The Tri-University Graduate Program in History had a year of consolidation in 2008-9, implementing the major structural changes of the previous year. The first cohort passed through the revised PhD program, the new promotional campaign was launched, the second internationally-attended Tri-University History Program Conference was held, the University of Guelph joined the new MA registration system and the work of the Tri-University Graduate Students’ Association expanded. Major new demands were placed on the program in terms of funding for travel and conferencing activity, a wonderful testament to the energy of our students. Applications for 2009-10 remained high, increasing at the PhD level and falling slightly at the MA. Because of financial uncertainty in 2009, the universities were slower in sending out official acceptances and so, as of this moment, we are still unsure of our final acceptance ratios. This issue and the other program initiatives will be reviewed below:

A. The Year in Review:

1. Inaugurating the revised PhD Program:

PhD program revision was undertaken in order to streamline, simplify and focus the doctoral program in keeping with the recommendations of the OCGS appraisers’ report of 2007. The new program requirements are modeled around a four year-to-completion degree and they include a number of novel provisions, such as a teaching practicum, a colloquium, a single year of field work and a streamlined major field exam structure.

All but two of the pre-comprehensive exam members of the 2006-7 and 2007-8 cohorts switched to the new program in spring 2008 and sat the first set of major field exams in the fall. The program accepted its largest PhD cohort in 2008-9 (18 students) and these students are currently completing their field course work. We are especially pleased that virtually the entire cohort will complete its fieldwork by the end of their first year of study and is ready to move on to exams in September 2009. For these students, what formerly took two years to complete has been finished in one.

The new Professional Development Seminar also enjoyed its trial run in 2008-9 and student feedback has been extremely positive. The entire 2008-9 cohort completed the Seminar in the first year of study.

The 2007-8 cohort is currently preparing thesis proposals which are due to their committees by the end of April 2009.

2. MA Pre-registration System
The Tri-University MA-course Pre-registration system was inaugurated in May 2008. It allowed students at the three universities to pre-register on the same day for courses at the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University. Although its launch was not glitch-free, it did succeed in fostering far greater student mobility among the campuses than ever before. The on-line registration system has been revised and updated and will be used again to register students in May and October 2009. The University of Guelph will join the other two institutions in pre-registering students in its courses in May. For 2009-10 we are moving to two pre-registration periods, one for Fall and one for Winter courses.

3. MA summer Course

The Tri-University Program will launch its first team-taught MA seminars in summer 2009. The courses are designed to allow students in course stream to finish program requirements in three consecutive terms and three consecutive-term MRP stream students to reduce course loads in fall and winter terms. One third of the classes will be taught on each campus. At time of writing, twelve students are enrolled in each of the seminars, which begin 5 May 2009.

4. Advertising and Promotion

The Tri-University program expanded the scope of its multi-dimensional, centrally-coordinated advertising and promotional campaign in 2008. Existing poster advertising and our one-page handouts were sent out to all Canadian universities and were featured at university recruiting fairs. A digital advertisement was sent out to history departments in English speaking countries for distribution to students and the same ad was sent out to departmental history clubs. A new set of postcard advertisements promoting different areas in the program was also created and sent out to all Canadian history departments for distribution. The first three postcards covered the research areas of Cold War History, Medieval History and Global History. The program plans to expand the postcards to cover three more areas in 2009-10 and to redesign its one-page handout.

5. Tri-University Conference

The Tri-University Conference has been held annually for 15 years. It provides a forum for the program’s graduate students and faculty to present papers and discuss their research. The conference also operates as an advertisement for the program, attracting visitors and potential students from area universities. This year the conference organizer (Susan Neylan, WLU) placed the call for papers on H-Net (the leading website for academic historians) and several other conferencing sites and we receive proposals from a large number of non-Canadian students and faculty. Ultimately, one half of the 39 papers were presented by students and faculty from outside the Tri-University program, roughly half of those (10) were presented by international scholars from Europe, Asia and South America. We hope to sustain this proportion of non-TriU to TriU presentations as it balances opportunities for our students to present with a context for their work. The keynote address at the conference was delivered by Roderick MacFarquhar, the Leroy B. Williams Professor of History and Political Science and retired Director of the John King Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University. One hundred and thirty faculty, students and guests attended this year’s conference.
6. Recruiting

The Tri-University program recruits intensively. Our goal is to process applications quickly and to be the first offer made to successful applicants. All applications to the program are reviewed by an admissions committee made up of the director and the three graduate officers. No offers are made without the approval of all three graduate officers. Electronic offers are sent out by the individual graduate officers and the director telephones all students admitted to explain to them the distinct features and advantages of our program. Supervisors then contact their potential students to express interest in the students’ projects. The graduate officers and director follow up with additional communications. It is a time-consuming and labor intensive process and it depends on our speed in assembling, processing and following up on applications. The graduate officers in the program work extremely hard to ensure the success of the process, they work wonderfully well together, share all information on funding and admissions and devote countless hours to recruiting.

