



Representing Faculty, Librarians & Veterinarians

September 8, 2022

Dear Member,

The UGFA has heard from members about Fall 2022. Some members are happy to return to campus and others remain nervous; many expressed concerns about the large number of incoming first-year students. Remember that there is a [Fall 2022 Letter Of Understanding](#) dealing with changes to teaching and with other provisions.

On August 11, UGFA Members (and, I assume, the wider University community) received a note from the Vice-Provost (Student Affairs) detailing the considerations of and actions taken by the Administration to support “the largest-ever class of incoming first-year students.” In an August 15 note to the Provost, I wrote:

According to OUAC data, UoG's first-year cohort grew by 48% over last year -- by almost 2,000 students. Ignoring the special case of Laurentian, only two other universities saw two-digit percentage growth over last year, in both cases around 15%, and all universities with an incoming cohort near or exceeding our size had, at most, marginal growth. One might see this situation as other institutions exercising a precautionary principle appropriately. The point is that UoG is in a singular, and potentially risky, situation, for which you have expressed strong enthusiasm and excitement in the past.

For this reason, I am writing to request an email from the Provost to UGFA Members detailing the considerations of and actions taken by the University to support UGFA Members who carry the responsibility, and, in some cases, given the growth in first-year section sizes, the workload challenge, of teaching and supporting the largest-ever class of incoming first-year students.

One day later, the Provost responded by saying that the Administration was “in the process of finalizing some details” and that she “will look forward to sharing some of these details with [me] and UGFA members in the next week or so.”

It seems that the response was the August 23 memo on “2022-23 Enrolment and Resource Allocation.”

In that response, the Provost mentioned the 48% increase in OUAC’s June confirmation statistics, and argued that “much of the growth is recovery” from the prior year’s “significant enrolment shortfall” (which in her email response to me she quantified at 12%). She then noted that the Administration is forecasting that the *total* undergraduate student population will show “measured growth” of around 3%.

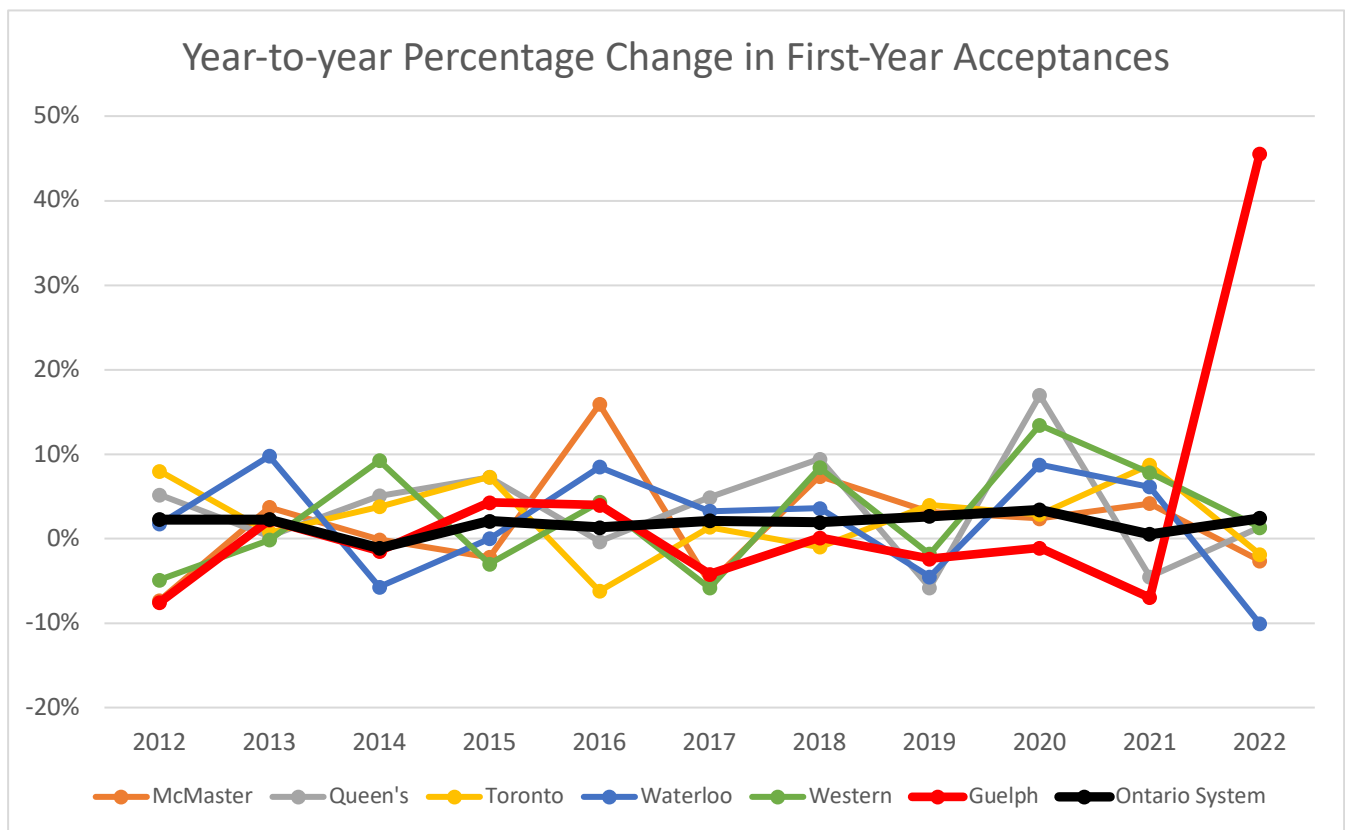
To help members digest this response, it seems useful to provide the OUAC confirmation data, for which archives run back to 2012; we do not have the September 2022 numbers yet. The chart on the next page presents the year-to-year percentage change in first-year confirmations/acceptances at our traditional comparator institutions (“the Bovey 6”) as well the overall results for the Ontario university system, from the years 2012 to 2022.

