Summary of ACMAPS 5-Year Review

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1. ACMAPS' 5-Year Review. Our 5-Year Review, mandated at the time of our founding, included the preparation of a 70-page backgrounder document which includes a history of ACMAPS, a literature review, institutional enrolment and retention data to 2011, an environmental scan of Canadian universities for similar services, and a unit self-study. Following the backgrounder, Sue Vail, AVP Teaching &Learning, assembled a pan-university working group to assess ACMAPS and generate recommendations about our future. The working group met between June of 2012 and March of 2013 and, in addition to deliberating on the basis of the backgrounder document, oversaw the implementation of a campus-wide survey of mature and part-time students. The working group presented its recommendations to the Provost in April 2013.

2. Four recommendations for ACMAPS future. In light of the substantial data at its disposal, the working group formulated the following recommendations.

Recommendation #1: That York continue to provide centralized support ensuring that there are clearly defined partnership agreements between ACMAPS and Faculties to address the unique needs of mature students. The working group concluded that the small staff team at ACMAPS had been very successful in establishing and implementing a highly regarded set of research-informed supports that have served its users well. The working group also acknowledged, however, that for ACMAPS to become an agent of change in the development of a broader culture of support for mature students, strong and formal working relationships with the Faculties would be needed.

Recommendation #2 : That ACMAPS' target audience be mature undergraduate students. The working group identified that ACMAPS' key strength was working with the acute needs of mature undergraduate students (both part-time and full-time). It noted that that historically ACMAPS had served relatively few graduate students or non-mature part-time students.

Recommendation #3 : That ACMAPS' mandate be 'to support the academic success of mature students from admission to graduation'. The working group proposed a broader, more inclusive definition of "mature student" than ACMAPS had used in practice previously and wanted to underscore the importance of supporting students throughout their experience at the University.

Recommendation #4 : That ACMAPS' major areas of activity reflect this mandate and respond to the expressed needs of Faculties. Through this recommendation, the working group expressed that, especially given the relatively small size of the ACMAPS team, our activities needed to be refocused and re-prioritized to emphasize our strengths in student support and our ability apply in practical terms the research conducted by ACMAPS and others through collaboration and reciprocal knowledge exchange.

3. On the strength of the recommendations above, the working group proposed the following adjustments to mandate and major areas of activity. The figure below depicts a before (ACMAPS 2007-2012) and after (ACMAPS 2013-2017) comparison of our target audience, mandate and major areas of activity. In its report to the Provost, the working group stressed that the recasting of "advocacy" as "knowledge mobilization" does not diminish the commitment to being a voice for the needs of

mature students or advocates for their interests, but rather denotes a shift away from unilateral lobbying towards collaborative problem solving. And, given ACMAPS reporting line has shifted to the Vice-Provost Academic whose priorities include championing a broad access mandate, it is understood that ACMAPS will continue to support York's commitment to access.

