

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE 2009-12

June 2009

When Huron adopted its Strategic Plan 2005-10, we agreed to create a three-year action plan (2005-08) and to review the Plan in 2008 to determine whether any revisions should be made in its six goals or in the related strategies. This review has now been completed and in April 2009, Huron's Academic Council and Executive Board approved a revision of the Plan which will carry the College through 2012. Agreement was reached to maintain the College's current direction but to update the goals in the 2005-10 Plan to reflect progress over the past four years. Units are now writing detailed action plans that will assist the College in carrying out the goals and strategies of the revised Strategic Plan over the period 2009-12.

The goals of the 2005-10 Strategic Plan were shaped four years ago by the knowledge that Huron faced significant challenges. As noted in the Preamble to the Plan, "We specialize in a model of undergraduate liberal arts education that offers our students advantages found in very few Canadian universities today. Yet our distinctiveness is neither well understood nor well known in the educational marketplace. Our Faculty of Theology also offers a strong and vibrant set of programs, but the number of students who pursue a theological education is limited. Over the past decade we have expanded program offerings (and related expenses) in both our faculties, but, apart from the spike of the double cohort year, our enrolments have remained relatively static and highly uncertain. As underscored in Statistics Canada data, our traditional program offerings in the arts and social sciences are not growth areas, and it is likely that the applicant pool for these programs will remain flat or will even decline. From a competitive standpoint, this means that universities who offer arts and social science programs will be fighting for a potentially smaller piece of the educational pie."

The challenge we faced in building our enrolments was part and parcel of the larger financial challenge faced by the College in 2005. We recognized at that time that our educational model is cost-intensive and that our size allowed for few economies of scale. Government funding had eroded in past decades, increasing our dependency on tuition revenues. To compete for the best students, we knew we needed to invest in scholarship aid and in first-rate physical facilities, both of these expensive undertakings. We also needed to increase our endowments significantly, in order to underpin funding for vital elements of our operations. As noted at the time, "Although the financial health of the College is not an end in itself, it is critical as a means to enable us to fulfill our mission." The goals identified in the Strategic Plan were intended, among other things, to move us to financial stability so that we could flourish as an educational institution. We can take pride in the fact that we have come a long way toward achieving this desired financial stability. We have invested in marketing and recruitment, and our enrolments have grown slowly but steadily over the last four years and now stand at 1200 full-time

equivalent (FTE) students, the number aimed for in the Strategic Plan. We've increased our revenues from ancillary operations, and we have doubled our endowments (even with the recent market erosion). We have secured funds to invest in improvements to our physical plant and have enhanced our scholarship values. We have also made steady progress in paying down our capital debt. We entered 2009 in much better fiscal condition than was the case in 2005.

In light of these achievements, the College will chart its course over the next three years in accordance with the following goals and related strategies. First of all, our focus on building upon our excellence in academic programs (Goal One in the 2005-10 Plan) will be retained as a mainstay of the Plan. Embedded in that goal are a number of key objectives: to develop new academic programs, and in particular ones that are distinctive from Western's; to continue our established emphasis on internationalization (as a key component of our academic excellence); and to nurture curricular innovations such as community-based learning. A great deal has been accomplished in each of these areas over the past four years. Further, new initiatives are emerging related to the first-year classroom experience, as the Faculty of Arts and Social Science through its Admissions and Retention Strategy Committee examines our National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data and seeks to enhance opportunities for student-faculty interaction and active and collaborative learning in its first-year courses.

At the same time, we will broaden Goal One to incorporate a reference to scholarly research, which is an important underpinning of Huron's academic excellence. Teaching remains paramount in our mission, and we do not aim to be a research-intensive institution. Nevertheless, scholarship is a vital part of the work that our faculty members do and feeds directly into the academic experience of students in the classroom. Goal One now reads as follows:

**Goal One: To foster excellence in academic programming, classroom teaching, and scholarship.**

Strategies in support of this goal:

A. Develop an academic planning and review process in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science and the Faculty of Theology that will support our existing program strengths and will at the same time encourage and provide resources for cross-departmental and cross-Faculty collaboration and interdisciplinary program initiatives.

