

HURON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2010

PREAMBLE

Huron University College is at a crossroads. 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. Further, in an environment in which the Constituent University has enhanced its recruiting appeal and raised its entering averages over the past two years, Huron's entering average has remained unchanged, thus beginning to undercut our hard-won position as a highly selective institution whose students are very well prepared for university-level work.

For a number of reasons—including the cost-intensiveness of our educational model; the erosion of government funding (particularly as directed to undergraduate and theological education), which has increased our dependency on the tuition revenue that comes from enrolments; the relatively low levels of our endowments; and the need to invest in scholarship aid and in physical facilities in order to compete for the best students—we are currently faced with serious financial challenges. In its work over the past year, the Strategic Planning Steering Committee has focused intently on those challenges. 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 following strategic plan—goals for which each relevant academic and administrative unit will be asked to develop implementation plans—are intended to move the College to financial stability, specifically by guiding us in

- Building upon our current excellence in academic programs and student services
- Developing a clear and compelling message about the unique strengths of our institution, and effectively communicating these strengths to potential students and to the general public
- Increasing enrolments to a target, over five years, of 1150 Arts and Social Science students, which will require sustaining a 25% increase in the average size of our first-year class as well as successfully retaining those students
- Increasing enrolments to 60 full-time equivalent Theology students
- Expanding our FASS applicant pool so that we can maintain an entering average at par or above the Constituent University's

- Attracting 60 upper-year students to live in residence each year
- Increasing revenue from ancillary operations and summer courses
- At a minimum, doubling our endowments
- Reducing our debt by at least 50%

Achieving our financial goals will allow us, in turn, to continue investing in a workplace environment that is highly rewarding to faculty and staff, providing them with a satisfying professional life and enabling them to contribute productively to Huron’s achievement of its mission. We will seek in the early years of the current five-year plan to introduce workplace improvements that are either relatively low-cost or closely related to our achievement of financial goals—some restructuring and modest staff additions, for example—and as resources permit, we will welcome other opportunities for enhancements.

Success in attaining our educational goals will also ensure that we continue to produce graduates who are well educated in their chosen fields of study; who have the capacity for critical thinking and analysis; who communicate effectively; and who understand and embrace their responsibilities as members of a civil society as well as global citizens. Our ability to maintain, build upon, and effectively communicate our current high levels of student and alumni satisfaction with their educational experience at Huron will, finally, assist us in sustaining the ambitious enrolment growth that is critical to our financial well-being.

Accomplishment of the following goals is projected over a five-year time frame because several of our targets will take that length of time to reach. Individual units, however, will be asked initially to develop three-year “rolling plans,” adding objectives for the fourth year at the end of year one and for the fifth year at the end of year two. This approach will allow units to track their progress against specific milestones and measures, and to fine-tune their objectives at the end of each year. Our overarching goals will also be reviewed annually and will be updated and extended at the end of three years.

STRATEGIC GOALS

I. To Build Upon Our Excellence in Academic Programs

We will maintain our core strengths in liberal arts and theological education, while at the same time we seek to diversify our program offerings in order to enhance our distinctiveness from UWO; to attract students interested in new multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary areas of study within the liberal arts; and to create a stimulating intellectual community for current and future members of our faculty. We will continue our established emphasis on internationalization within Huron’s curriculum, which has become a hallmark of our academic life. In addition, we will continue to pursue and nurture curricular innovations such as our recently introduced interdisciplinary first-year course and our current project to develop experiential learning opportunities for students within FASS.

Strategies:

- A. Strike an Academic Program Committee of FASS, charged with leading the development of new multi/interdisciplinary major and minor modules built from existing programs and faculty expertise. In addition, charge the APC with reviewing and considering future directions for the new interdisciplinary first-year course, including possible incorporation of additional “foundational studies” for first-year students.
- B. Continue the work of the Principal’s Committee on Experiential Learning in proposing and helping to implement experiential learning opportunities for Huron students.
- C. Continue Theology’s development and implementation of its new initiatives: e.g., the B.Th., M.A., and the MTS in the West Indies.
- D. Consider restructuring FASS departments, in order to improve administrative support, to facilitate collaborative new program development, and to ensure that faculty are able to devote their primary professional efforts to teaching and research excellence.

Units to develop implementation plans and performance measures to support this goal:

- FASS
- Faculty of Theology
- Library

II. To Enhance Student Life and Student Services In Order To Create A Warm And Vibrant Academic and Social Community

The overall quality of student life at Huron must reflect and support Huron’s core identity as an institution that offers small classes, personal attention, and caring faculty and staff. Huron needs to maintain attractive physical facilities and to promote a climate that is warm, welcoming, responsive, and respectful of individual student needs. Further, we need to attract a cohort of upper-year students to residence, in order to strengthen community and mentoring among students in all years at Huron.

In the years ahead, as competition for the best-prepared students continues to intensify, first-rate student services—including academic support services, residence life, and food services—will play an even more critical role in Huron’s ability to distinguish itself and attract and retain students. Further, students within the liberal arts in particular, and many students in theology, need expert guidance as to their academic choices while at university as well as the diversity of career pathways open to them as Huron graduates. We must ensure that the academic and career counselling resources that we offer students are well designed, accessible, effective, and responsive to their needs. International students, who have become an important component of the Huron student body, must also be well served by our suite of student support services.

