



# **DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **Brock University**

### **May 1, 2017**

#### **MISSION**

Brock University is a comprehensive university, strongly rooted in the Niagara Region. Brock is committed to outstanding experiential learning and personal development for its students, discovery and innovation by its faculty and creative engagement with the development of its community partners at home and abroad.

#### **VISION**

Brock University will be recognized increasingly as an outstanding, regionally-connected, comprehensive university that provides innovative experiential learning opportunities for its students within an evolving curriculum; a growing range of high-quality graduate programs; ambitious teaching and research achievements by its faculty; and numerous community partnerships at home and abroad to enhance economic, social and cultural development.

#### **VALUES**

Brock University's Strategic Plan 2010 outlined a series of values that remain appropriate today:

- Integrity and respect
- Innovation
- Unique student experience
- Freedom of thought, expression and academic responsibility
- Accountability and stewardship
- Generation and mobilization of knowledge
- Sustainability

#### **INTRODUCTION**

A strategic plan focuses on certain things and remains silent on others. On the one hand, it articulates general goals and objectives, recommends certain actions and clearly describes the inter-relationships between multiple activities within the University to avoid the unintended consequences of thinking in silos. It does not, however, make binding decisions about specific policies for the University. Policy and decision-making must continue to follow established governance practices. Instead, this strategic plan articulates new areas of action that could be

advantageous, recommends issues for further study and facilitates debate about issues that require greater attention.

For those who object to particular suggestions in this document, there will be ample opportunity to make your case before final decisions are taken. For those who agree that more work or greater attention should be paid to a specific issue, the door is now open for further consideration and potential action. Brock University has multiple forums in which to explore and settle these matters in the future. However, the strategic plan points us toward future lines of inquiry and action — a strategic direction, if you will — that circumstances suggest will be helpful for institutional progress and fulfillment of our mission.

Post-secondary education faces significant changes in Ontario, as well as globally, and Brock cannot exempt itself from their consequences. Provincial government regulation is increasing steadily, closing off more and more opportunities for autonomous action. Our enrolment levels are proscribed; tuition fees are set by politicians and bureaucrats; graduate programs are strictly regulated, from the introduction of new programs to the number of students we can admit; various administrative and social service expectations have been downloaded to the university with little or no financial support; and core academic grant funding in real dollar terms has fallen for years. At the same time, some people argue that our sector will experience major technological disruptions and, like so many other areas of society, could face new forms of competition that might undermine historic practices at the University. These are daunting social realities. But by the same token, new technologies and the growth of the global knowledge economy also offer exciting new opportunities for teaching and learning, new programs of study, international research partnerships, large movements of international students and new career opportunities for our graduates in coming decades. Moreover, demographic pressures will likely lead to enrolment growth starting within a decade, especially for those universities in or near the Greater Toronto Area.

This strategic plan will help us think about change and improvement in a holistic manner, enable us to execute new initiatives successfully and ensure that traditional academic values drive everything we do. It will also create an opportunity to integrate a series of longer-term plans across many components of Brock's operations. Creating a longer planning horizon introduces more flexibility into decision-making and enables us to be more responsive to emerging issues. At the same time, the introduction of a system of metrics to measure our progress against our planning objectives will create accountability and a greater sense of urgency about our efforts. Such metrics will be added to this plan after we have agreed to its substance. Finally, while this plan is all about change and innovation, we need to appreciate the essentially conservative nature of its purpose, namely that, to succeed, our plan must be based on our traditional mission: commitment to academic excellence, to our students' personal growth and development and to strong engagement with communities who share our objectives.

We also need to appreciate that universities are complicated institutions with multiple sources of authority and diverse objectives. Success will depend upon elevating our capacity to pull

together in the same direction. For that to happen, we need a clear strategic plan that is broadly understood and supported by the Brock community. This does not mean that we all must march together in lockstep, for that would be counter-productive to achieving our creative mission. But we must avoid unintended conflicting actions that cancel each other out. Our goal is an "integrated" plan.

Some may wonder about the relationship of this plan to our Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA) with the Ontario government. If one examines both documents closely, it is clear that there is no conflict between them. The SMA describes the University in very broad terms and is structured to meet the template that the government provided for their enrolment and funding priorities. The Brock Strategic Plan assumes those expectations, but focuses more on operational concerns and a broader range of issues than the SMA. Logically, our SMA submission should have followed the development of this document, but timing and circumstance precluded that for SMA 2. However, in another three years we will be better placed to prepare SMA 3 because of this strategic plan.