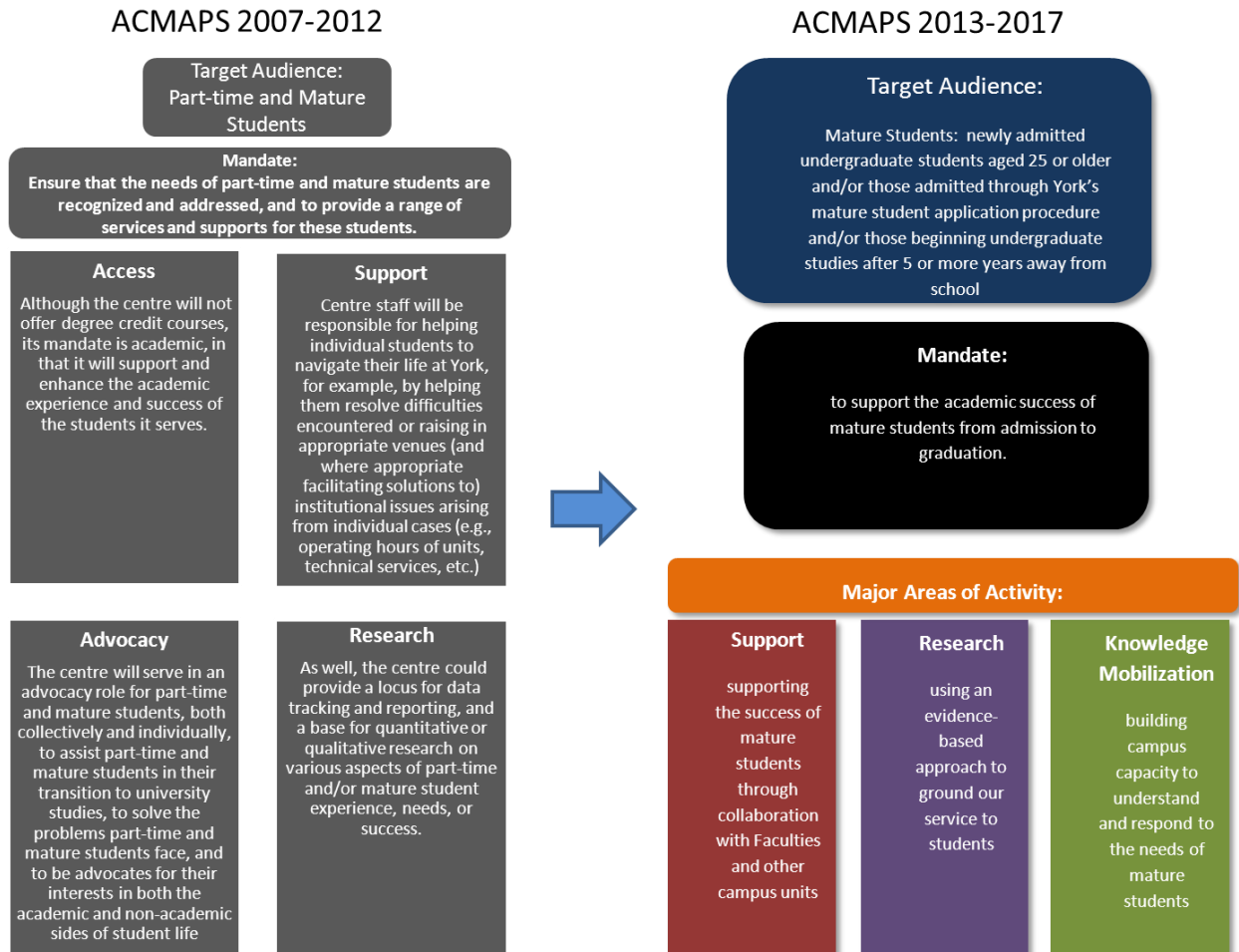**Figure 1: ACMAPS Target Audience, Mandate and Major Areas of Activity, 2007-2012 and 2013-2017**

ACMAPS 2007-2012

Target Audience: Part-time and Mature Students

Mandate: Ensure that the needs of part-time and mature students are recognized and addressed, and to provide a range of services and supports for these students.

Access

Although the centre will not offer degree credit courses, its mandate is academic, in that it will support and enhance the academic experience and success of the students it serves.

Support

Centre staff will be responsible for helping individual students to navigate their life at York, for example, by helping them resolve difficulties encountered or raising in appropriate venues (and where appropriate facilitating solutions to) institutional issues arising from individual cases (e.g., operating hours of units, technical services, etc.)

Advocacy

The centre will serve in an advocacy role for part-time and mature students, both collectively and individually, to assist part-time and mature students in their transition to university studies, to solve the problems part-time and mature students face, and to be advocates for their interests in both the academic and non-academic sides of student life

Research

As well, the centre could provide a locus for data tracking and reporting, and a base for quantitative or qualitative research on various aspects of part-time and/or mature student experience, needs, or success.

ACMAPS 2013-2017

Target Audience:

Mature Students: newly admitted undergraduate students aged 25 or older and/or those admitted through York's mature student application procedure and/or those beginning undergraduate studies after 5 or more years away from school

Mandate:

to support the academic success of mature students from admission to graduation.

