To: Dean of UBC Faculty of Arts, UBC Arts Faculty Members, UBC Professors instructing Majors subjects within Faculty of Arts

From: Rob Trigo

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Subject: Proposal for additional degree requirement distance education courses for the Faculty of Arts

**Introduction**

A four-year degree is a colossal time and financial investment. Seemingly obscure but required costs to either study or teach is commuting to classes daily and living in relative proximity to the campus. Opportunity costs to this are time (which would have been spent elsewhere), potential earnings (which would have been gained by additional working hours elsewhere), social and recreational experiences (instead of time spent excessively commuting or being required to live in Vancouver to study or teach), and more.

Metro Vancouver is ranked as one of the most heavily traffic-congested cities in North America. During weekdays, drivers often have commute times 20-40 minutes longer than average and commuting via public transit often lasts at least an hour. A sizable portion of lower mainland commuters is several thousand students and instructors commuting to and from the campus (the westernmost area in Greater Vancouver).

Lengthy commute times heavily use up one’s waking hours, which reduce alternatives to time spent, such as additional jobs. With the high cost of living throughout Greater Vancouver, many often need to work part-time jobs to compensate living expenses.

There are also numerous international students and staff at UBC. Students may wish to complete parts of their degree requirements at their hometowns or somewhere with lower costs of living.

**Problem Statement:**

The availability and selection of UBC distance education courses are often very limited. Only a few online courses either qualify as Arts courses or satisfy specific degree requirements. Due to demand, these online courses often have limited or restricted available spots. Some courses require additional lower-level prerequisites, which increase a student’s total courses taken.

**Proposed Solution:**

However, distance education courses have certain shortcomings for Arts students. Additional offerings of distance education courses, most of which would satisfy degree requirements for the Faculty of Arts, would greatly benefit Arts students and professors alike. There are numerous online tools which support and facilitate online courses. These include Blackboard, UBC Connect, UBC Blogs and websites. There are also plenty of tools which facilitate online discussions and communication, such as Facebook, Messenger, Slack, WhatsApp, and more. In-class lectures can easily be replaced with reusable online videos, PDF documents, images, recordings, and more. If necessary, there are also tools which can restrict access to materials, discussion, and activity to registered students only.

Fortunately, UBC distance education courses greatly reduce overall commutes, free up time, and introduce the opportunity of living or travelling elsewhere while studying or teaching at UBC.

**Scope:**

I plan to assess these areas of inquiry:

* Demand for courses which satisfy the following Faculty of Arts degree requirements:
  + Number of required upper-level credits
  + Overall number of Arts credits
  + Literature
  + Science
  + Language
  + Non-specialization courses (outside requirement)
* Availability of the above courses (online and classroom)
* Descriptions and observations of overall class activity for select faculty classes

(i.e. discussions, workshops, oral or written communication, hands-on work, etc.)

* Additional online tools and services that may support above activities and courses

**Methods:**

I plan to conduct surveys and interviews for Faculty of Arts students (and instructors if necessary). I also plan to research online for UBC course selection, sizes, availability, and more, as well as to search and assess the numerous tools and services which may support online courses.

**My Qualifications:**

I am a soon-to-be Bachelor of Arts degree graduate with over 4 years of study. Having taken several research and statistics courses, I have extensive prior experience in the research process, such as interviews, surveys, statistics, and more. As a Vancouver local, I’ve experienced many years of commuting throughout the Lower Mainland as a public transit commuter and as a driver. I’m also a frequent traveller who simultaneously takes online courses, so I understand the advantages and limitations of those courses. Furthermore, I’m a computer science student. I also have an extensive background in current online technology including its strengths and weaknesses.

**Conclusion:**

Knowing various logistical limitations within the Lower Mainland, as well as the importance of efficient time and financial management, Faculty of Arts students and instructors may greatly benefit from additional distance education courses. With today's internet and computing technology, as well as notable demand and availability, this proposal may be feasible to implement. It will hopefully benefit not just the Faculty of Arts, but the university as a whole.

Works Cited:

<https://www.forbes.com/pictures/ehmk45jhdg/2-vancouver/#20eb798d21cf>

<https://www.tomtom.com/en_gb/trafficindex/list?citySize=ALL&continent=NA&country=ALL>