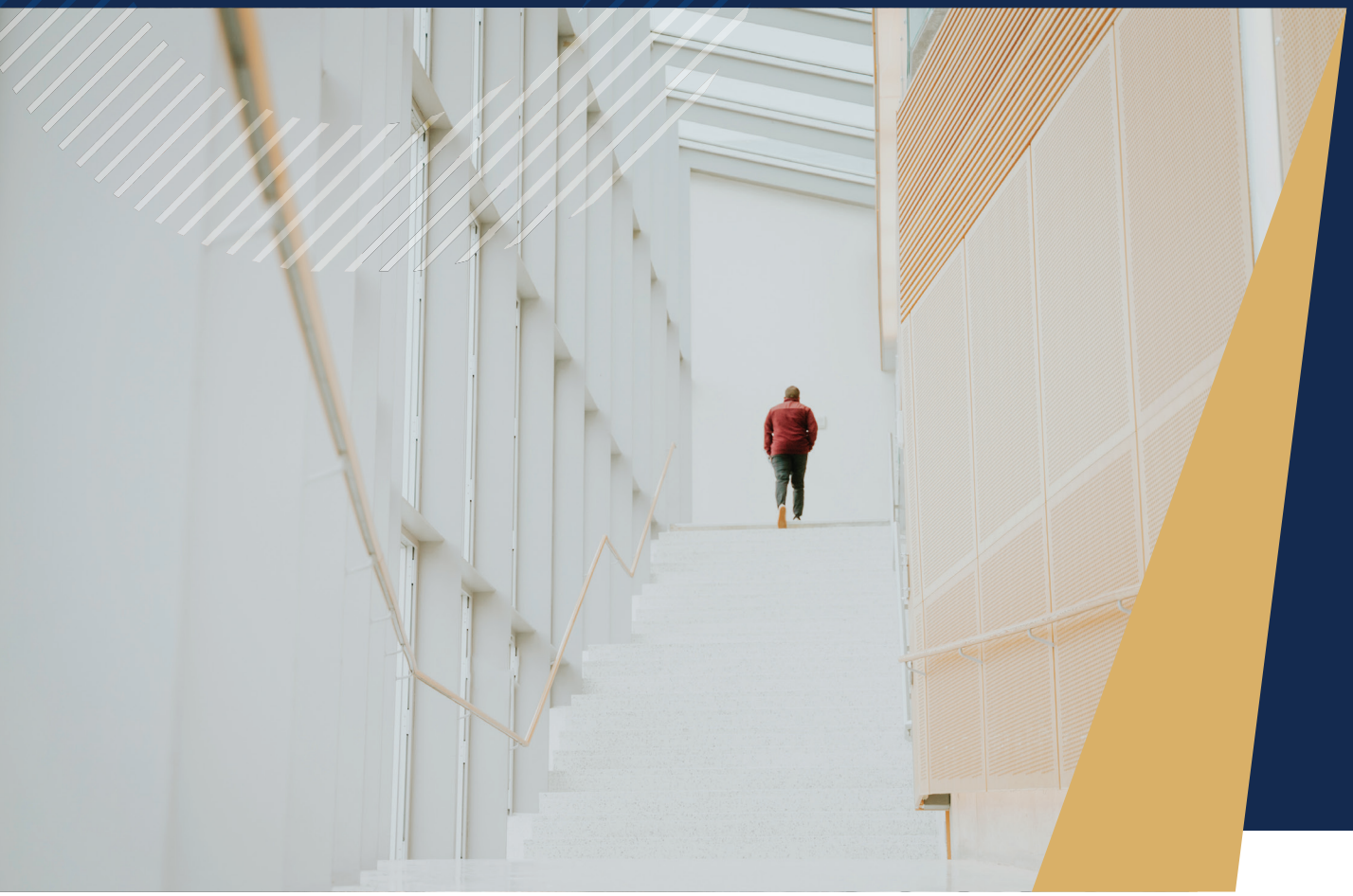
# Aspire.

TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW



# UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2028

University of Windsor

# Land Acknowledgement

The University of Windsor sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi. As we make this land acknowledgement, it is also important that we continue to do the work to address systemic and historic injustices.

*As outlined in the strategic priority section Advancing the Journey toward Truth and Reconciliation, a consultative process is currently underway to develop a new Land Acknowledgement for the University.*

# Table of Contents

Message from the President ..... 3
Strategic Planning Process ..... 5
Mission, Vision, Values ..... 7
Strategic Framework ..... 9
Foundational Commitments ..... 11
Strategic Priorities ..... 13
Strategic Opportunities ..... 25
Realizing Our Strategy ..... 27
Acknowledgements ..... 29

# Message from the President

## A UNIVERSITY IS ITS PEOPLE.

As knowledge creators, learners, teachers, innovators, supporters, and advocates – the people that form a university community and their relationships to one another are the source of its transformative potential. Our stories about how we understand ourselves, what we do, what we think we are capable of, and where we have struggled both as individuals and as communities are all important in how we envision truly transformative institutional change.

During the *Aspire: Together for Tomorrow* strategic planning process, we heard many stories about the University of Windsor as a place of uplift, where we work to create excellence, opportunities, and possibilities, and where students' lives can be transformed. This plan is built on a commitment to better celebrate, support, and recognize people so that they can lead, learn, serve, and thrive – continuing to build that transformative potential.