Some observations:

- The size of the confirmed first-year cohort at Guelph in 2022 is 25% larger than any other year in the OUAC records.
- Guelph's percentage increase this year is more than 30 times larger than any of our comparators' increase this year.
- Guelph's percentage increase this year is more than ten times larger than Guelph's previous largest percentage increase.
- Guelph's percentage increase is roughly three times the largest percentage increase ever experienced at any of our comparators

When considering the data and the Provost's response, please think in particular about your colleagues who are teaching first-year courses.

Where does this leave us?



Students will feel cheated. The lack of guaranteed residence has generated negative press; students will be in larger class sections than their predecessors, surely impacting their academic experience negatively; will those students who get freshly sub-divided residence rooms be happy?

UGFA Members feel unsupported. Given their remote learning experience of recent years, teaching these students will be a more demanding task in various ways, including poorer student preparation, more marking, and more demand for contact with the instructor. The Provost suggested that there could be more money to pay for additional TAs, which assumes that more TAs are available and ignores that this “solution” means managing more TAs.

There is no sense of appropriate caution. However individual UGFA members may view the set-backs and gains of the shifting pandemic landscape, the UGFA has the general sense that many members see this system-wide record growth in acceptances as having an unacceptably high potential for additional risk.

Indeed, in their August 31st communication, the Administration wrote, “Vaccination remains one of the best ways to protect yourself,” seemingly acknowledging that vaccination is personal protection, not community protection. Oddly, they also informed the UGFA that they have modified their inactive vaccination policy to redefine the term “fully vaccinated” to mean more than the government’s definition: having received all *recommended* boosters. In their communication, they noted that students will have “Masks On” spaces because some students find such spaces comforting, but we should note that faculty members who find similar comfort in “Masks On” spaces cannot declare their classroom to be such a space.

The Administration's decisions regarding enrollment for Fall 2022 have enormous implications for the negotiation of a new Collective Agreement and for the UGFA's determination to address workload and defend academic freedom.

As always, please contact the Faculty Association at facassoc@uoguelph.ca if you have any questions.

UGFA Executive