

Engaging the Future: Update on the Strategic Plan – September 2010

Engaging the Future, the Report of the Task Force on Strategic Planning, was approved by the Senate in October 2006 and the Board of Governors in November 2006, and published in its final form in January 2007.

There have been many successes in fulfilling the commitments made in *Engaging the Future*. That progress has been reported in earlier updates and in the directions set out in the *Preliminary Recommendations on Faculty Budgets*, and *The University of Western Ontario Operating and Capital Budgets* during the current four-year Planning Process. This Update does not review that progress. Rather – at the mid-point of the Strategic Plan’s anticipated life – it identifies aspirations in **four** areas potentially worthy of greater academic and/or operational priority. These ideas are drawn from feedback on *Engaging the Future* provided by the Senate Committee on Academic Policy and Awards (SCAPA), the Senate Committee on University Planning (SCUP), Deans, and the President – Vice-Presidents Group (PVP).

It is recommended that proposals directed towards these aspirations should be encouraged and evaluated through the 2010-11 planning process, as part of Western’s next four-year academic, operational and budget plans.

1. Western will raise its international profile by:

- Selectively expanding Western’s number of (i) active partnerships with preeminent international research and teaching institutions in the areas of undergraduate and graduate programming (e.g., joint degrees, dual degrees); (ii) active study abroad initiatives at the undergraduate and graduate levels; and (iii) active exchanges of faculty
- Steadily increasing the number of international undergraduate students studying at Western, as well as the necessary support programs to help ensure their success
- Enhancing the preparation of Western students for leadership in a global society through an expansion of related curriculum offerings, research activities, and service-learning opportunities
- Redoubling Western’s effort to communicate a cohesive and focused message about the strengths of Western’s scholarship and research at the national and international levels—with the full and active engagement of alumni, Deans, faculty members, student ambassadors, staff, and research and educational partners
- Using Western’s Endowed Chairs matching program to attract and retain internationally recognized scholars
- Planning and designing international visits and exchanges, conferences – and developing the ‘Advanced Study Institute’ concept – to strengthen intellectual intensity at Western, and to have lasting impact on disciplines, policy makers, and the public at the national and international level

2. Western will enhance the quality of its undergraduate and graduate programs by:

- Developing meaningful plans to improve in those areas of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) where Western lies at or below the national average
- Integrating teaching and research by embedding a research focus into undergraduate curriculum and creating more undergraduate research opportunities
- Progressively increasing support provided to both undergraduate and graduate students—domestic and international—for career counseling, professional development, and employment search
- Developing clear pathways and funding for the development, implementation and operation of distinctive interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate degree programs and curricula
- Progressively increasing the number of graduate students at Western with externally funded scholarships

3. Western will expand its educational reach in the region and around the world by:

- Increasing the number of highly competitive, upper-year-entry undergraduate programs that fill distinctive national niches
- Increasing the first-year undergraduate class to a size commensurate with that needed to compensate for the transfer of some Western students into upper-year-entry niche programs, while maintaining or enhancing academic standards for admission
- Giving consideration, through the normal planning/approval processes, of how to respond to the government's anticipation of growth in demand for undergraduate education in Ontario, while maintaining or enhancing academic admission standards
- Fulfilling the graduate expansion plans outlined in *Engaging the Future* – and continuing the doctoral expansion trends of the past decade at Western
- Developing more high-quality professional masters programs in high-demand areas
- Collaborating with community partners and Faculties/programs to ensure a supportive teaching and learning environment for aboriginal students, with a long-term aspiration of becoming their university destination of choice
- Designing and implementing a strategy for distance education and on-line learning that will increase the participation rate in these areas at Western

4. Western will enhance its support for faculty and staff by:

- Sustaining the core/central services that support the work of faculty and staff across the University
- Increasing the attention paid to career mentoring for faculty (teaching and supervision, curriculum design, grant applications, promotion and tenure)
- Emphasizing staff access to professional development and training
- Emphasizing the formal opportunities for development of leadership and management skills by current and prospective academic and support unit leaders
- Increasing diversity among staff and faculty, with the aspiration of surpassing the national averages for representation of designated groups in our sector
- Sustaining and expanding Western's efforts to inculcate a culture of respect in all of our activities as a university community