There is no single story of an institution. There are many communities, and their stories are not always equally heard. *Aspire* has been an important opportunity to begin to build the bridges and spaces for us to hear one another better. I am proud of the honesty, integrity, and commitment people brought to this process and the leadership that reflects. This plan builds on that progress.

These stories also challenged us. They reinforced our role and responsibility in the national journey toward Truth and Reconciliation. They brought into focus the urgent collective need for action on climate change and environmental sustainability. They emphasized the importance of continued action to ensure justice, equity and inclusion on campus and beyond. They reminded us of the importance of openness to learning and building trust. These are challenging paths, but full of opportunity.

As a locally grounded, globally connected comprehensive university, we are an institution of and for the Windsor-Essex region. We are also the university for its future. Our capacity to evolve and change, to inspire curiosity and innovation, and to bring cutting-edge scholarship, creative activity, student experience and global perspectives to the table are critical. This capacity helps shape the outlooks, aspirations, and skills of each new generation of graduates while supporting our local communities and regional economy. Here, the local is transnational. Our success and the region's success - our neighbours' learning and our own - are interdependent.

*Aspire* begins with a fundamental commitment to our people and the relationships among them: students, staff, faculty, alumni, and communities. This commitment must be our compass as we strive to be a university that serves its students along with its communities, and where people, learning, insight, and innovation thrive every single day.

**Robert Gordon, PhD**
President & Vice-Chancellor
University of Windsor

# Strategic Planning Process

*Aspire* strategic planning was shaped by the communities of the University of Windsor, who envisioned a process that valued transparency, inclusion, accessibility, and collective learning. Reconnecting and trust building were important priorities after more than two years of disrupted learning and working environments.

Research and committee development began in Summer 2021. In November, a draft position paper outlining the planned process was released for campus review and feedback, and the Steering Committee began its work. In February 2022, a year-long, multi-stage planning process officially began with the launch of a campus-wide survey focused on values, mission, vision and the kinds of priorities, goals and concerns people wanted the consultation process to address. Each consultation stage shaped the development of the next.

Data from other consultations have informed this work including the University's first employee engagement survey and an ongoing consultation process engaging in necessary trust and relationship building to create the University's first Indigenous strategic plan. Analysis of contextual and institutional data including post-secondary sector best practices; local, regional, and provincial planning document; and other reports helped to frame planning.

The *Aspire* planning team engaged over 5,500 students, faculty, staff, and surrounding community members through virtual and in-person consultation events including town halls, focus groups, world cafés, and one-on-one meetings. The consultation sessions resulted in over 38,000 data points informing what would become this strategic plan.

In December 2022, the *Aspire* strategic framework and numerous summaries were shared with the campus and surrounding community to solicit feedback before preparing the final draft. This has been a new approach to campus consultation, made possible by the willingness of on- and off-campus communities to engage. As an institution, we want to continue to build these pathways for communication, transparency, data collection, knowledge mobilization, and accountability.

## Strategic Planning by the Numbers...

**Data Collected**

- **38K** Data Points
- **5,588** Contact Points

**Individuals and Groups Consulted**

- **1,000** Students
- **700** Faculty and Staff
- **40** External Organizations
- **420** Alumni
- **360** Community Members

**Outreach Efforts**

- **18K+** Invitations to Surrounding Community Members
- **10K+** Website Visits
- **367,802** Social Media Impressions
- **90+** Hours of Consultations with Communities On and Off Campus
- **202** Posters, Signs, and Billboards in the Community

# Mission, Vision, and Values

## Our Mission

To empower positive change through regionally and globally engaged inquiry, learning, scholarship, creative activity, and research.

## Our Vision

As a locally engaged, globally connected institution, the University of Windsor will enable people to transform their circumstances. As partners, leaders, and learners, we will engage in impactful research, relevant teaching, creative endeavours, and inclusive relationship building to foster positive change.

## Our Values

Values are the underlying beliefs that guide our decisions and actions. They articulate what the institution stands for and how we intend to conduct ourselves. Our values are listed alphabetically.

### Academic Excellence

We strive for academic excellence in teaching, learning, research, scholarship, and creative activity. We encourage innovation and collaboration with local and global communities. Diverse ways of knowing, knowledge traditions, and ways of creating and disseminating knowledge enhance the richness of our academic pursuits.

### Action on Indigenization, Truth, and Reconciliation

We have a responsibility to Indigenize and decolonize the University, to make it a place where Indigenous staff, students, faculty, and community members feel supported, and where the impacts of intergenerational traumas are addressed. There is much to learn from Indigenous ways of knowing, teachings and traditions. Integrating Indigenous knowledge and values will improve our institution for everyone.

### Community Impact

We are an anchor institution in our region, with the privilege and responsibility of living, learning, working, and creating partnerships here. We bring global perspectives, emerging knowledge, and leadership to the table as we address regional challenges together. Our impact is greatest when we all learn together.

### Engagement with Students

We strive to be a place where all learners feel welcome, are included, and can succeed, and where students, staff, faculty, and communities work together to foster meaningful engagement and experiences. This requires us to ensure student voices and aspirations are heard, and that we respond to those voices with compassion, care, and flexibility.

