

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An academic plan looks to the future and builds on the past. Lakehead University has a strong past on which to build, and this Academic Plan envisions a bright future for Lakehead as a comprehensive, research intensive university, recognized nationally and internationally for excellence in teaching and learning. The Academic Plan is designed to guide Lakehead University's priorities and decision-making over the next five years with this long-term vision in mind. This plan encourages us to be ambitious and innovative while working within the fiscal constraints we will be facing.

Established in 1965, Lakehead offers a diverse range of undergraduate and graduate programming with nine faculties: Social Sciences and Humanities, Science and Environmental Studies, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Natural Resources Management, Health and Behavioural Sciences, and Graduate Studies. The new Faculty of Law will welcome the charter class on the Thunder Bay Campus in the fall of 2013. Lakehead 's Thunder Bay campus is home to the west campus of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) – a joint initiative of Lakehead and Laurentian Universities – which graduated its first cohort of 55 doctors in May 2009. The Orillia campus offers an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in arts and sciences, as well as programs in business, education, and social work.

The 2006-2010 Academic Plan placed significant emphasis on the development of program learner outcomes. As a result of work completed over a two year period, learner outcomes were established for 97% of the core undergraduate degree programs and were reported as part of the 2008 Multiyear Accountability Agreement with the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU). This achievement positioned the University well for the current transition to the provincial Quality Assurance Framework in which learner outcomes are now required for both new and cyclical program reviews. The Senate Undergraduate Studies Committee (SUSC) was given the responsibility of clarifying the commitment of all 4 Year Honours, 4 Year and 3 Year undergraduate degree programs to “educating students who are recognized for leadership and independent critical thinking and who are aware of social and environmental responsibilities.” The graduation of students possessing these skills was a focus of the Lakehead University Mission Statement. In response to a mandate in the 2006 Academic Plan to ensure regular review of the 4 And 5 Year Undergraduate Programs, the 10-year schedule for the Lakehead Undergraduate Program Reviews under the previous provincial UPRAC Guidelines was significantly revised to enable completion of programs that were already in progress or scheduled for review. By the end of the 2009-2010 academic year, all remaining program reviews in the original cycle of Lakehead's reviews were either underway or completed. Requirements for internal graduate program reviews as a pre-requisite to the new and periodic Ontario Council of Graduate Schools (OCGS) review process were implemented.

Senate standing committees and administration worked together to review and revise regulations for 3-year degrees, academic majors and minors, and certificates. The Academic Plan also focused attention on the development of the Writing Centre and affirmed continued support for the Instructional Development Centre. In June 2010, reports were prepared to summarize the implementation status of the 2006-2010 Academic Plan. The reports were organized by the action items referenced in the plan, and provided chronologies of how the Academic Plan was implemented. The report was presented for discussion and feedback to the

Senate Academic Committee and was subsequently posted on the Vice-President (Academic) & Provost Website (June 2010).

Lakehead University prides itself on the quality of teaching and the student experience, and there are many indications that we should indeed be proud. Student-teacher ratios are favourable, average class sizes are small, and the percentage of full-time faculty with doctoral degrees is high. Student evaluations of teaching performance consistently indicate that our instructors are highly regarded by their students. External reviews of our undergraduate and graduate programs are generally strong. However, achieving excellence in teaching requires ongoing reflection and meaningful assessment, as well as strategic use of resources to support teaching and learning. Meaningful and reliable indicators of teaching excellence need to be identified so that the achievement of goals in this area are unambiguously stated, tracked and disseminated.

Lakehead University's research activities are a testament to its growing commitment to become one of the top 25 research-intensive universities in Canada. With nine Canada Research Chairs, nine research centres, 31 graduate programs, and a doubling of external research funding within the last few years, Lakehead's sustained development in this area is clear. Given our recognition of the value and expertise that faculty who are actively engaged in creative and scholarly work bring to their teaching, we are in the position to further strengthen the quality of undergraduate education by enhancing the integration of research and teaching.

Lakehead University's core strengths and future opportunities are clearly linked to our unique geographical positioning in Northwestern Ontario and Central Ontario. As a regional university, we have been necessarily responsive to the needs of our northern rural and remote communities. Our connections to community are explicit and ever expanding as we move to enhance relationships and student learning opportunities while embracing our role as a vital contributor to economic development.

Lakehead University must play a role in helping to increase dramatically the proportion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (Aboriginal) students who are academically prepared to go University. Not only do Aboriginal students present Lakehead with an opportunity for growth, but Lakehead has a long-standing social obligation to these students, enshrined in the institution's mission statement to serve the educational needs of the Aboriginal population in Northern Ontario, and now, Central Ontario as well. We will need to ensure we offer quality programs, ensure access, and provide the necessary academic support services to successfully recruit and retain Aboriginal students, and at the same time reach out further to potential students in the GTA, the rest of Canada and internationally.

In March 2011, the Academic Planning Committee posted the Academic Plan Consultation documents which described Lakehead University today, presented a vision for the next five years, and proposed five priorities with sets of associated strategies for the 2012-2017 Academic Plan. Based on the review of the feedback received over the course of the subsequent consultation periods, in writing and through numerous small and large group discussions among faculty, staff, students, university committees, academic units, and other stakeholder groups, the Committee has completed the Academic Plan. As a result of the University Community's input and commitment to the planning process, the Academic Plan - Action Plans will guide the University's efforts over the next five years.

Proposed Academic Priorities

1. Achieve Excellence in Teaching, Learning, and Research
 - High Quality Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
 - Engaged and Successful Students, Faculty and Staff
 - Intense Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity
2. Extend Community Engagement and Outreach
3. Strengthen our Commitment to Social Justice
4. Enhance our Support of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (Aboriginal) Students
5. Expand our International Reach