

Summary Report of Campus Consultations: Teaching and Learning

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 teaching and learning at the University of Windsor. 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.

Promoting a Sense of Belonging in UWindsor's Learners

As part of the Aspire Café Conversations, attendees were asked: **What does the University need to change about teaching and learning to be more of a place where every learner feels they belong?** This question received a total of 753 responses, with 607 (80.6%) from students, 79 (10.5%) from staff, and 67 (8.9%) from faculty. Table 1 displays the five most common themes for the question from all respondents combined and separated by respondent group. The strengths for each theme are displayed in parentheses.

Student responses tended to focus on access to different modes of learning and opportunities to gain practical experience as key aspects of promoting belonging. Responses regarding curriculum includes aspects of course design and course content. Students suggested that the curriculum could be updated, but also that courses could be better designed to promote more interaction with their instructors and their peers. In addition to improved course design, students suggested that different modes of learning such as hyflex

courses and more hands-on approaches would improve their sense of belonging at the University.

Staff responses tended to focus on aspects of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) including accessibility, and Indigenization and decolonization. A common theme among responses related to EDI was to encourage diversity among staff and faculty that reflected the diversity of the student body. There was a similar sentiment regarding accessibility at the University where it was suggested that diversity in student needs should be reflected among staff and faculty and that there should be an understanding among staff and faculty of the barriers facing students with different learning needs.

Faculty responses were more varied, emphasizing the improvement of teaching through professional development and lessening faculty workload. The discussion surrounding professional development emphasized the importance of mentorship and the continued improvement of teaching practices. Some of the responses under this theme as well as responses under the “balanced emphasis on teaching and scholarship” theme suggested that it was important to redefine the balance between teaching and research as part of faculty members’ workload. Faculty members also expressed concerns regarding workload and called for smaller class sizes and workload assignments to allow faculty to improve their teaching.

Table 1. Five most frequent themes regarding a place where learners feel like they belong.

Role	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
All Respondents	Curriculum (89)	Flexible Learning Modalities (60)	Experiential Learning (56)	Co-op and Internships (51)	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (48)
Students	Curriculum (83)	Flexible Learning Modalities (56)	Experiential Learning (52)	Co-op and Internships (51)	Course and Program Options (39)
Staff	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (15)	Accessibility (13)	Indigenization and Decolonization (10)	Culture and Atmosphere of University (5)	Professional Development (5)
Faculty	Professional Development (11)	Workload (9)	Teaching and Learning (8)	Student Success and Academic Support (7)	Infrastructure (6)

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

Enhancing Teaching and Learning for UWindsor's Students

Staff and faculty received a different, albeit similar, question from student respondents regarding the topic of excellence in teaching and learning. Staff and faculty were asked: **When thinking about teaching, programs, and learning at the University, what do we need to focus on to ensure that students have a truly excellent and relevant learning experiences?** and students were asked: **What is the best teaching/learning experience you have had at UWindsor?** Both questions received 830 total responses, with 504 (60.7%) responses from students, 114 (13.7%) responses from staff, and 212 (25.5%) from faculty. Table 2 displays the five most common themes for all respondents and for separate respondent groups.

Table 2. Five most frequent themes regarding excellent and relevant learning experiences.

Role	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5
All	Faculty-Student Connection (116)	Experiential Learning (74)	Curriculum (70)	People (58)	Student Assessment and Feedback (55)
Students	Faculty-Student Connection (104)	Curriculum (60)	People (58)	Experiential Learning (54)	Flexible Learning Modalities (48)
Staff	Course and Program Options (18)	Experiential Learning (10)	Community Impact (10)	Student Centred/Experience (8)	Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (8)
Faculty	Student Success and Academic Support (28)	Student Assessment and Feedback (18)	Work Conditions (18)	Teaching and Learning (16)	Professional Development (14)

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

Student responses tended to focus on a combination of positive experiences with faculty and courses that were well-designed and supported types of learning. The third most popular theme among students, People, demonstrates the difference between the student question and the staff and faculty question, as in responding with a specific instance of excellence, these students named a specific instructor whose class or teaching style they enjoyed. The curriculum theme also identified particular types of course design or content that students found enjoyable without mentioning specific instructors. However, the most frequent response to this question was related to connecting with faculty members who were helpful and available to students.

Staff emphasized an approach to excellence that offered a variety of course options and learning styles for students. With regards to the course options, staff respondents suggested

that excellence in teaching and learning was related to providing good programs with a multitude of ways for students to complete their degree. They also suggested that opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning and connect with industries in the community would foster excellence in teaching and learning.

Faculty responses emphasized two separate approaches, with some advocating for developing excellence through more academic support for students, while others supported developing excellence in their approach to teaching and clear feedback on their teaching. Responses on supporting students focused on developing core skills and making sure that students are able to meet the requirements of their program. In addition, faculty respondents emphasized different approaches to assessment and grading to promote excellence for the student body. Other faculty respondents asked for clearer standards from the University regarding teaching standards and assessment of teaching. They suggested that the university needed to change how it assessed teaching to promote excellent teachers.

In addition, as part of these consultation sessions, students were asked, **when thinking about your learning experiences, which of the following do you think it's important to have more of at the U?** Students were provided with a list of potential responses and asked to choose their top 3. There were 648 responses to this question. Table 3 displays the five most common themes for the question with the strengths in the right-hand column. The original category and corresponding strength are indicated in parentheses.

Table 3. Five most frequent themes regarding changes for students learning experiences.

Theme	Strength
Co-op and Internships (Internships and field experiences (91))	91
Experiential Learning (Labs (35), Simulation activities (face to face or virtually) (29))	64
Student Centred/Experience (Prompt feedback on assignments (42), Capstone experiences (8), Learning communities (14))	64
Flexible Learning Modalities (Hyflex courses (41), Online Courses (21), Other – asynchronous course options (1))	63
Post grad (Career-focused programs/courses (57), Other – Financial Literacy and Education (1))	58

The top responses to this question tended to focus on either employment opportunities for students in their chosen field or different styles of learning. Students were eager to gain experience in their field during their degree through internships and to be more prepared for their career after graduating. The sixth most popular theme for this question was on-campus work opportunities at 55 total responses, suggesting students are very interested in employment during and after their degree. The other top responses were related to different styles of learning, with both experiential learning through labs and simulation activities and flexible learning modalities receiving high interest from students. These responses suggest that students are interested in a variety of different types of instruction and learning environments.

Next Steps

This consultation data helped form the foundation of the design/discussion sessions that were held in June with faculty and staff on the topic of teaching and learning. These sessions allow for deeper conversations on the topics and enabled many of the themes identified here to be broken down and interpreted when compared to other publicly available data sources.