LAURENTIAN UNIVERSITY

Academic Plan

2020 - 2024

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged not only Laurentian University but post-secondary institutions worldwide in how to best maintain quality academic programming while keeping students, faculty, and staff safe and healthy. With over 24 fully online degree programs and 500 online courses, Laurentian is already poised as a leader in online education, but transitioning to remote and alternative modes of teaching for on-campus courses in a very short time frame required an immense collaborative effort across campus. Laurentian was the first university in Canada to recognize the severity of the outbreak and suspend in-class activities, as well as shift to remote learning. This transition was made possible through the dedication of its faculty members and staff, as well as the commitment from everyone to adapt. It also created awareness of equity issues regarding limited access to reliable internet for students living in remote locations, as well as challenges for students balancing school and home responsibilities.

While a challenge to adapt quickly, the COVID-19 pandemic also presented several opportunities to both faculty members and students. It exposed many to new technologies, such as Zoom, plus allowed faculty members to leverage some of the capacities of our existing Learning Management System (D2L) in using the discussion forum to facilitate engagement or post pre-recorded lectures. Finally, given the cancellation of in-person final exams, faculty members also reimagined their assessment approaches, integrating alternative methods and creative final assignments.

Post-secondary institutions worldwide have also had to adapt quickly to online modes of delivery, so this "new normal" challenges Laurentian University to continue in its innovation in order to maintain its status as a leader, plus attract and retain students. With that in mind, this Academic Plan is even more important as Laurentian redefines itself and enhances its academic programming. While COVID-19 may initially impact our ability to reach some of the objectives in the Academic Plan, once we have passed through this experience, we will indeed emerge with a renewed commitment to achieving each goal and objective.

The **Plan**

The Academic Plan is structured into 12 goals.

For each goal in the Academic Plan, a lead is identified. Each of these goals is further divided into several objectives. They are organized by the four lenses of the Academic Plan, but also each consider the lessons learned from COVID-19.

The key goals for the 2020-2024 Academic Plan are:

Strategic **Development** of **Academic Programs**

1. Build and support flexible innovative and timely academic programs that provide the foundation needed by our graduates to become productive critically engaged members of society (supported through our Institutional Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) and accreditation processes).
2. Enrich our French language programming.
3. Enhance our bilingual opportunities.
4. Enhance our Indigenous programming and support the success of our Indigenous students.
5. Drive the development of interdisciplinary opportunities at the course and degree level.

Student Success and **Retention**

6. Enhance and support the transition for all first-year students.
7. Attract and retain graduate students through strategic growth of attractive and competitive thesis-based, course based, and professional graduate program offerings.
8. Become a destination of choice for international students.

Support for **Faculty Members** in the Continued **Development** of **Innovative** Pedagogies

9. Grow and recognize our excellence in teaching through comprehensive and ongoing pedagogical support for full-time and part-time faculty members.
10. Grow research, scholarship and associated creative activities within our high-quality academic programs and translate their outcomes into productive benefits for society.

Alignment with **External** Opportunities and **Stakeholder** Priorities

11. Strengthen experiential learning and leadership development opportunities.
12. Attract and retain non-traditional students and enhance opportunities for e-learning and lifelong learning.

Strategic **Development**

- Enhance and support the transition for all **first-year students**.
- Attract and retain graduate students through strategic growth of attractive and competitive thesis-based, course based, and professional **graduate program offerings**.
- Become a destination of choice for

Support for **Faculty Members** in the Continued **Development** of **Innovative** Pedagogies

9 Grow and recognize our **excellence in teaching** through comprehensive and ongoing pedagogical support for full-time and part-time faculty members.

10 Grow **research, scholarship and associated creative activities** within our high-quality academic programs and translate their outcomes into productive benefits for society.

Alignment with **External** Opportunities and Stakeholder **Priorities**

11 Strengthen **experiential learning and leadership development** opportunities.

12 Attract and retain non-traditional students and enhance opportunities for **e-learning and lifelong learning**.

Strategic **Development** of **Academic Programs**

La ' a ı ' ı ' ı :

1

Build and support flexible innovative and timely academic programs that provide the foundation needed by our graduates to become productive critically engaged members of society.

