

IARP Discussion Questions

1. I think that one of the challenges the University of Winnipeg faces, regardless of the demographics it chooses to pursue, is to balance, or manage, the perception of its double commitment to inclusivity and the delivery of quality education (because to many, 'inclusive' means 'we'll take anyone' and so implies lower standards, just as 'exclusive' may suggest higher standards of education). It therefore seems important to communicate to different demographics that the University of Winnipeg is both welcoming AND a place where truly interesting things happen. One means of doing this might be to encourage faculty (i.e. by having someone else make the initial contacts and managing the arrangements) to visit e.g. schools in the area, or other community organizations, to deliver talks/mediate discussions etc. in much the same way as is done already for the retirement communities. Re the schools, such visits need not be confined to the high schools; it might go a long way to have faculty interact with e.g. elementary students too, and so inculcate early the impression that university (and university teachers) are not terrifying, that university courses deal with interesting topics, and that the U of W is a good example of both. Indeed, this might be one way of recruiting school-age children's parents too.
2. Without meaning to slight to the very committed and competent people who work in CTLT, those who are not already inclined to use technology may find some of the informational seminars (e.g. on using Nexus) too tedious to attend and not very useful in terms of generating ideas. If information could be provided about, e.g., the ways that technology/experiential opportunities are being used (successfully!) in our AND other universities and in disciplines that might not traditionally use such – short, quickly read summaries to inspire ideas in a semi-annual email or something, perhaps produced by the people at CTLT or others who are similarly well-positioned to know – this might go a lot further towards encouraging faculty to think of new ways to incorporate similar strategies into their own teaching.
3. I support this commitment. However, I still have a very difficult time envisioning what indigenization means in practice, not least of all because of my own ignorance of the specifics and dynamics of indigeneity, particularly as they relate to higher education and its contexts; it is difficult even to know how to frame questions whose answers would lead to participation in the achievement of this goal. Information and/or discussion about exactly those specifics and dynamics, delivered by those who know, would be really helpful.
6. The retention of comparatively small class sizes is, in my opinion, among the most useful strategies to achieve a welcoming atmosphere where students and faculty can share in the productive exchange of ideas.
7. Collaboration among faculty might be increased with the opportunities to learn about what others are doing. Research groups and institutes to some extent address that goal, but several faculty members have wistfully recalled the Friday 'brown bag' lunches in which faculty members from across the university might give a brief presentation on

current research (delivered, I am assuming, in such a way as to speak to those in different disciplines).

9. Re the definition of research success: coming from a discipline in which really large sums of money are not always necessary to undertake research, I would hope that 'success' will not be measured by grants (and the size of grants) alone.

11. While it is tempting to say that one ought to prioritize focus on graduates who have become the heads of NGOs and that sort of thing, the fact is that not all U of W graduates will become 'leaders' who make enormous differences to (e.g.) public policy or in other easily observable ways. It is important that those who do not achieve such heights do not feel that they have wasted their time. My own opinion is that a liberal arts education gives students – all students – intellectual traction that they probably would not have otherwise gained: the issues in the world around them gain depth and nuance with their increased ability to think and talk about them. In this way, the world opens up – not necessarily in terms of opportunity (although maybe), but in terms of its comprehensibility and their own confidence in taking part in it. Students learn to critique, to create, to argue, and to communicate, and in this way, they emerge better prepared to be engaged members of *all* the communities in which they will take part, regardless of the employment they eventually pursue. I'm not sure how this could be packaged into a motto or exit survey, though...