B. Continue the development within the Faculty of Theology of a Centre for Abrahamic Religions as an opportunity for curricular innovation and for cross-Faculty collaboration.

C. Conduct a campus-wide International Quality Review Process (IQRP) that will assess our progress in internationalization across our academic enterprise and give direction to future initiatives.

D. Build upon our now-established foundations for Community-Based Learning as part of our curriculum.

E. Develop mechanisms for enhancing student-faculty interaction and active and collaborative learning in first-year courses (including the use of technology to support effective learning).

F. Explore methods for incorporating research-based teaching into our curriculum.

G. Support and recognize the scholarly accomplishments of our faculty.

Units to develop action plans and performance measures in support of these strategies are:

- Faculty of Arts and Social Science
- Faculty of Theology
- Library

Goal Two of the 2005-10 Strategic Plan focused on student life and student services at Huron and will remain a strategic priority. Huron defines itself as an institution which offers exceptional opportunities for students to be part of a close-knit and supportive academic and social community. We have made significant strides over the past four years on major objectives related to achievement of this goal. A new Academic Services Centre has been established, with increased staffing for academic counselling, career services, and community-based learning. Staff members in this Centre (which also includes Writing Skills and Cross-Cultural Services) now report to the Associate Dean of FASS and are working together to coordinate and strengthen services. They are also making greater use of technology where appropriate, so that staff time can be used effectively for personal interactions with students. We have made physical enhancements to our residences and to student common areas; have strengthened programming within those residences; and have worked with the Huron University College Students' Council to improve opportunities for student engagement in campus life, including a volunteer service initiative.

**Goal Two: To enhance student life and student services.**

Strategies to address Goal Two are as follows:

A. Continue development of a strong, service-oriented academic counselling and career services operation that is structured to support students' academic success and to guide them in making appropriate career choices.

B. Expand opportunities for students to take part in internships and community-based learning opportunities.

C. Make effective use of technology in delivering student services.

D. Continue to foster high-quality student services within the Library, the Computing Centre, the Writing Centre, and the Chaplaincy.

E. Continue to make physical enhancements to residences.

F. Work with the HUCSC, the BHTS, and student advisory groups to expand opportunities for student engagement in campus life and for leadership and volunteer engagement both on and off campus.

Units to develop action plans and performance measures in support of these strategies are:

- Faculty of Arts and Social Science (including Academic Services Centre units)
- Faculty of Theology
- Housing and Student Life
- The Library
- Information Technology
- The Chaplaincy

**Goals Three and Four** of the 2005-10 Plan addressed the need for identifying and communicating Huron's unique strengths in order to attract and recruit high-calibre students and meet our enrolment targets. The Plan recognized the imperative need we faced in 2005 to "craft and communicate a powerful message about Huron's distinctive character within the fields of undergraduate and theological education, including a focus on academic excellence, a student-centred environment, cultivation of the whole person, an international or global outlook, nurturing of leadership abilities, opportunities for experiential learning and meaningful volunteer service, and our students' access to 'the best of both worlds' through our relationship with UWO." The Plan also noted the need to pay close attention to operations within the Registrar's Office to ensure that they were structured and supported effectively. Since 2005 we have worked with a consultant to develop a communications and marketing plan, and we have used that plan consistently to guide our recruitment efforts. We have also restructured and added a staff member to the Registrar's Office and have carefully refined our recruitment strategies. Our steady growth in applications and enrolments is a measure of success in our advancement of these two goals.

In the updated Strategic Plan, we will maintain our emphasis on marketing and recruitment, combining the previous Goals Three and Four as follows:

**Goal Three: To communicate, market and recruit effectively so as to meet Huron's targets in terms of numbers and calibre of students.**

Strategies to address Goal Three are as follows:

A. Continue implementation (with appropriate updates) of our marketing and communications strategy (including use of website, various media, and our alumni base).