(L a : -P ' , A a a P ı ı ')

While universities are often still regarded as traditional upholders of knowledge, academic innovation in program design and delivery is transforming the undergraduate and graduate educational experiences as never before. Laurentian along with its federated partners is committed to being at the forefront of this innovation, with continuously evolving academic programs that are nationally leading and internationally recognized, providing the strongest possible outcomes for our students.

In support of this goal, Laurentian University's Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) was designed in compliance with the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) adopted by the publicly-assisted universities of the Province of Ontario, and its intention is that undergraduate and graduate programs in Ontario universities meet high standards of quality. Further, our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan states that we will "demonstrate support for our vibrant high-quality accredited programs by providing the appropriate resources to meet external accreditation requirements".

Recognizing the importance of ongoing development and assurance of quality of our academic programs through both the IQAP and external accreditation processes, the Vice-President, Academic and Provost will work with faculty and staff across campus to:

a. Update and streamline the IQAP procedures to encourage rigorous and evidence-based reports;

b. Engage academic units[2] early and equitably in the planning and implementation of their IQAP review and external accreditation processes through targeted workshops and one-on-one consultations (including but not limited to curriculum (re)design, outlining of data collection/analysis strategies, actionable and effective responses to reviewer suggestions);

c. Work with academic units to ensure that accredited programs meet or exceed external accreditation requirements;

d. Engage faculty leadership regularly in critically reflective practices concerning academic planning (including but not limited to the development of program level outcomes and curriculum maps, establishing a data-driven approach to development of programs and courses, cycling courses and removing courses that are no longer offered, and long-term vision planning);

e. Introduce a centralized system to archive, process, track, and cue activities related to IQAP and accreditation projects (including reviewer recommendations, course-level and program-level learning outcomes, ACAPLAN recommendations, and implementation plans);

f. Ensure that there is minimal duplication in course or program offerings on a system-wide basis, including within and between faculties;

g. Through ACAPLAN, enforce a better management of inactive courses and the steps to revitalize and reactivate them;

h. Promote the development of new courses, new pedagogical approaches, and pedagogical tools;

i. Standardize the numbering of 3000 and 4000 courses to ensure that students are not artificially penalized by the course numbering.

2) Academic unit refers to all academic departments and schools, including federated university partners

2

Enrich our French language programming.

(L a : A . ı . ȧ . -P . ' , A a . a F a . ı ı A a .)

The Franco-Ontarian flag proudly flies on Laurentian University's campus, where it was first created in 1975. Laurentian offers opportunities for Francophone students to study in French and for immersion students to continue their studies in French or in bilingual programs to increase their mastery of French as they complete their disciplinary programs. Our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan states that we will both "demonstrate our ongoing commitment as champions of French cultures and language, by offering and resourcing vibrant programs and services in French" and "equip graduates to practice, teach, and contribute as employees of choice in francophone, rural, and Indigenous contexts, throughout the North and beyond".

We are committed to enhancing the experience of our French-language students on our campus. As graduates, they will

4

Enhance our Indigenous programming and support the success of our Indigenous students.

(L a : A . ı . d . -P . ' , A a . a l ı . P ı a .)

Laurentian's Strategic Plan affirms that Laurentian University will be a leader in the process of reconciliation through transformative postsecondary education and research. Furthermore, it states that "Laurentian students will become more familiar with Indigenous ways of being and principles of reconciliation through various aspects of campus culture" and "We will be a national leader in Indigenous education because of expanded Indigenous curriculum offerings across all faculties". The Laurentian University Native Education Council (LUNEC) affirms that Indigeneity can only be accomplished through r elationships with kin, land, language, and community and the ongoing commitment to sustain and nurture that relationship or connection. It is also important to ensure there is support for those who are striving to reclaim and learn about their identity.