In the eight sections that follow, organized around essential components of our strategic plan, we advance a total of 60 Action Items. This list is by no means exhaustive of all concerns, since many academic and administrative units in the University will develop action items for their own purposes, to meet their own mandates. Each of these activities must make sense on their own terms, of course, but as noted earlier, it is crucial that we align such initiatives with our broader goals. That is the purpose of integrated strategic planning.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: ACHIEVE OPTIMAL ENROLMENT RESULTS**

Students attend university to expand their education, take advantage of a variety of personal development opportunities and prepare for a successful entry into the labour market. With so many universities across the country, students enjoy a feast of institutional choices. They choose Brock, they tell us, because of its general reputation, the quality of our programs and teaching, opportunities for experiential learning, the availability of superior student services that support a great university experience and our location relative to their home. Given the highly competitive landscape we operate within, superior marketing and recruitment efforts are essential to promote the relative value of our strengths compared to alternative opportunities elsewhere. These issues will be explored in greater depth later in our plan, but for now we must focus on how we decide which students we hope to attract, what programs we hope to attract them to, where they are most likely to come from and what inducements we should offer to encourage them to accept an admission offer from Brock. These comprise the central focus of our long-term enrolment strategy.

Enrolments drive virtually every aspect of Brock's activities and success. The financial implications of meeting enrolment targets are obvious, but under the new Provincial Enrolment Corridor regime it is important to remember that now we will be counting weighted enrolments by program, not simply by head counts, within the framework of a Corridor mid-point that is assigned to us. Graduate program enrolments also count toward our Corridor calculation. With

a provincial cap on our enrolments, we must carefully consider the trade-offs implicit in growing one kind of program at the expense of others, competing not only with other universities for students in the marketplace but for enrolment allocations within Brock. So it is important that we develop a fine-grained enrolment plan that is sensitive to all the elements considered under the Corridor regime, including students' program choices, program weighting, level of study as well as our traditional concerns about the distribution of enrolments among various Faculties and departments. At present, there is no organizational structure at Brock to systematically consider these different competing elements within our enrolment strategy. We must, therefore, create an Enrolment Strategy Committee to oversee all the components of enrolment management at Brock.

Graduate enrolments are strictly regulated by the Province, not just through program approvals but by the number of funded seats assigned to Master's and Doctoral students. This adds a new level of complexity to our graduate program planning efforts and admission decisions, since we do not receive funding for students above our allotted targets. As new program ideas come forward, we need to ensure that they fit within our Corridor plans as well as how likely we think such programs will be successful. At some point, we may have to ration internal graduate student allocations or assign students to some programs ahead of others.

Given that enrolments in programs that are eligible for government funding are regulated by the Province, we may wish to enhance the number of programs that are not subject to the same requirements. These could include continuing education programs, professional certificates, and others that do not need provincial approval.

Student retention is also an important challenge. To every student we recruit, we have a duty to provide all the supports necessary for their future academic success. Retention levels at Brock are below the provincial average. We must do more to understand this problem and develop strategies to lower our attrition rates as much as possible, without, of course, sacrificing our academic standards. Moreover, since some Faculties have much better outcomes than others, and domestic students on average have higher retention rates than international students, we must produce strategies that are sensitive to the local particularities of different programs and different student groups at Brock. Because higher retention rates reduce the pressure to attract as many first-year students as possible to achieve our enrolment targets, better retention outcomes will also allow us to become more selective with enrolment decisions. Finally, insofar as a focus on retention leads to improvements in teaching, mentoring and student services, all students at Brock will benefit from attention to this measure of success.

Brock has increased scholarship spending substantially in recent years, but it is unclear what the results of this effort have been. We need to develop a more refined scholarship model that allows us to focus on specific outcomes by program of study and student background, to understand how to shape our financial offers to serve our enrolment strategy.

Student diversity is an important feature of life at Brock. Diversity, of course, is a term with many dimensions. For Brock to achieve its full potential, we need a diverse mix of students. As we develop our enrolment strategy, we need to become more aware of the current mix of students at the University, and create mechanisms to reach out to under-represented groups. The best way to do this, of course, is to create an inclusive campus culture that welcomes and celebrates the backgrounds of all students and, in so doing, builds a reputation that attracts future students from all communities.