## Environmental Sustainability

We are committed to working with on- and off-campus communities to ensure that climate action and environmental sustainability are integral to decision making. We are on a journey to greater sustainability through innovation, reciprocal partnership, collaborative action, and shared learning and knowledge.

## Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Decolonizing the University, ensuring justice, and embedding anti-oppression and anti-racism in our institution requires long-term care and commitment. An equity focus must be ingrained in all our decision-making in order to address the policies and practices that have oppressed and stigmatized community members for too long.

## Openness to Change

We have shown that we can adapt and be agile when necessary. Our challenge now is to translate temporary adaptations into sustained transformative evolution of the institution. As an institution we need to evolve beyond the way we've always done things, be willing to take calculated risks, and continuously learn from our actions.

## Prioritizing People

Our people are the foundation of all that we do. We are committed to becoming an institution that consistently operates from a place of care, compassion, respect, humility, and empathy.

## Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is founded on accountability, transparency, honesty, and integrity. It requires us to thoughtfully measure and report our progress. Where we miss the mark, we will acknowledge it, learn from our missteps, and use what we learn to inform future approaches. As a public institution, we are accountable for our stewardship of public funds: financial sustainability is critical to fulfilling our mission.

# Strategic Framework

## The areas framing our strategic plan fall into three distinct categories

Over the next five years, the University will address three key areas of activity: (i) **Foundational commitments**, which involve making important ongoing improvements to institutional processes that enhance the groundwork for transformative practice, (ii) **Strategic priorities**, which will focus on six institutional practices that are critical to our mission, and (iii) **Strategic opportunities**, which outline a framework for the identification, development, and implementation of ambitious cross-institutional initiatives. Efforts to advance all three areas of activity will enrich and expand the University's context of opportunity and better integrate our collective strengths, commitments, and efforts in the service and leadership of regionally and globally engaged inquiry, learning, scholarship,creative activity, and research.

### Foundational Commitments

Improvements to institutional practices and processes to advance our institutional mission and enhance student experience and success. Addressing these challenges will create an environment where people and opportunity flourish, and will support the achievement of strategic priorities.

### Strategic Priorities

Transformative priorities within specific areas of institutional practice that will help us further our mission, achieve our vision, live our values, and capitalize on our untapped potential.

### Strategic Opportunities

Criteria and processes for framing ambitious, inter-disciplinary opportunities that have transformative potential and that integrate activities from multiple strategic priorities to create opportunities for regional, provincial, and national leadership.

# Foundational Commitments

Throughout the consultations, common themes emerged around processes and practices whose enhancement will augment efficiency and allow people to achieve their goals more effectively.

Effective, consultative, and data-driven progress on these foundational commitments will empower all of us to tackle ambitious institutional, regional, and global challenges collectively. Improvements will also enable us to focus more on strategic directions and less on reactive response. An ongoing emphasis on improvement to foundational commitments is key to how we become an increasingly nimble university where everyone thrives.

## 6 THEMES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED

### Establishing and Implementing an Institutional Data Strategy

- Develop, implement, and monitor a data strategy that will focus on data necessary for tracking, analyses, accountability, and recognition with an emphasis on enhancing the clarity, consistency, and availability of campus data related to our strategic priorities and institutional vision. These efforts will align us with the cutting edge of post-secondary institutional efforts to operationalize responsive, equitable, integrated, and engaged data use for effective planning.

### Foster Resilience and Institutional Learning through Connection, Reconnection and Collaboration

- Build inclusive cross-campus collaboration, leadership, and innovation networks to enhance our institutional capacity to learn, lead, and innovate together and as individuals
- Expand social engagement spaces and opportunities for employees, students, and communities, with a focus on inclusion and belonging
- Improve and enhance community and industry partnership engagement through increased and strategic outreach, development, tracking, support, and growth strategies

### Continue to Foster and Build Welcoming, Inclusive and Engaging Physical and Virtual Spaces

- Engage cross-campus and community partners to focus on the safety and accessibility of campus spaces and virtual platforms
- Continue the process of ensuring that planning, building and maintenance of campus infrastructure is transparent, equitable, consistent with our values, aligned with institutional priorities, and responsive to stakeholder engagement

## Ensuring that Faculty and Staff Have the Skills and Support to Maximize Impact, Growth, and Engagement

- Foster equitable, inclusive, and just campus environments and processes
- Establish and implement campus mental health and employee engagement strategies
- Consultatively enhance positive work environments, for example through the exploration and development of safe and responsive feedback and conflict mediation mechanisms, strengths-focused performance review tools, succession planning, and a learning-focused approach to change management within the University's labour and policy context
- Continue to build inclusive and broad-based talent recruitment, career, and leadership development programs
- Implement strategies to foster greater diversity in leadership teams and governance bodies

## Telling Our Stories and Sharing Our Knowledge

- Build and implement effective reputation-building communications strategies focused on campus, partner, and alumni success stories
- Create systematic and engagement-oriented neighborhood, regional, alumni, and global outreach strategies that reflect institutional priorities
- Improve internal communication channels to facilitate knowledge mobilization, campus engagement, and campus feedback loops for students, staff, and faculty