Strategies:

- A. Create 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. Ensure that students are well connected to alumni, professionals, graduate schools, professional schools and a range of potential workplaces.
- B. Review support for international students (including those within Theology) and ensure that this support is robust and effective in integrating these students into life at Huron and meeting their particular needs.
- C. Use technology effectively to assist in offering student services.
- D. Complete a study and cost-analysis of changes required in residence facilities and operations in order to attract upper-year students to live at Huron. Implement those changes as funds can be identified (e.g., for adding cooking facilities to the houses) and set aside for this purpose.
- E. Complete negotiations with Chartwell's for a major revamping and improvement in quality of the food services offered in the Food Court. Monitor for success of execution.
- F. Expand and enhance student common areas.
- G. Evaluate the quality and delivery of support services to upper-year and off-campus students(including those within Theology), in order to ensure that they are as robust and effective as our services to students in residence. If called for, propose a restructured student services operation that can effectively meet our goals related to student life.
- H. Expand and facilitate student opportunities for leadership and volunteer engagement within the community and for international exchange and internship experiences.
- I. Support the continued development of high-quality student services within the library, the computing centre, the writing centre, and the chaplaincy.

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

- Dean of FASS and Dean of Theology
- Registrar's Office
- College Administrator
- Director of Residences and Student Services
- Alumni and Community Development
- The Library
- The Writing Centre
- The Chaplain
- Information Technology

III. To Develop a Clear and Compelling Message About Our Unique Strengths As An Institution And To Communicate That Message Effectively

We must 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. As well, our communications strategy must make use of diverse outlets—including our strong and committed alumni base—to assist us in conveying our distinct identity to prospective students and to the public at large.

Strategies:

- A. Employ outside, professional expertise to assist us in a clear articulation of Huron's identity and strengths, so that we can use recruitment and promotional materials and activities to maximum effect.
- B. Develop a campus-wide communication strategy to ensure that our messages about Huron are accurate, consistent, and compelling.
- C. Develop a marketing and communications plan that will enable us to use diverse outlets (including our website, UWO's website, and other media as well as our alumni and friends) to convey "the Huron story," including the success of our graduates.
- D. Encourage and support staff in engagement with the regional community in ways that will increase our profile and visibility.

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

- Principal's Office
- Registrar's Office
- Alumni and Community Development
- Director of Communications and Information Technology
- Student Services

IV. To Attract and Retain High-Calibre Students And Meet Our Enrolment Targets.

Achievement of this goal will be highly dependent upon how successfully we achieve the first three strategic goals. In addition, we must pay specific attention to operations within the Registrar's Office, to ensure that they are structured and supported effectively.

Strategies:

- A. Analyze staffing within the Registrar's Office (including allocation of responsibilities across positions) to ensure that the structure supports achievement of Huron's recruitment and retention goals.
- B. Continue analysis of recruitment strategies and target markets (with outside expertise if needed) to determine what changes are needed to enhance recruiting success.
- C. Review our international recruitment efforts (including those for Theology) and establish strategies and targets for recruiting students from a number of countries and into a more diverse range of programs at Huron (currently the

majority of our international students are from China and are enrolled in honours economics).

- D. Make effective use of existing resources such as current students and our loyal alumni base to assist us in recruiting.

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

- Registrar's Office
- Deans of FASS and Theology
- Principal's Office
- Alumni and Community Development

V. To Maximize Our Revenues From Ancillary Services And Programs

Ancillary services and programs (including summer course teaching) can play an important role in augmenting the College's operating revenues. We must continue to investigate and develop appropriate initiatives that will make full, year-round use of the College's resources (including land, buildings, and personnel) and will generate income in support of our core academic operations. An active Conference Services operation can also contribute to our goal of enhancing Huron's visibility within the broader community.

Strategies:

- A. Establish three-year goals and financial targets for the new Conference Services Manager (to include a tripling of annual gross revenue from its current base of \$250,000 of over that time period).
- B. Continue expanded summer course offerings and increase them if feasible.
- C. Investigate feasibility of other uses of land and buildings when not needed for core operations (e.g., rental of houses until we secure sufficient numbers of upper-year residents).

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

- Conference Services
- Principal's Office
- College Administrator
- Dean of FASS (summer courses)

VI. To Increase Endowments and Move Toward Retiring Capital Debt

In order to sustain our educational model, we must be able to draw upon endowment returns to help close the gap between operating revenues and costs. We have an opportunity to approach alumni and friends to contribute to endowments in ways that have not traditionally been front and centre at Huron, given our past emphasis on raising funds to support the renovation and

expansion of facilities. We have in recent years established a range of endowments representing the key areas of College life, and we believe that we can attract significant support for these endowments from donors. Specifically, we should build our endowments to a level that will fund all scholarship and bursary expenditures, as well as support a portion of our operating expenses each year in areas such as the library, student services, and student volunteer programs. While our two major areas of capital debt—for the Food Court and the new residence—are being paid down over time through ancillary revenues, we will also seek donations to assist us in early retirement of these debts, thus freeing up dollars for operations that would otherwise be spent in debt service.

Strategies:

- A. Continue and support plans for a Capital Campaign to be launched in 2006 and to be focused on doubling our current endowments.
- B. Develop a plan for a “mini-campaign” focused on select donors and aimed at retiring 50% of our capital debt.

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

- Alumni and Community Development
- Principal's Office

Approved by:
Strategic Planning Steering Committee: April 7, 2005
Executive Board: April 21, 2005