International students are a welcome addition to diversity on campus. They are also the one group of students that the Province does not count within our Enrolment Corridor, so Brock has relative freedom to attract as many students as it wishes from beyond Canada's shores. To ensure their success, and to build a reputation as a welcoming environment, we need to offer excellent student services, especially to students who may struggle at first to adapt to a new culture and language. We also need to develop targets for the proportion of international students we admit to Brock, recruitment strategies that ensure a diverse source of countries of origin and must be sensitive to distribution among various programs at Brock by level of study and discipline.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

#### **Action 1.1**

Brock must establish a long-term enrolment strategy for success within the framework of the Ontario government's Enrolment Corridor. To ensure effective coordination of sometimes competing components among our enrolment goals, Brock must establish an Enrolment Planning Committee to oversee annual and long-term plans.

#### **Action 1.2**

Brock must develop a long-term graduate student enrolment strategy with a focus on relative Master's and Doctoral program demand and increased emphasis on laddered (certificate/degree progression) professional employment related Master's programs.

#### **Action 1.3**

Brock must develop an international student strategy regarding total enrolments, distribution between undergraduate and graduate programs, distribution by students' country or region of origin and tuition levels.

#### **Action 1.4**

Brock must increase its student retention results to at least the provincial average, with a focus on Faculty-level improvements.

### **Action 1.5**

Brock must develop a program of differentiated scholarships to support University enrolment plans, and report annually on their impact on recruitment results. These plans must be overseen by the University's new Enrolment Management Committee.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: ENHANCE ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION**

Brock should develop a discernible academic focus that highlights its areas of academic and research strength to create a clear institutional identity. A strong reputation depends on a distinct institutional profile. At present, it is arguable that we do not have such a profile. This undermines our marketing efforts, our recruitment activities, the establishment of fundraising priorities as well as the development of research partnerships and international collaborations. Moreover, once we articulate our focus, it will help us identify gaps in programming that will advance Brock's reputation.

Many institutions that grow incrementally suddenly find that their organizational structures and processes no longer serve their future needs. It is debatable if this is so at Brock, but it is good practice from time to time to review the way we organize and pursue our mission. For example, do we have too many Faculties, and would we better served to achieve our academic and research ambitions if we operated with fewer but larger primary academic units? Similarly, Brock academic departments range from tiny to moderate sized when we compare ourselves to universities of similar size elsewhere. Brock invests significantly in its academic administration. Would we be better served if some of those funds were allocated to meet other academic needs? These are questions that should be examined without bias or predetermined conclusions, but they should not be ignored.

For this strategic plan to produce positive benefits for Brock, it is important that all parts of the University are broadly aligned with its strategic direction. So, every Faculty should start a process to develop its own strategic plan that addresses all the key variables that will determine their success in the future.

Faculties should also consider departmental plans, or at least the articulation of academic goals by each of their departments. In particular, every department responsible for academic programs should begin the process of explaining the skill competencies that students gain as they move through their programs. This is an Ontario government priority, but it is also a need that our students express regularly when they think actively about their transition to the work world and how their degree studies have prepared them for success in the future. These are reasonable concerns and we should address them. Similarly, our Faculties and departments should investigate additional ways to extend experiential learning opportunities for their students. Brock has developed a very good reputation for this kind of academic opportunity, and we should extend it through as many programs as possible.

All universities should be committed to equitable practices, yet it is a cause for concern among some of our faculty members that workloads in their departments and across the University are not shared equally. While teaching responsibilities are defined clearly, research and service expectations are quite vague, and empirically we know that they are not met in the same way by all members of the academic collegium. The best way to define such expectations is through collegial discussion and administration. Variations in different work patterns among academic colleagues are to be expected and are sometimes desirable, but there are ways to build fair arrangements that enable all to contribute equally to the total work of the University.

Brock has a reputation for good teaching. The University invests in numerous professional development opportunities that broaden faculty members' skills in the classroom and enable every professor to enhance the techniques they use to teach effectively. It should be a priority in the University that these supports are always funded appropriately. However, it also must be said that Brock stands outside the mainstream, as documented several times by Ontario's Auditor General, when it comes to its practices concerning teaching evaluations. We do not use standardized evaluation techniques, even within each of our Faculties. Certainly, we do not accept such methodological inconsistencies in our research practices. Nor is this a problem without easy solutions. Many universities with greater disciplinary variation than Brock utilize common evaluation standards, with multiple opportunities for additional categories of analysis on a Faculty or departmental basis. Brock's Senate should consider this matter and present various options for improvement. Some elements related to this matter are currently under the purview of the Collective Agreement, but Senate could assist the parties to the agreement to understand best practice in this important academic area more comprehensively.