## Improving Institutional Processes and Coordination of Services

- Build on and enhance user engagement in process development and review
- Reduce duplication of efforts through enhanced transparency and process analyses, and the systematic streamlining of processes, interfaces, and practices

# Strategic Priorities

# Advancing Bold, Impactful Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

**Research, scholarship, and creative activity** at the University of Windsor contribute to technological and scientific innovation, social and civic engagement, thought leadership, environmental change, social justice, economic diversification, creative and cultural engagement, and student learning and opportunity. They stimulate the attraction, retention, and development of innovative leaders. The broad range of perspectives, methods, and knowledge traditions represented in this work enrich how we tackle critical disciplinary and global challenges, foster innovation, and seek evidence-based solutions to complex problems. The University's scholarly footprint is growing: in 2022, University of Windsor scholars produced more peer-reviewed publications and acquired more external funding than ever before.

Our strong history of student-engaged research at all levels is a powerful tradition we will build on to ensure our graduates have the skills and ability to make significant contributions to disciplinary knowledge, social change, innovation, and knowledge economies.

Over the next five years, we will continue to build inclusive cultures of inquiry and creation, increasing support for researchers across their careers, and recognizing, valuing and supporting diverse methodologies, approaches, and knowledge traditions. We will streamline and enhance research processes and services to maximize scholars' ability to focus on their research and creative activities. Approaches to resource and space allocations will be transparent, equitable, and strategically aligned. We will focus on building the infrastructure, opportunities, and collaborative contexts to better support community-engaged and interdisciplinary research. Through these efforts, we will enhance and amplify the impact and reputation of research, scholarship, and creative activity at the University, in local communities, and across Canada.

- **Ensuring that the institution explicitly recognizes and increasingly engages with inclusive definitions of research, scholarship, and creative activity, acknowledging and valuing diverse methodologies, approaches, and knowledge traditions**
- **Nurturing and supporting collaborative and interdisciplinary activities, for example through cluster hiring, creating externally and internally funded research chairs, better aligning research gaps with strategic hires and developing opportunities and spaces for collaboration, social engagement, and knowledge sharing**
- **Increasing the number and diversity of opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to participate in research, scholarship, and creative activity including the expansion of scalable paid and for-credit opportunities that enable inclusive participation**
- **Supporting strong cross-campus understanding and recognition of Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) research methods, traditional ways of knowing, and appropriate and respectful engagement with Indigenous communities**
- **Expanding support for partner- and community-engaged research opportunities, including strategic cross-sectoral resource and space sharing to enhance collaborative research, learning, and community service**
- **Enhancing consultative, user-based approaches to engaging with researchers and academic leaders towards the continuous improvement of research services**
- **Developing and implementing research communications and knowledge mobilization strategies that will share and celebrate the diverse outcomes of research, scholarship, and creative activity**

# Advancing the Journey toward Truth and Reconciliation

The University of Windsor is currently in the preliminary stages of developing its first Indigenous strategic plan. Under the leadership of the Senior Advisor to the President on Indigenous Relations and Outreach, this process is currently focused on trust and relationship building necessary for respectful consultations with Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit), communities and organizations. It is important for this process to unfold along its own timeline, and it is also essential that as an institution we affirm our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation. We have worked to outline preliminary directions here, based on the current consultative input. The University is committed to furthering these consultative efforts.

Universities have responsibilities under the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* and the *Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education*. The University of Windsor's continued journey towards Truth and Reconciliation encourages all of us to meaningfully engage with this process to foster mutual respect, shared understanding, and respectful approaches to Indigenous research methods and Indigenous ways of knowing. This work with Indigenous peoples, communities and organizations will include commitments to decolonizing the curriculum, training, and learning programs; the consultative re-development of the University's Land Acknowledgement; the recognition of Indigenous knowledge creation, ways of knowing, and identification in policy and practice; an emphasis on creating Indigenous campus spaces; and partnership and relationship building. These commitments will be integrated across all aspects of our activity and decision making. They are everyone's responsibility, and they are also a profound opportunity for leadership, learning, and transformation.

- **Consultative and culturally relevant engagement of Indigenous peoples in governance**
- **Consultative redevelopment of the University's Land Acknowledgement**
- **Development and action on a University of Windsor Indigenous strategic plan**
- **Development of policies and practices related to identification of Indigenous peoples in all application processes**
- **Ensuring that the campus is truly welcoming to Indigenous peoples, including creating Indigenous spaces and Indigenizing existing spaces**
- **Meeting universities' responsibilities under the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and the Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education**
- **Ongoing consultations, relationship building and partnership development with Indigenous communities**
- **Progress on the decolonization and Indigenization of curriculum, including land-based learning programs**
- **Partnership to support the learning of Indigenous languages**
- **Recognizing, advancing, and valuing Indigenous ways of knowing and supporting Indigenous knowledge creation and mobilization**
- **Training regarding anti-Indigenous racism and cultural safety**

# Becoming an Increasingly Equitable, Diverse, Inclusive, and Just University

We are committed to tackling all forms of discrimination as we work toward a meaningfully inclusive, equitable, and just campus. Over the next five years, the University will broaden and deepen its efforts to dismantle systemic barriers to equity, inclusion, and justice. We will advance efforts to be a university that consistently combats and addresses systemic barriers and discrimination on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, or any other distinguishing characteristic or trait. This work will commit to decolonization, anti-racism, and anti-oppression, and to deeply and sustainably ingrain these changes in all aspects of campus culture and practice. It will solidify the position of the University of Windsor as a leader in truly inclusive practice.

