

Summary Report of Campus Consultations: Community Engagement and Partnerships

Introduction

The University of Windsor launched the Aspire online survey between February and March 2022 as the first step in the strategic planning process. The survey was accessed by more than 2,000 respondents, with 1,534 usable responses. The Aspire Café Conversations were the second step in the consultation process. These sessions provided students, staff, and faculty with the opportunity to provide their input through in-person, discussion-based, consultation sessions targeted at key topics identified through the Aspire survey. A total of 665 students and nearly 200 staff and faculty participated in these events. The Aspire online survey and Café Conversations aimed to gather respondents' perceptions of where the University of Windsor should be and how the University can best get there. As part of the consultations, attendees were asked to respond to questions centered around the University's community engagement and relations. This summary will discuss student, staff, and faculty responses to these questions.

It is important to note that these consultations were intended for broad, community-based input. The University also implemented separate consultations with approaches that are appropriate for specific communities whose voices must be heard. For example, while questions about Indigenization and Decolonization and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) were included in consultation questions, dedicated consultations with community members using informed and appropriate methods were also needed to ensure that this priority was supported by rich and informed processes.

Regional Engagement

As part of the Aspire Café Conversations, faculty and staff had the opportunity to answer the following question: **How can the University of Windsor make a difference in the Windsor-Essex region?** Respondents submitted 202 individual comments to this question including 107 (53%) staff and 95 (47%) faculty responses. Table 1 presents the three most common themes from this discussion broken down by role.

Both staff and faculty mentioned community impact most frequently as a way that the University could make a difference in the region. Comments reflected impact through the arts (e.g., "artistic engagement"), community employment and education (e.g., "skilled labour force/diversified skill" and "upskilling and reskilling opportunities"), community outreach and providing community services (e.g., "clinics and a direct service to community members need to be better funded" and "programming for the community") and building community partnerships and relationships (e.g., "bigger presence at community events" and more

“meaningful community-based research”). Only faculty members discussed aspects associated with internationalization of the University as a way to make a difference in Windsor-Essex. Specifically, comments focused on the University having “a presence outside the places in Windsor” and the need to “think broader than Windsor-Essex.”

Indigenization and decolonization were mentioned by faculty respondents with a focus on forming “Indigenous partnerships on environmental initiatives or social issues,” the “need to build and strengthen” Indigenous partnerships on environmental initiatives and the need for “more Indigenous spaces on campus.” Staff often discussed collaboration and partnerships between the University and community indicating that the University should “continue to expand partnerships,” have “meaningful partnerships,” and engage in “collaboration with community orgs.” Several themes were mentioned equally by staff, including communication (e.g., “improve media relations”), innovation (e.g., “lead innovation with industrial partners”), post graduate considerations (e.g., “employment pathways for highly engaged graduates”), research (e.g., “research collaboration”), and faculty and staff workload (e.g., “more volunteer opportunities during work time as staff”).

Table 1. Three most frequent themes regarding making a difference in Windsor-Essex.

| Role | Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme(s) 3 |
|---------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Staff | Community Impact (57) | Collaborations and Partnerships (10) | Communication, Innovation, Post grad, Research, Workload (4) |
| Faculty | Community Impact (59) | Internationalization (7) | Indigenization and Decolonization (6) |

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme.

Local Engagement

The following question was included as part of the Aspire Café Conversations for faculty and staff: **How can the University be better engaged in the neighbourhoods that surround it?** A total of 237 responses were documented to this question including 84 (35.4%) staff and 153 (64.6%) faculty responses. There was significant overlap in the top three themes discussed by faculty and staff members in response to this question (see Table 2). The top three most common topics mentioned by staff members by frequency were community impact, housing and residence, and the bus/transportation system, while for faculty these topics were community impact, collaboration and partnerships, and housing and residence, respectively. Both faculty and staff felt that having great community impact would allow the University to become better engaged with the neighbourhoods that surround it. Some recommendations for community impact included “on campus programs for youth,” “laying an accessible pathway for low-income neighbourhoods,” and “community-based teaching and research activities/projects.” Faculty and staff also expressed concerns regarding housing in the area and residences on campus. For example, they felt that advocacy regarding tenant protections and rights were necessary (e.g., “affordable and non-predatory housing for