In the first instance, we are committed to providing national leadership in developing curriculum that provides all of our students with a full appreciation of Indigenous issues, including recognition of their positionality in relation to colonialism and racism, such that they can apply this knowledge as they become Canada's next generation of leaders.

To achieve this goal, we must work together to:

a. Increase Indigenous content in the curriculum across all faculties;

b. Emphasize critical reflection of self in relationship to Indigenous curriculum;

c. Create processes to maintain and review the curriculum of courses with Indigenous content to ensure they are relevant and provide compelling learning opportunities for all Laurentian students;

d. Enhance learning opportunities and support for faculty members in integrating Indigenous content and supporting Indigenous students in their courses;

e. Promote on campus and off campus experiential learning opportunities that maximize the learning experience while promoting deeper understanding of Indigenous issues.

Our second intention is to increase enrollments and the success of Indigenous students across all disciplines. As an institution committed to leadership in Truth and Reconciliation, we must fully recognize the ways of learning and cultural approaches to knowledge of Indigenous communities and students in order to design curricula that will stimulate successful scholarship of Indigenous students. We must also provide for learning in a culturally safe environment.

To accomplish this intention, we must meet the following objectives:

f. Continue to work with the Laurentian University Native Education Council (LUNEC) as well as Indigenous communities to best respond to research, program, and content needs;

g. Collaborate with secondary school Indigenous program leads both provincially and federally, to transition secondary school graduates to university, through the collaborative development of pre-university programming, early introduction to the university environment, and development of mentorship programs;

h. Review our courses through the lenses of structuring the content and delivery of courses in a manner that will maximize the success of all learners;

i. Establish Laurentian University as a steward for the preservation and reclamation of Indigenous languages, including the development of academic activities in Anishnaabemowin;

j. Ensure that there are appropriate academic and library services for Indigenous students to complement the expanded Indigenous content in courses;

k. In collaboration with the Indigenous Sharing and Learning Centre and the Centre for Academic Excellence, provide cocurricular and extracurricular supports for Indigenous students and create opportunities for the Laurentian community to engage with Indigenous ways of knowing;

l. Develop a proactive plan for the recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty across all disciplines.

Student Success and Retention

6

Enhance and support the transition for all first-year students.

(La: A.ı.d -P. ı, La a a)

Student success begins by setting clear expectations through the recruitment and admissions processes. It also includes providing the supports and welcome needed for students to develop a sense of belonging in the Laurentian community and confidence in their ability to succeed in their studies. According to the most recent data, 2.6% of Laurentian students leave our institution before November 1st and our year 1 to year 2 retention rate is 86.8%. Although this is an improvement over previous years' retention rates, in order to continue our improved retention rate and increase student success, the 2017-2023 Retention Strategy emphasizes the importance of a friendly first year and recommends increased supports for incoming students. The Strategic Plan states that "Laurentian students will benefit from enhanced services and infrastructure that support writing and information literacy, advising, academic planning, administrative services, and progress tracking". Furthermore, the Okanagan Charter emphasizes the personal development of students, including creating opportunities to build student resilience and life enhancing skills, plus support to thrive and achieve their full potential. In order to support the transition of first-year students, it is incumbent on the various units across campus to prepare students for the expectations of a university education before they arrive at Laurentian, plus provide appropriate academic supports though these objectives:

a. Work with appropriate administrative and academic units to initiate a summer transition program focused on developing and enhancing skills for academic success;

b. Design and implement a comprehensive Welcome Week and first six-week transition plan to build a sense of community among students, to impart university- and program-specific expectations of students, and to brand the Laurentian Experience in the Fall, Winter and Spring semesters;

c. Enhance academic supports for students, including informational literacy, writing and numeracy, and research skills;

d. Create first-semester early warning mechanisms by which at-risk students can be identified earlier, and monitor term-to-term and year-to-year attrition alerts;

e. Enhance our peer support programs to increase opportunities for peer mentorship of first-year students and develop a leadership credit for participation in this program;

f. Initiate an Academic Forgiveness Policy to permit students who completely fail out of first year to receive appropriate remediation and support, and get a new opportunity to succeed.