It is important to acknowledge and honour the strength, courage, and commitment of people from historically marginalized communities who often must take on this work, and to recognize the efforts of those who take on leadership roles in these efforts. We will act on our commitment of equity-focused approaches and create and support opportunities for transformative leadership locally and nationally. We will be accountable for our progress through annual reporting on the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategic plan.

- **Establishing and implementing an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion strategic plan with annual reporting on metrics and reflecting a commitment to respond to racism and equity issues across all campus communities**
- **Building the mechanisms, policy context, data, and reporting structures necessary to ensure accountability and build trust**
- **Creating and promoting programming that enables all members of the campus community to develop greater knowledge of equity, diversity and inclusion; the skills necessary to work, learn and lead together in a diverse world; and the awareness that change is everyone's responsibility**
- **Developing and implementing inclusive recruitment, hiring, and capacity building plans**
- **Employing an equity, diversity, and inclusion lens in planning, enhancing, and re-designing campus and student services**
- **Fostering inclusive and welcoming learning and knowledge creation environments**

# Ensuring a High Quality, Relevant Teaching, Learning, and Student Experience for Everyone

Every year, more than 16,000 students pursue their educational and personal goals at the University of Windsor. We are committed to our mission as a comprehensive university in the Windsor-Essex region, offering a greater range of undergraduate, graduate, and professionally accredited programs than most comparably sized universities. We continue to develop as a global study destination, with an increasing focus on the holistic international student experience.

We are proud of our strong and growing profile in experiential, work-integrated, and research-focused learning. Our students bring varied personal circumstances, past experiences, needs, and strengths to their learning journeys. They differ in where, how, and what they want to learn, in their goals, and in what they value about a university education. An exceptional student experience – in the classroom and beyond, reflecting the rich diversity our students bring to their learning – should always be at the heart of decision making at the University of Windsor.

Over the next five years, we will expand opportunities for students, staff, and faculty to engage as partners and co-leaders in change. Varied student journeys will be supported through more flexible educational offerings in terms of format and credential type. Partners on- and off-campus will inform regionally and globally relevant curriculum development based on a diversity of lenses and approaches including enhanced work-integrated and experiential learning opportunities. We will continue to learn and build the relationships necessary to Indigenize and decolonize the curriculum. Given the disruptive force that COVID has been for many, supporting learners in their educational journeys is more important than ever. We will work to inspire more learners to attend university, and foster students' wellness, perseverance, and success on their way to graduation and the futures and careers they envision. It is important that we value and recognize the daily work of faculty, staff, and partners in inspiring, supporting, engaging, and challenging learners. Systematic opportunities for staff and faculty to connect, lead, learn, and share knowledge are critical to the sustainable evolution of our educational mission.

- **Establish an institutional teaching and learning strategy in line with the University's Strategic Academic Plan**
- **Create and enhance compelling, regionally, and globally relevant, effective curriculum, programs, instruction, and learning opportunities that meet the current and emerging needs of learners with diverse priorities, expectations, and experiences**
- **Explore and support interdisciplinary and collaborative program development**
- **Work towards integrated, holistic, and inclusive student support services that foster mental health and wellness, create a welcoming and engaging campus environment, and facilitate students' navigation of the educational paths they create and choose**
- **Develop and expand scalable, inclusive, experiential, work-integrated and research-based learning opportunities that increase access and opportunity, and that prepare graduates to tackle the complex challenges we face as individuals, as a society, and as a region**
- **Recognize and further effective teaching based in a wide range of approaches, methods, and knowledge traditions; and support, value, and recognize the efforts of faculty and staff so that their student-focused work is informed, effective, and sustainable**
- **Enhance and maintain accessible formal and informal teaching and learning spaces across our campus that leverage new technology and modes of learning**

LABORATORY HOT WATER

# Fostering an Engaged, Healthy, Safe, and Environmentally Sustainable Campus

Ensuring that people thrive and feel valued in their work, learning, and community leadership efforts is fundamental to establishing the kind of university culture people want. Fostering an engaged, healthy, and sustainable campus will mean making tangible investments in health and wellness, social programming, and equitable leadership development. For employees, it also means the development of strengths-focused performance and career development, and training and support programs that inspire agency, innovation, and mutual respect.

We will develop safe and responsive feedback mechanisms and better support for conflict mediation in support of healthy, compassionate, and respectful learning and work climates. We will encourage opportunities for exchange and collaboration across units and roles within the institution and beyond so that we can learn from and about each other. Increasing and expanding these connections will provide important continuity and lines of sight as we support and engage learners across the depth and breadth of their university experience.