students and local community families”), that more residence spaces were needed on campus (e.g., “provide more residence spaces”), and that the University should “encourage faculty to live near campus.” Staff also advocated for better transportation services, recommending a “transit Windsor partnership for faculty and staff” and more “active transit.” Faculty, on the other hand, discussed collaborations and partnerships with local Windsor business and organizations, specifically, mentioning partnerships with the “public library, community service organizations, schools and school boards, city, police, and hospitals” as well as “working with St. Clair college.”

Table 2. Three most frequent themes regarding engaging surrounding neighbourhoods.

| Role | Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme 3 |
|---------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Staff | Community Impact (41) | Housing and Residence (8) | Bus/transportation (8) |
| Faculty | Community Impact (47) | Collaboration and Partnerships (16) | Housing and Residence (15) |

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme.

Encouraging Students to Choose UWindsor

As part of the Aspire Café Conversations, students were asked: **What would help more students choose to come to University, rather than choosing a different path after high school?** A total of 627 total responses were provided for this question. The five most common themes are outlined below in Table 3.

Students most commonly suggested aspects related to course and program options at the University as a way to motivate students to attend UWindsor after high school. Students identified having more diversity and specialization in courses and degrees as well as courses with practical or hands-on experience as ways to encourage enrolment. Career-focused programming was also brought up frequently during discussion of this question. Students felt that high school students would be more likely to attend UWindsor if the University provided courses, programs, and credentials that are more career specific, opportunities for career exploration and planning (e.g., workshops, networking, open houses, and job fairs), and career and skill assessment. Students also felt that taking measures to make attending University more affordable would also be beneficial specifically mentioning reducing the cost of tuition and greater access to scholarships and other forms of funding. In addition to the other forms of career-focused programming mentioned previously, students also suggested that the University should provide greater access to co-op, internship, experiential learning, clinical, and apprenticeship opportunities. Changes to campus life were also frequently suggested by students. Some of these included having more campus activities (e.g., a homecoming party), highlighting the opportunities for involvement on campus, more incentives for participating (e.g., giveaways), and emphasizing when events, activities, and buildings are open to the community.

Table 3. Five most frequent themes about helping more students choose UWindsor.

| Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme 3 | Theme 4 | Theme 5 |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Course and Program Options (117) | Professional Development (93) | Tuition and Affordability (78) | Co-op and Internships (45) | Campus Life (32) |

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme.

Improving the Community’s Perception of UWindsor

Faculty and staff were asked the following question as part of the Aspire Café Conversations: **How do we improve the perception that the external community has of the University of Windsor?** A total of 199 responses were documented to this question including 58 (29.1%) staff and 141 (70.9%) faculty responses. The three most common themes regarding what could be done to improve community members’ perception of the university were consistent between staff and faculty. Table 4 presents a breakdown of these themes by role. Promotion and branding were most frequently cited by both faculty and staff as a response to this question, followed by community impact, and collaboration and partnerships. Regarding promotion and branding, both faculty and staff thought more extensive and unified promotion and branding for the University was needed. For example, activities such as “promoting global and national impact”, enhancing “our reputation by positive media PR and story sharing,” and promotion of “our unique programs that distinguish us from other Ontario schools” were mentioned as ways to improve the University’s promotion and branding within the community. Faculty and staff also felt the University could have a greater impact within the community through “resource sharing,” “public involvement in decision making,” “involvement in external public boards,” and “accepting and welcoming those from the community” among other engagement efforts. In addition, faculty and staff also suggested developing more collaborations and partnerships through efforts such as “involvement on community boards,” “more ties with industry to direct focus on teaching and learning,” and “multidisciplinary research engaged with the community.”

Table 4. Three most frequent themes regarding improving perceptions of the University.

| Role | Theme 1 | Theme 2 | Theme 3 |
|---------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Staff | Promotion and Branding (33) | Community Impact (8) | Collaboration and Partnerships (5) |
| Faculty | Promotion and Branding (50) | Community Impact (25) | Collaboration and Partnerships (12) |

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme.