B. Continue investment in marketing and promotion of the College.

C. Continue focus on enhancing our recruitment strategies for both FASS and the Faculty of Theology in order to maintain enrolments of 1200 FTE students and to raise our entering cut-off average in FASS to 80%.

D. Continue roll-out of our international recruitment plan.

Units to develop action plans and performance measures in support of this goal:

- Registrar's Office
- Faculty of Arts and Social Science
- Faculty of Theology
- Principal's Office
- Alumni and Community Development
- Director of Communications

Goal Five in the 2005-10 Strategic Plan, to maximize our revenues from ancillary services and programs, has now been broadened to encompass attention to operational health and sustainability within the organization. This goal in its original form was intended as a means of enabling the College to achieve the fiscal stability necessary for us to flourish as an institution. We have seen steady gains in the revenues produced by Conference Services and by ancillary operations such as Summer School courses. We have refashioned our on-campus houses to attract upper-year students to residence, thus increasing our residence revenues. With the help of a land-use consultant, we have investigated the potential for development of a portion of our lands and have decided to shelve this idea for the medium term. We are in a better financial position than we were four years ago, and while a combination of entrepreneurial activity and prudent management is still necessary, we can shift our attention to some broader operational initiatives that have emerged in recent years. We now have in place, for example, frameworks for risk management and for emergency preparedness that should be monitored and maintained. We also have commitments to employee wellness and to the professional development of our staff that were not reflected in the 2005-10 Plan. The following goal replaces Goal Five in the previous Plan:

**Goal Four: To nurture the stability, sustainability, and fiscal health of our operations and the well-being of our employees.**

Strategies to address Goal Four are as follows:

A. Regularly monitor and maintain the Risk Management practices established for the College.

B. Continue to develop and implement Emergency Preparedness plans for the College.

C. Ensure that the College's buildings and the services we provide comply with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

D. Create a culture of environmental sustainability on our campus and a strategy for supporting environmental sustainability throughout our practices.

E. Continue to engage in long-range financial forecasting to ensure that we are able to foresee and deal with threats to our financial stability.

F. Investigate new partnerships and revenue sources that would support the strategic advancement of the College.

G. Maintain effective management of our ancillary revenue operations to maximize their returns to the College.

H. Continue development of a supportive workplace to promote the professional development and well-being of our employees, including training opportunities and individual employee development plans.

I. Strive to communicate regularly to all employees the information they need to thrive and be effective in the workplace.

Units to develop action plans and performance measures in support of this goal:

- Chief Administrative Officer
- Principal's Office
- Director of Information Technology

Goal Six of the 2005-10 Strategic Plan, to increase endowments and move toward the retirement of capital debt, has also been updated to reflect the current status of the College. Since 2005 we have significantly reduced our capital debt, with the only outstanding loan being that for the Southwest Residence. The Executive Board has also adopted a policy of balancing debt reduction with the need for strategic investment in key components of operations, and the Board monitors this balance regularly. The Capital Campaign planned for in 2005 is now well launched and on target with its intended outcomes. The original Goal Six has been recast to encompass more broadly our on-going work in "alumni and friend development" and fund development within which our Capital Campaign and Annual Fund Campaign are both situated.

**Goal Five: To pursue excellence in our alumni relations, community relations, and fundraising activities.**

Strategies to address Goal Five are as follows:

A. Engage our alumni and friends in the mission and life of the College, providing them meaningful opportunities to be involved in academic and social events, recruiting and promotion, and mentoring of younger alumni.

B. Provide opportunities for alumni and friends to benefit the College financially in ways that are satisfying to the donor and support the College's mission.

C. Build endowments equal to our current operating budget, laying the foundation for our long-term (10-year) goal of having endowments that are double our annual operating budget, while at the same time meeting annual fund targets in supplying operating revenues for the College.

Unit to develop action plans and performance measures in support of this goal:

- Alumni and Community Development