As a new generation of students enter post-secondary education already acting as change agents on climate change, the University will accelerate and embed sustainability measures in research, teaching, and operations while fostering a culture that values the stewardship of natural environments, and social and environmental sustainability. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals and the Principles for Responsible Investing will provide a strong framework for planning, enabling alignment with campus operations, research and creative activity, teaching, and community engagement, advancing our existing strengths in environmental research. We will establish an institutional goal and timeline for carbon neutrality and develop campus actions to reflect broader sustainability goals including discontinuing use of single-use plastics, enhancing sustainable infrastructure, evaluating our water footprint, reducing food waste, conscious decision-making around transportation, and procurement.

- **Continue to build a culture of respect, trustworthiness, and transparency by emphasizing individual and public accountability, strong bicameral governance, and a clear and navigable policy context**
- **Consultatively explore and establish equitable and clear pathways for professional and career growth, and learning, for example including regular performance conversations, mentorship, leadership development programs, succession planning, job shadowing, and opportunities for cross-organizational engagement**
- **Foster positive work environments, for example through the exploration and development of safe and responsive feedback and conflict mediation mechanisms and a learning-focused approach to change management within the University's labour and policy contexts**
- **Reviving and enhancing the sense of energized belonging, connectedness, and engagement on campus through the creation of informal learning, connection and social spaces, and a greater emphasis on events that support togetherness and belonging**
- **Supporting capacity building for inclusive, equitable leadership in a context which embraces collective learning and new opportunities**
- **Working towards an environmentally sustainable campus and campus culture, and fostering strong partnerships that support and inspire regional participation in sustainable practice**

# Generating Local and Global Impact through Partnership and Community Engagement

The University of Windsor is one of the only Canadian universities operating in an urban context so closely integrated with a major American city and its transnational economies, ecosystems, communities, and histories. This is a unique regional dynamic that inspires inquiry, innovation, engagement, and learning. We are an anchor institution in the Windsor-Essex region: an engine of labour force stability, economic diversification, urban and regional vitality, sustainability, and civic engagement, and a catalyst for positive change and innovation. Our alumni networks link us to all employment sectors and fields in our region and around the world. We proudly embrace our role as globally informed and locally engaged partners. We continue to build the strong, reciprocal relationships with local and international industry and community partners, alumni, and retirees that support all our efforts to learn, lead, and serve. We are committed to expanding outreach, partnership, and connection through our downtown campus. Our students learn, serve, and contribute to companies and organizations across the region, and we are grateful for these expanding partnerships. We are committed to building strong municipal and regional coalitions, accountabilities, partnerships, and networks focusing on shared priorities.

The *Aspire* community consultation sessions told us much about the need for responsive relationship building and opportunities for collaboration, the University's role as a neighbor and a leader in good times and in challenging ones, and the need for a campus-neighbourhood strategy. This will involve engaging on key neighbourhood issues based on reciprocity, clear communication, and mutual benefit. There are many communities that operate within our common geographies, and it is important that the University listen and engage where this has not historically been the case. Enhancing our impact also means better supporting all of those who lead community-engaged practices and improving coordination of partnerships to streamline and amplify efforts. The University's increased emphasis on experiential and service learning and on helping our students build their own community networks and connections will also be furthered through community engagement.

- **Building coalitions, partnerships, and networks focusing on shared priorities; information exchange; innovation; research, scholarship, and creative activity; knowledge mobilization and collaboration; talent development; resource sharing and cross leveraging of funding opportunities**
- **Building strong relationships and engagement with Indigenous communities**
- **Consultatively establishing, implementing, and tracking progress on a neighbourhood engagement strategy based on reciprocity, strong lines of communication, and mutual benefit**
- **Establishing a community engagement hub and team to help faculty, staff, students, and community members in developing collaborations and to assist with the coordination of engagement efforts across campus**
- **Expanding community-based and community-informed student experiences and educational opportunities**
- **Recognizing, supporting, and enhancing community-engaged research and practice across many campus roles**
- **Working respectfully and effectively with partners and prospective partners to remove barriers to community engagement and to engage and build trust with historically marginalized communities**

# Strategic Opportunities: A Decision Making and Development Framework

Over the next five years, the University will enhance its capacity to systematically build and successfully implement ambitious, multi-disciplinary initiatives. These initiatives will serve our communities, address complex local and global challenges, enhance sustainability, create exciting new educational opportunities, and address emerging local and regional concerns. These are the kinds of projects that can change the University, our region, and people's lives. They will also require us to pull together in shared directions and to build new skills and mechanisms for better supported and more flexible cross-institutional collaboration. The achievement of the institution's foundational commitments will play a key role in our success.

To maximize impact, project development will emphasize thoughtful integration of strategic priorities and foundational commitments. This might, for example, involve the integration of elements such as the advancement of interdisciplinary research and creative activity, for-credit curriculum and life-long learning programs, experiential learning opportunities, and community partnerships. While not every project can integrate all strategic priorities, an approach that systematically explores their greater integration will maximize the potential impact of our initiatives.

During the consultation phase of strategic planning, on- and off-campus community members proposed a number of possible topic areas for new programs, new and often interdisciplinary areas of research, and specific potential areas of focus for enhanced community engagement, partnership, and services. This input will be invaluable to planning as the more specific academic and research strategic plans unfold.