Community Perspectives from the Aspire Survey

As part of the Aspire survey, individuals who indicated that they did not study or work at the University responded to the following statements

1. I am proud to be a UWindsor Grad
2. I personally feel reflected in the UWindsor community
3. I feel welcome to come to UWindsor campuses and UWindsor events
4. I am involved in UWindsor initiatives
5. I would like to be involved with UWindsor initiatives
6. The UofW is meeting the needs of local residents

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with these statements using the following scale 1 (Strongly disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), 4 (Agree), 5 (Strongly agree), 6 (Not Applicable), and 7 (No Opinion). Approximately 100 individuals provided their responses to these items (ranging from 99-111 responses for the individual statements). The average response to each statement ranged from 2.89 (*The UofW is meeting the needs of local residents*) to 4.08 (*I am proud to be a UWindsor Grad*). Overall, participants typically fell in the middle (neither agree nor disagree) leaning towards agreement with these statements. The sole exception to this was the average response to the statement regarding whether the University was meeting the needs of local residents which leaned towards disagreement. See Figure 1 for a visualization of the aggregated responses to these statements.

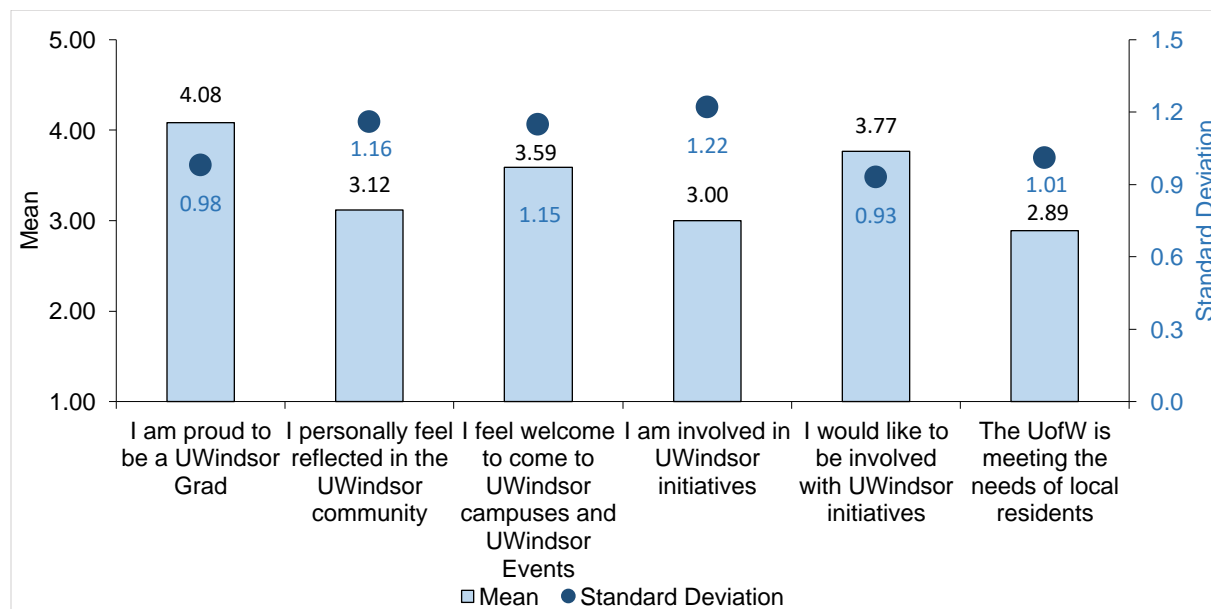


Figure 1. Community Perspectives from the Aspire Survey.

Next Steps

During July and August 2022, a number of community-based listening sessions and pop-up events took place to allow community members to have direct input with the strategic planning process. In parallel to these community consultation events were targeted surveys and focus groups with key community partners, alumni and the general public.

This data will be combined with this initial survey and other consultation data to provide insights of community perceptions of the role of the university as well as areas where collaboration, support and partnerships can occur.