Given the complexity of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of our students and variations in their academic preparedness, it is crucial in developing these supports to focus on and recognize the individual and to ensure that the right blend of supports is in place for each student. Further, particular attention should be provided to students arriving at Laurentian through nontraditional pathways, for whom the cultural transition to university may be the greatest.

7

Attract and retain graduate students through strategic growth of attractive and competitive thesis-based, course based, and professional graduate program offerings.

(La: Da, Fa ı G a d S)

We have committed in the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan to increase Laurentian graduate student enrollment by at least 40% through augmenting both domestic and international graduate student registrations. This outcome is in line with the growth of Laurentian as a research-intensive institution and with our SMA2 objectives to increase domestic graduate enrollment. In order to raise our graduate student numbers, partners across the academic and administrative units must work together to:

a. Support the creation of new graduate programs, including post-graduate diplomas and course-based and professional options, with a focus on our strengths;

Administratively we will:

e. Streamline admission procedures;

f. Enhance our recruitment network through the mobilization of faculty members, current students, and alumni, plus develop a geographic strategy that maximizes opportunity while building in the diversity to weather challenges resultant from geopolitics or international situations beyond our control;

g. Increase communication with international students throughout the application to admission processes, including support during the visa application process;

h. Develop further partnership agreements with institutions internationally and in a variety of disciplines.

Support for **Faculty Members** in the Continued **Development** of **Innovative** Pedagogies

9

Recognize excellence in teaching and provide comprehensive and ongoing pedagogical support for full-time and part-time faculty members.

(La : A . ı . d -P . ' , La a a)

Laurentian University prides itself on its teaching excellence and the delivery of a quality learning experience for all students. As emphasized in the 2017-2023 Retention Strategy, retention is built in the classroom and the Strategic Plan states that "We will enhance our support for professors in their teaching by providing opportunities for faculty peer-mentoring and collaboration with colleagues who specialize in pedagogy and instructional design". In particular, pedagogical design and innovation are key to increasing student satisfaction with the Laurentian in-classroom experience, an area where national surveys suggest that Laurentian has lagged behind its peers in recent years.

In order to achieve this goal, Laurentian University will accomplish the following objectives:

a. Engage faculty in professional development on current practices and trends in higher education, including high impact practices, teaching with technology, student engagement and active learning, Universal Design, Indigenous pedagogies, as well as assessment and teaching strategies for various class sizes and modes of delivery;

b. Support faculty participation in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) through peer-to-peer and mentorship style programming;

c. Improve course evaluation procedures and equip faculty members with alternative methods of collecting feedback and measuring course success (e.g., appropriate goal setting, exploring indicators of success on various concurrent goals, informal feedback methods, critical reflection);

d. Introduce widespread mechanisms to remind and encourage faculty members to adopt best practices in their teaching (e.g., provide detailed/frequent feedback before the Drop deadline, use of active learning techniques, etc.)

e. Design courses and develop a teaching style using principles of Accessible Education, which consider a range of student characteristics such as ethnicity, race, abilities, disabilities, age, gender, language abilities and preferred learning style;

f. Implement a policy regarding a common syllabus format and minimum syllabus requirements, including clear learning outcomes, information about academic and non-academic supports on campus, as well as Academic Integrity and Academic Accessibility policies;

g. Increase internal recognition of faculty members with demonstrated excellence in teaching, and nominate faculty members for external awards, such as 3M teaching fellowships.

around the university, from the humanities to engineering, from health to architecture, and education to music. While our scholarly achievements are broad, we are especially adept at working in partnership with communities to achieve impactful research outcomes that have particular relevance for the North. This broad-based creative activity is essential to providing the best possible educational experience to our students.