In a similar commitment to best practice and academic accountability, Brock should periodically review all of its degree programs to secure improvements and identify problems that can be remedied. Where programs fail to meet the academic objectives of their founders, or cannot attract reasonable enrolments, they should be eliminated. In a province where the government regulates enrolment levels and constrains funding options, the only way to create room for new initiatives and new priorities may well be to stop pursuing legacy initiatives that have outlived their usefulness for the institution. The Provost, in collaboration with Senate, must take the lead in organizing and implementing the results of such assessments.

Students have told us that we need more flexible academic rules to enable them to pursue their studies to where their interests lead them, and to facilitate changes in direction when they decide to switch degree programs. Academic regulations are meant to ensure academic quality and intellectual integrity, but they should not be an end in themselves or a barrier to legitimate options that students wish to pursue. Recently, the University Senate asked the Provost to initiate a review of Core and Context regulations at Brock. Perhaps it is time for us to look more broadly at all the ways we structure our program requirements to make sure they further our educational goals rather than impede them.

In a student-centered university, the academic timetable should accommodate students' need first. Software exists for the University to ask students what courses they want to study, and

then build a timetable that meets the largest number of requests. This will maximize student choice. Scheduling and room allocations should follow this timetable structure. Such information also will enable Faculty Deans to develop staffing plans that facilitate academic choices by the greatest number of students. To be most effective, returning students must make their enrolment plans for the coming year known as early as possible during the preceding Winter Term.

Our students also tell us they value the opportunity to combine their studies at different institutions to achieve more varied forms of academic accreditation. Brock has long had valuable partnerships with the Province's community colleges, especially Niagara College, but perhaps we could be doing more in this regard. Similarly, international partnerships with universities that enable students to pursue undergraduate or graduate studies at two institutions in a coordinated fashion, so they can achieve a more diverse academic experience, should also be examined, especially if such two-plus-two programs enable us to attract more qualified international students.

Brock should develop a renewed focus on how to attract more Aboriginal students, and ensure that we have the academic and social supports in place to facilitate their success at the University. If we aspire to serve our community and address issues of national concern, this should become a more active area of Brock initiatives. Aboriginal students, faculty and staff, as well as community elders, should be consulted actively to ensure that our academic plans address their issues and meet their needs.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

#### **Action 2.1**

To develop a clearer institutional identity, Brock should identify its broad academic focus and special areas of excellence.

#### **Action 2.2**

Brock's Provost should create a Task Force to examine the University's current academic organizational arrangements to ensure that we have the optimal number and kind of Faculty and departmental structures to deliver diverse degree programs in the most effective manner.

#### **Action 2.3**

Every Faculty must develop a long-term strategic plan to advance their goals within available resources and support the University's general strategic objectives, with appropriate consideration of enrolment levels and targets; new undergraduate and graduate program initiatives; ongoing and new research initiatives; the outcome of reviews to address program sustainability; community engagement plans; the identification of fundraising priorities to



support Faculty aspirations; administrative staffing levels; and other matters that the Faculty considers appropriate.

#### **Action 2.4**

As part of their strategic plans, Faculties must include specific degree-level expectations of learning outcomes concerning the knowledge, skills and values every graduate should achieve by the end of the program, and provide pedagogical and curricular strategies to ensure these objectives can be attained.

#### **Action 2.5**

Every Faculty, in collaboration with the Provost, should develop a long-term staffing plan for academic appointments and administrative services, with appropriate consideration of enrolment levels; new academic initiatives; research activities; prospective retirement dates where known; access to externally funded Chairs; and the Faculty's financial capacity to support faculty renewal and growth as well as evolving academic administrative services.

#### **Action 2.6**

Every Faculty should develop a workload standard — to cover teaching assignments, research or creative expectations and service activities — that is approved by the appropriate governance body within the Faculty and administered by the Dean in cooperation with department chairs. This is to ensure equitable workloads for all faculty members as well as accountability by the Dean for expectations under the policy to achieve the most effective use of available academic resources in the Faculty.

#### **Action 2.7**

Brock must continue to expand more opportunities for curricular and co-curricular experiential learning opportunities.

#### **Action 2.8**

Brock should develop flexible academic regulations to facilitate student success, including a review of the current core and context requirements, easing barriers for students wishing to switch degree programs and exploring the possibility of introducing more varied course structures and degree requirements to facilitate creative learning modalities.

#### **Action 2.9**

Brock should investigate software that would enable it to create a more student-centered timetable.

### **Action 2.10**

Brock should enhance its focus on teaching excellence by increasing opportunities for further professional development for all full-time and part-time faculty members, and by developing comparable teaching evaluations consistent with best practices at other provincial universities.