Major Areas of Activity:

Support

supporting the success of mature students through collaboration with Faculties and other campus units

Research

using an evidence-based approach to ground our service to students

Knowledge Mobilization

building campus capacity to understand and respond to the needs of mature students

Figure 2: ACMAPS revised Major Areas of Activity (detail view)

Support

(supporting the success of mature students through collaboration with Faculties and other campus units)

- Orientation
- First-year student transition strategy
- Peer mentorship program
- Strategy for transition to 2nd year and beyond
- Online and in-person workshops/information
- Individual consultation and referrals

Research

(using an evidence-based approach to ground our service to students)

- Literature reviews (secondary research)
- Ongoing program/ service evaluation
- Student needs assessment
- Service usage statistics
- Institutional data (e.g., retention, population)

Knowledge Mobilization

(building campus capacity to understand respond to the needs of mature students)

- Supporting the reciprocal exchange of knowledge about mature student needs between ACMAPS, Faculties, and other campus units
- Integrated communications/promotions strategy

4. Key institutional data on mature students: The working group considered a large amount of institutional data in its review of ACMAPS. Some highlights of these data include:

- From 2007-2011, the population of mature students at York increased by 10% from 8193 students to 9007.
- From 2007-2011, the proportion of mature students enrolling full-time increased from 54.9% to 60.29%.
- From 2009 to 2012, the number of course "meets" taking place in the 7-10 p.m. time slot have declined in number and appear to have migrated to the 4-7 p.m. time frame. Contrary to expectations, this apparent decline in evening course offerings does not appear to have had a negative impact on degree completion rates among enrolled mature students.

- Mature students are at higher risk of attrition than 101s and non-mature 105s. For instance, those mature students who began studies in 2003, by 2011 only 53.4% of them had completed the degree program, compared to 64.4% of non-mature 105s and 74.8% of 101s.
- Mature student degree completion rates are on the rise. In particular, those starting between 2000 and 2003, 8-year completion rates rose by 6.9%, 40% higher than for other cohorts.
- A preliminary study of students' GPA at graduation that was conducted by OIRA in early 2013 indicates that between 2001 and 2011 mature students' graduating averages are higher than their 101 and non-mature 105 counterparts' graduating averages.
- The Fall 2012 survey of all mature and part-time students at York demonstrated ACMAPS has a nearly 90% approval rating among its service users.

5. ACMAPS activities in mandated areas since April, 2013. Since the conclusion of the 5-Year Review, ACMAPS has been involved in a number of key activities as listed below (note: major area of activity indicated in parentheses).

- ACMAPS has continued into its second year of its funded AIF Project, the Mature Student First-Year Experience Program. This collaborative project delivers a comprehensive first-term support program for new mature students aimed at smoothing students' transition to university. The second year of our project also involves the development of video materials and associated "lesson plans" that can be flexibly accessed (i.e., online) so that a greater proportion of our student body can access the support. These will be used to develop a mature-student focused online Moodle "course" and also be integrated with YU Start and its emerging emphasis on the (post-orientation) first-year experience (Support; Knowledge Mobilzation)
- Brian has represented ACMAPS on the First-Year Experience Working Group and is a co-author of the First Year Experience Working Group Report which will support campus consultation process beginning in late November. (Knowledge Mobilization)
- Brian represented ACMAPS in the Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) Persona project. Leveraging primary and secondary research done at ACMAPS, Brian co-wrote the Mature Student Persona with staff partners from VPA and Vice Provost Students divisions. (Knowledge Mobilization; Research)
- Brian continues as co-chair of Peer Mentor Community of Practice under the PRASE initiative. The Peer Mentor Community of Practice aims to enhance the evaluation of campus mentor programs, the development of central core training materials, the recognition of peer mentors on campus, and our capacity to share resources across the university in support of peer mentor programs. (Support; Knowledge Mobilization)
- ACMAPS is in the early phases of service adjustments that will gradually devolve our direct academic advising role and permit expansion of our successful peer mentor program (Support)
- ACMAPS is spear-heading the development of a new Bridging Program pilot project in tandem with York Region District School Board and Seneca College. The project will set a foundation for

enhancing the engagement of students enrolled in YRDSB's adult day school and support their transition to post-secondary study. (Support; Research; Knowledge Moblization)

- ACMAPS has continued its front-line contact with mature students, including mature student academic orientation, student advising, peer mentoring, and individual consultations. (Support)