To enable the success of research, scholarship, and associated creative activities, we will:

a. Work to equitably recognize instructional excellence in creative, scholarly, and research activities across the institution;

b. Recognize participation in research, scholarly, and creative activities as an important experiential learning activity for all our students;

c. Build the administrative support network needed to appropriately support our scholarly aspirations;

d. Build partnerships with the community at large to recognize synergies in collaborative research, creative, and scholarly activities, as well as grow the network of Laurentian-affiliated scholars that can enhance our programs;

e. Ensure that the results of our scholarship have impact; through presentation and publication and through innovation, patenting and commercialization as warranted;

f. Enhance the incorporation of research planning within academic planning at the faculty and unit levels;

g. Set graduate and postdoctoral targets and provide the competitive scholarly support packages necessary to achieve our objectives for thesis-based programming, including the technical support often needed;

h. Bring entrepreneurship and innovation into coursework by linking research and creative activities to entrepreneurship and community engagement;

i. Ensure that the library and archives faculty and collections can support a robust research agenda, which includes research support in the digital realm: scholarly communication, research data management, and research impact reports.

Alignment with **External** Opportunities and Stakeholder **Priorities**

11

Strengthen experiential learning and leadership development opportunities.

(L a : A . ı . d - P . ' , L a a a)

Our 2018-2023 Strategic Plan states that "Laurentian students in all faculties will benefit from enhanced leadership development and experiential learning across the institution, in community and industry settings, as we will double the number of work and experiential learning opportunities". Our SMA- 3 for 2020-2025 also affirms that Laurentian will be assessed on the number and proportion of graduates in undergraduate programs who participated in at least one course with required Experiential Learning during their degree. In order to meet these important targets, the Laurentian community must:

a. Establish mechanisms such that every Laurentian student participates in and records at least one experiential learning opportunity during their academic program;

b. Define and catalogue existing experiential learning and leadership opportunities across all academic units, plus promote these opportunities;

c. Work with community partners to provide mutually beneficial experiential learning opportunities;

d. Provide professional development for the Laurentian community regarding best practices in experiential learning (i.e., grounded in pedagogy, experiential, means of assessment, reflection) and the diversity of forms that this type of experience can take (e.g., beyond formal placements);

e. Enhance the skills and competencies n)d8095(7 .dctualTextFEFF0009>BDC ( )TjEMC y/Span /Lan,serv7 .dctb /evolvlD 7o2penti0 ETEMC /S

c. Create opportunities for dual credit offerings, whereby secondary school and college students can receive university level credit before starting their first year of undergraduate studies;

d. Establish a mechanism by which students with work experience can challenge courses or receive credit towards their degrees;

e. Seek opportunities to engage with college partners to expand applied research opportunities, including unique work-integrated learning experiences.

The growth and development of e-Learning and blended learning[3] opportunities have driven access to the university and have provided a means to grow the diversity of Laurentian's offerings. Micro-credentials are also aligned with the competencies of the workforce, including critical thinking, professionalism, intercultural sensitivity, and digital dexterity. To better serve the lifelong learning needs of our community and to grow Laurentian's participation in the e-learning market, we will:

f. Explore the creation of degree options, certificate programs, and micro-credentialing for students seeking flexibility in their programs;

g. Create administrative processes to facilitate the development of non-credit and micro-credential offerings;

h. Enhance the culture of teaching with technology, through investment in improving and reinforcing Laurentian supported IT platforms as well as enhanced professional development in the integration of technology in teaching;

i. Grow and market the availability of programming during the spring and summer terms;

j. Work with relevant programs to expand the course and program offerings of Laurentian Online, as well as increase the number of blended learning course offerings;

k. Advocate for internet service to be readily available to all students and faculty members, in order to provide equitable access to online and remote-delivery courses.

3) Blended learning refers to a combination of synchronous and asynchronous delivery. This approach to teaching could include recorded lectures posted on D2L, synchronous Zoom sessions, discussion posts on D2L, or online simulations.

Looking Forward

In contemplating the next four years of Laurentian University, pursuing the goals and objectives of this Academic Plan sets Laurentian on a course towards academic success that will enable Laurentian to achieve its full potential as one of Canada's