mathematics Across Canada: Time to Rethink Our Curriculum?” Conference in Edmonton, AB (May 2019).
- **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** presented the paper “English Linguistic Imperialism in a South African Writing Centre” at the Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing (CASDW) Conference in Vancouver, BC (June 2019).
- **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** presented the paper “Academic Literacies in a South African Writing Centre: Student Perspectives on Established Practices” at the Canadian Association of Writing Centres (CWCA) Conference in Vancouver, BC (May 2019).
- **Dianne Ashbourne**, **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk**, Sanja Hinic-Frlog, Simone Laughton, Christoph Richter, and Chester Scoville presented the workshop “Designing Effective Learning Experiences for Active Learning Classrooms” at the University of Toronto Teaching & Learning Symposium (May 2019).
- **Tyler Evans-Tokaryk** presented a lightning talk “Experiential Learning in the ‘halls’ of the Ivory Tower: A nifty assignment that turns students into agents of change” at the University of Toronto Teaching & Learning Symposium (May 2019)

- **Laura Taylor** presented a poster titled “Game Based Learning in the University Classroom” at the University of Toronto Teaching and Learning Symposium (May 2019).
- **Xiangying Huo** presented “Second Language Education: Self-Construction or Other-Orientation?” at the 8th International Second Language Pedagogies Conference (May 2019) at the University of Sherbrooke, Sherbrooke, QB.