6.1 2009-10 Admission Targets

The History Departments at the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph both moved in 2009 to lower the number of admissions from 2008 levels. So many students had been admitted in 2008 and so many were continuing in the program that both departments felt they needed to consolidate. PhD targets at those two institutions were lowered from a total of 16 to 9. MA targets were adjusted slightly from 45 to 38. WLU proposed steady-state in its admissions at the MA level and an increase in PhD admissions from two to three.

6.2 2009-10 Recruiting

For the 2008-9 academic year we received 169 applications (127 MA and 32 PhD); for the 2009-10 academic year we received 150 applications (109 MA and 41 PhD). Although the rise in PhD applications is gratifying, the decline in the number of MA applications is a cause of concern. The online application system launched at the University of Waterloo in winter 2008-9 slowed the speed at which we were able to process applications. There were delays in the issuing of official offers of admission. This was all less significant at the PhD level because the numbers are smaller and contact is more consistent and individualized. At the MA level, however, we found a dramatic increase in competition for students.

6.3 2009-10 Admissions

Ultimately, 66 MA and 15 PhD offers were extended. We received 45 MA and 10 PhD acceptances and 15 MA and 5 PhD rejections. The MA acceptance rate was 60-70%, a decline from the 80-90% acceptance rate of 2008. At UW and UG, PhD the PhD acceptance rate on offers was 80%; Laurier saw its first 3 PhD offers rejected. Responding quickly to this disappointing result, Laurier raised the level of its financial offers to approximate those of the other two institutions, resulting in success in its last
two PhD offers.

7. Tri-University Graduate Students Association

In the spring of 2008, graduate students at the three institutions met together and drafted a constitution creating the first students association covering the three campuses. The association held its founding meeting in March 2008 and an executive was elected and the constitution approved. In April, the new organization hosted its first event, which included faculty presentations and a visiting lecture by Professor Steven Penfold of the University of Toronto. It has since undertaken a number of social and academically-focused activities, including skating parties, movie nights and a student speaker series. The association appears to be off to a fabulous start and it promises to become a focus of inter-university activity and graduate student identification.

8. Success of Tri-University Students

It was an outstanding year for Tri-University’s students. Appendix A contains a list of major external award holders in 2008-9 and Appendix B lists student conference and publication activity. More than 10 scholarly articles published and 53 papers were delivered by our students in 2008-9. The program funded travel to Canadian conferences for 3 MA and 6 PhD students and to international conferences for 6 PhD and 1 MA student.
B. Directions for 2009-10

1. Fund raising

External fund raising is a priority if the program is to continue to grow and attract the finest applicants. Among targets for fund raising are international student scholarships and fee-waivers, student research and travel fellowships and funds to support collaborative faculty research. The director met with University Development officers at UW and WLU in fall 2008 to design a strategy for fund-raising. Following on recommendations made at UW, material has been prepared on program alumni for a direct mailing campaign. Collecting the material we needed has taken longer than anticipated because the necessary records were not traditionally centrally maintained. Further meetings are scheduled with the UW Development Office to discuss additional approaches to fund-raising.

2. Doctoral Field Development

For a program of its size, the Tri-University is surprisingly narrow in its formal scope. The program is authorized by OCGS to advertise in only 6 doctoral fields, which leaves many of the country’s leading faculty unrepresented in our PhD field structure. A proposal for new fields in “Cold War era” history and “Medieval” history was prepared in the fall of 2008 together with a proposal to transform the “Race, Imperialism and Slavery” field into a “World History” field. The new fields have been approved in principle by the History Department at WLU and are under discussion in the other two departments. The goal of field expansion is to broaden the base of faculty supervision and to involve in the program the substantial body of individuals whose areas of expertise are not covered by the 6 doctoral fields.

3. Equalization of Funding

As explained in 6.4 above, funding discrepancies continued to plague the program. Our goal is to ensure that the interim solutions reached in 2008 are sustained and that funding levels remain in rough balance across the three universities.

4. Advertising, Promotion and Recruiting

The program needs to intensify its advertising and promotional campaign. What worked well in 2008 and attracted record numbers of applicants and acceptances, was not as effective in 2009. Although the website has proven a powerful recruiting tool and has seen 15,000 discrete hits since April 2008 (2,000 visits to the site have been made through Google and other search engines), we are learning that it is not a stand-alone device. A priority for the program is to find new methods of drawing students to the website. We will do more in the direction of direct electronic advertising as a way of attracting attention to the program. We have adopted the postcards as a method of achieving niche-marketing, and we will continue with that effort, but bringing the postcards to the attention of students remains a challenge. In addition to sending postcards to the departments we will be sending them to faculty teaching in the specific areas
advertised on the cards. We will attempt to have the faculty bring them to the attention of their students. We also plan to prepare a new one-page advertisement which will replace the one we have been using for two years. This advertisement will serve as direct on-line mailings advertisement.