Major strategic opportunities could focus on a specific topic or area. For example, a new partnership between the University and the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) will result in co-location and joint programming opportunities. The co-location effort will engage with material re-use in line with our environmental sustainability goals, as a retrofit of a vacant building on campus is planned. This partnership will bring together existing cross-campus research and educational strengths in public and environmental health, and institutional priorities around employee and student mental health and wellness. The partnership will also provide opportunities to focus on new work-integrated learning opportunities, and neighbourhood priorities around health.

Strategic opportunities could also focus on activities such as building, enhancing, and expanding an area of institutional practice into a major institutional pillar – for example, undergraduate research, or inclusive leadership.

Our goal is to create a systematic, streamlined, and transparent approach to identifying and supporting initiatives to maximize their impact. This planning framework is open to a wide range of potential initiatives and is not topic specific. It will provide greater transparency in decision making, support new ways to collaborate, optimize the chances of success, cross-leverage funding sources, and maximize project impact.

Identification and development of new projects will be cyclical, through mechanisms identified as the University develops strategic academic and strategic research plans that will unfold from the *Aspire* strategic plan. These mechanisms will involve regular cross-campus and community consultations and collision opportunities to develop new ideas. Exploration of emerging opportunities driven

by, for example, regional change would also be informed by the following guidelines, with the recognition that some projects do require an agile response. Key criteria in identifying promising projects will include the integration of some or all of the following:

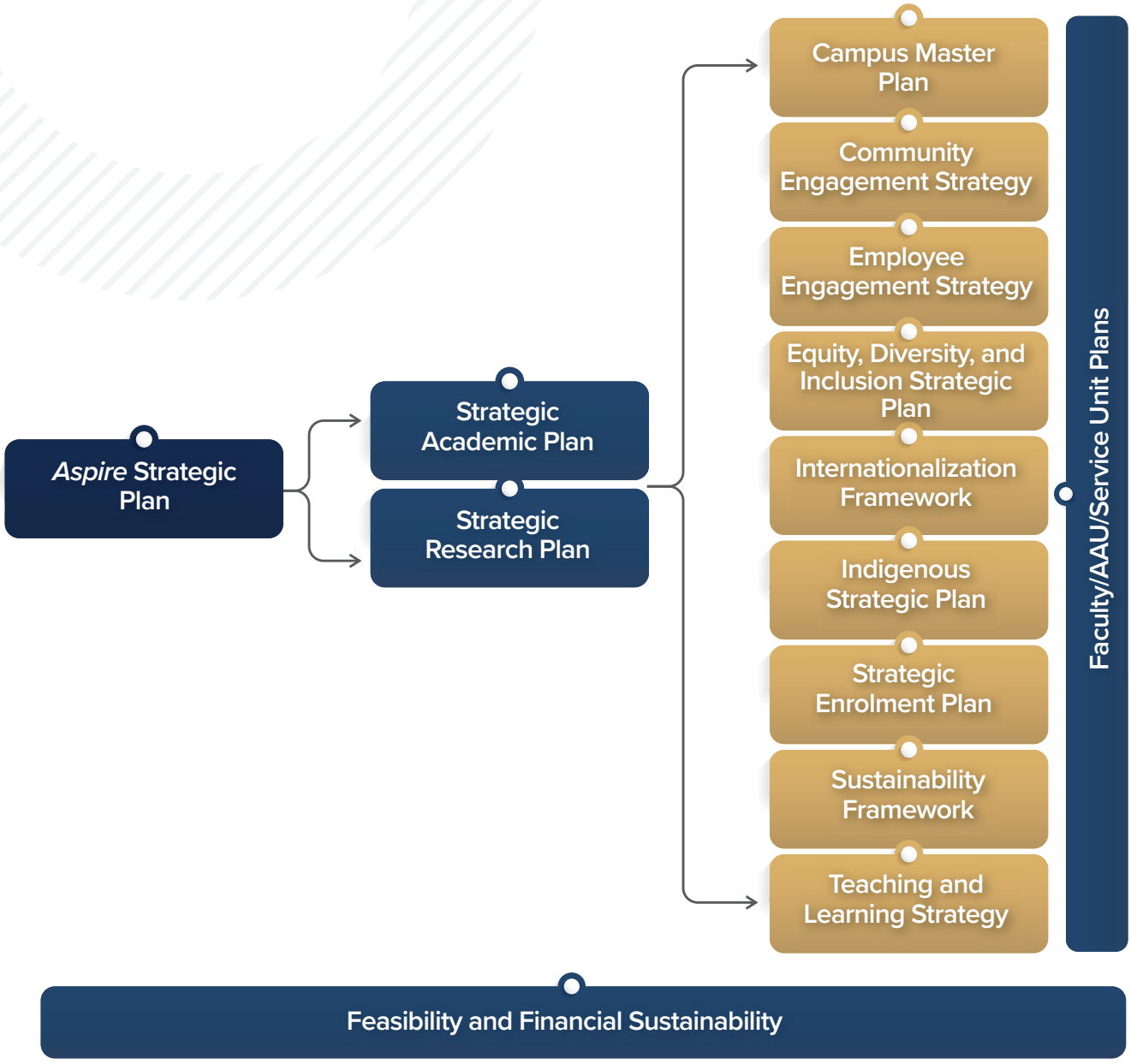
- **Addresses key areas of institutional risk**
- **Advances Indigenization, Truth and Reconciliation**
- **Allows for multiple points of entry and engagement**
- **Drives enrolment**
- **Engages with multiple strategic priorities, and multiple communities**
- **Improves the student experience**
- **Integrates equity-focused approaches and practice**
- **Involves areas of institutional strength**
- **Practice in the area is strong on campus, and resources exist, but activities are under-leveraged or under-coordinated**
- **Offers a unique opportunity (in combination with other criteria)**
- **Resonates with critical campus, regional, or global challenges**
- **Speaks to our values and core aspirations**
- **Will be financially sustainable**