The program will, however, maintain the overall thematic direction of the 2007-8/2008-9 campaigns, which stressed the program’s size (one of the largest history faculty complement in Canada) and diversity and it will continue to draw potential applicants’ attention to the benefits of studying at three different universities at once. We will more deliberately integrate advertising for the Tri-University conference into the overall marketing strategy. A significant advertisement for the program that we need to more fully support is the conferencing and networking activity of our own students. Already our students are highly active participants in the conference circuit (see Appendix B). The program plans to increase its financial commitment to this activity.

The coordinating committee takes seriously the lowered acceptance rate in 2009 and will review procedures. The challenge that faces us is to find not just new ways of drawing students to the program but also new ways of securing their acceptances once offers are made.
Appendix A

Student Awards (External)

OGS Award Winners:

Jill Campbell Miller (UW)
Ryan Kirkby (UW)
Michael Pitblado (UW)
Katherine Scott (UG)
Jessica Steinberg (UG)
Jen De Vries (UW)
John Wilson (UG)
Cassandra Woloschuk (UG)

SSHRC Award Winners

Jonathan Crossen (UW, PhD)
Ian Haight (UW, PhD)
Nathan Hatton (UW, PhD)
Peter Kikkert (UW, MA)
Lianne Leddy (WLU, PhD)
Michael Paiva (UW, MA)
Danielle Terbenche (UW, PhD)
Jane Whalen (WLU, PhD)

Balsillie Fellowships (WLU Spring/Summer Term 2008):

Jenn Annis, 
Keith Calow
Tavis Harris
Matt Symes
Appendix B

Student Scholarly Publications and Conferences

1. Articles:


Lorene Bridgen "On Their Own Terms: Temperance in Southern Ontario’s Black Community (1830-1860)" Ontario History (Spring 2009).


Tavis Harris . “Stacey and the Use of Oral Accounts in the Dieppe Narratives.” In Between History and Memory: Conference Proceedings of the University of Victoria Oral Military History Conference. (Forthcoming).


Peter Kikkert, "Sovereignty and Security: DEXAF, the United States and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1968." Centre for Military and Strategic Studies Calgary Papers Studies, forthcoming fall 2009. (paper co-authored with Professor Whitney Lackenbauer of the University of St. Jerome's at Waterloo)


2. Student Conference Activity:


Guillaume Larocque Beaudin, “Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda et une vie de controversies”. Pierre Savard Conference, University of Ottawa, 2-3 April 2009


Jacqueline Cannata, "Focusing on the Negative" presented at the "History in the Making: Sources of Controversy" conference at Concordia University, March 2008
Jacqueline Cannata, "Confronting Tomorrow: Ken Hammond's Contribution to Environment Awareness in Guelph" presented at the "Kenneth Hammond Lectures on Environment, Energy and Resources". Conference through the Faculty of Environmental Science at the University of Guelph, April 2008


Norman Erwin, “Never has there been such a phenomenon of paranoia: Re-evaluating Canadian media reports of the Nazi death camps”. Presented at the Sixth Annual Fort Garry Lectures in History Graduate Student Conference, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, May 2008.


Peter Kikkert, “Kurt Meyer in the Eyes of the Canadian People: Victim and Hero, Villain and Monster, or worse - a German?”. Tri-University History Conference, Waterloo, Ontario, 15 November 2008.

Peter Kikkert, "Sovereignty and Security: DEXAF, the United States and Arctic Sovereignty, 1945-1968." Paper delivered at Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's Centennial Conference, In the National Interest, Calgary, Alberta, 25 January 2009. (paper co-authored with Professor Whitney Lackenbauer of the University of St. Jerome's at Waterloo)

Peter Kikkert, "Rising Above the Rhetoric: Northern Voices and the Strengthening of Canada's Capacity to Maintain a Stable Circumpolar World." Paper delivered at Canada's Role in the Circumpolar World: A Symposium Showcasing Preeminent Graduate Students, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 9 March 2009. (funding for symposium provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Government of Canada)


Ben Robinson, "Grandstands and Knotholes: A Portrait of the Baseball Spectator in New York City, 1883-1887." Tri-University Graduate Program in History Conference, November 2008 and at the Nineteenth Century Base Ball Conference at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, April, 2009.

Katherine Scott, "They taught us how to make things just that little bit nicer": Progressive Continuity and Rural Reform Targeting Women in Ontario's Ottawa Valley, 1900-1950". Annual Meeting of the Agricultural History Society Little Rock, Arkansas, June 18, 2009.


3. Invited Lectures given by Students:


Kim Anderson. “Notokwe Opihikeet: Reflections on Aboriginal Women and Health Research” Annual Public Lecture, CHSRF/CIHR Chair in Health Services and Nursing Research, York University, February 8, 2008.