While not every project can integrate all priorities, initiatives that can clearly demonstrate alignment with a greater number of the criteria above and greater integration across strategic priorities will be prioritized for investment and development. A first set of specific projects will be identified and built out during strategic academic and research plan development.

**We look forward to developing specific projects with communities on and off campus as we implement *Aspire*.**

# Realizing Our Strategy

The *Aspire* strategic plan is based on cascading strategies. It outlines foundational commitments and strategic priorities, providing guidance for the development of more operational cascading strategies and plans. Over time, faculty and unit-level planning will also be aligned with these areas. The *Aspire* strategic plan was designed to be broad in scope: as faculties, departments, and units work toward alignment with institutional priorities, it is likely that their own strengths and goals will resonate more with some strategic areas than others. There are many ways for units and individuals to contribute that will align with the vision of the institution. Going forward, human, capital and financial resource allocations, and performance planning will be aligned with the *Aspire* strategic plan's priorities.



Following the approval of the *Aspire* strategic plan, specific initiatives focused on Foundational Commitments will be early goals, beginning with the development of an institutional data strategy that will support the collection and use of meaningful and reliable data in alignment with the strategic plan. This is an important early step that will enable us to analyze and benchmark our situation, track and report on our progress, and celebrate our strengths and successes. The development of the data strategy is also an important opportunity for us to reach greater consensus around the data that we need to collect and use, empowering units and departments to make data-driven decisions.

Once the strategic plan has been approved, the President and senior leadership's performance objectives will align with the plan and expand to other roles as the various cascading strategies are finalized and implemented. Governance agendas will be set relative to the annual plans. This approach is intended to ensure accountability as well as ownership of key elements of the plan.

Beginning in summer 2023, the Provost and the Vice-President, Research and Innovation will co-lead the development of the Strategic Academic Plan and the Strategic Research Plan to prioritize and develop specific academic and research initiatives and metrics, in alignment with *Aspire* strategic plan priorities and commitments. Development of many of the cascading plans, including the equity, diversity, and inclusion strategic plan; the employee engagement strategy; the internationalization framework; the Indigenous strategic plan; and the sustainability framework are already underway. The extensive data gathered during the *Aspire* consultation process will provide a strong foundation for efficient planning during subsequent phases. Coordination and line of sight across plans will be important, and as an institution we are building capacity and support for those activities. Faculty and unit-level planning will follow, in line with the cyclical planning activities of various areas.

## Investing in Our Future

Institutional financial sustainability is critical to our ability to fulfil our academic mission, to serve communities, and to create knowledge. Many factors impact the sustainability of our University. These include provincial funding models, changing regional demographics, fundraising, post-pandemic enrolment patterns, evolving competition in the post-secondary sector, cost pressures, and institutional financial management.

Thoughtful and strategic approaches to fiscal responsibility, fundraising, cost management, alternate revenue generation, and enrolment planning are critical to creating the stability that enables future planning, possibility, and innovation. The priorities of the strategic plan will provide direction and guidance for human, capital, and financial resource allocations and revenue generation planning to ensure that we reach our goals over the next five years.

Consultative planning of the University's next strategic enrolment plan began in the first quarter of 2023, exploring considerations such as ideal institutional size, mix of domestic and international graduate and undergraduate students, diversification of international student countries of origin, and strategies for student engagement, recruitment, and retention. Many of these factors overlap significantly with the goals of this strategic plan. This planning must be nimble in order to respond to shifting provincial funding frameworks, changes in demand, and the international context.

## Measuring Our Success

To inspire meaningful change, we must be trustworthy. Accountability to our stakeholders and to on- and off-campus communities is an essential part of that commitment. We will track and communicate our progress and provide annual public reporting on performance metrics across all identified strategic areas of focus. Because we are employing a cascading strategies approach, appropriate metrics will evolve in alignment with the establishment of each plan, strategy, or framework. Reporting will focus on process metrics in the initial stages, with more specific performance metrics arising from the cascading plans as they are approved.

Metrics from the cascading plans will be "rolled up" to be incorporated into institutional tracking and reporting as they are finalized. The implementation of the institutional data strategy is critical to the establishment of meaningful, aligned metrics for this plan. Timelines for cascading strategies will be announced as they evolve, with quarterly reporting on progress submitted to Senate and the Board of Governors.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who participated in this strategic planning process. Without your voices this vision for the future could not have been created. This is the first step in a journey, and we hope that you will continue to share your passion, expertise, energy, and leadership as this process unfolds.

### Steering Committee

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