### **Action 2.11**

Brock should continue to develop innovative academic partnerships to create new academic and career-oriented programs and add additional pathways to university education with Ontario's community colleges, especially Niagara College. Brock should also pursue new international academic partnerships to establish, for example, successful two-plus-two degree programs to enhance our student diversity and help meet our international enrolment targets.

### **Action 2.12**

Brock's Senate should routinely review the success of our degree programs to identify problems that can be remedied and, where necessary, upon the recommendation of the Provost, eliminate programs that over time have not met our academic or enrolment goals.

### **Action 2.13**

Brock should develop a plan to attract more indigenous students, identify their academic and social needs and develop programs and services that facilitate their success by working in collaboration with aboriginal students, faculty, staff and community elders.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: SUPPORT OUTSTANDING RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES**

Two decades ago, Brock announced its ambition to become a comprehensive university with an increased emphasis on research activities. Today we spend more than \$40 million annually, and perhaps nearly double that, to support our research and creative activities agenda. But do we have a research and creative agenda? What are our priorities? What are our areas of strength? Who does research and creative activity on campus and what is its impact within their fields of inquiry and expression? And how well do we support these efforts? Are these supports effective?

Since 1996, when we committed to increased research and creative activity, there has been evidence of progress towards this goal in many parts of the University. Our challenge now is to broaden the extent of research and creative activity on campus, increase the range of external financial support for Brock scholars and enhance the impact of our discoveries and innovation. To that end it is important that we develop a strong institutional infrastructure that supports and promotes research and creative activities. It is timely, therefore, to establish an external review of these functions at Brock that will help us understand if we require increased support for the Vice-President Research's office, to enhance its capacity to support major grant

applications, and promote knowledge mobilization and commercialization of Brock faculty research discoveries and creative expression. Our most active researchers tell us that this is necessary.

Brock's initiative several years ago to invest in a series of Transdisciplinary Hubs, to bring together large numbers of Brock faculty under a series of common research themes, has proven to be a very effective means of supporting research. As we look forward, it is time to decide how we can extend these initiatives if they merit further support, and consider whether we have the interest and resources to develop new hubs. We also must develop our capacity to leverage these investments by securing large external research grants from government and other organizations, to boost our capacity and extend the impact of our work. In some cases that may involve the development of interesting research partnerships with other Canadian universities or international scholars.

Since every professor at Brock is supposed to devote 40 per cent of their time to productive research or creative activities consistent with their discipline, every Faculty should establish a research or creative activities strategy as part of their Faculty Plan and develop clear measures to assess the progress of such activities.

Brock prides itself on developing research or creative opportunities for undergraduate students that enhance our experiential learning agenda. We also partner with local or global communities to assist their development agendas as we pursue our own research interests. Both activities are excellent examples of how we can leverage our research and creative activity agenda to assist with the achievement of other University goals. Such initiatives should be expanded wherever possible.

It is important to measure the progress of our research and creative activity agenda, identify our strengths and weaknesses and respond to both, as well as celebrate our successes to indicate the value we place on these activities and build a wider appreciation of Brock's capacities for research and creativity. The Vice-President Research, working in collaboration with the Provost and our Deans, is in a position to coordinate such efforts and should regularly inform the Brock community about our ongoing progress and record of achievements.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

### **Action 3.1**

Brock should launch an external review of the capacity of the Vice-President Research to help productive faculty secure greater external research funding, support new commercialization initiatives and assist greater knowledge mobilization efforts by scholars in all fields. This review should also examine Brock's commercialization policy and provide recommendations for any necessary adjustments.

### **Action 3.2**

Each Faculty should create a plan to support research initiatives and establish realistic targets for external funding of its faculty members' projects, either as individuals, as members of teams or in partnerships with scholars at other universities.

### **Action 3.3**

Brock should determine the future of its existing Transdisciplinary Hub research programs, consider extending moderate levels of funding to sustain successful Hubs if financially possible and assess whether new initiatives can be supported after a competitive selection process. In concert with the development of Faculty research plans, we should assess who should pay for what support services and under what circumstances.

### **Action 3.4**

Brock should encourage its faculty to lend their research expertise to external community partners, either by working with their students to develop mutually beneficial projects that facilitate research initiatives, or through experiential learning that enhances economic, social or cultural development at home or abroad.

### **Action 3.5**

Brock should assess research output and impact across campus to determine its most productive research clusters. This would help identify priorities for the distribution of Canada Research Chairs and other externally funded positions, the assignment of research space and matching funds for CFI grants for equipment or laboratory expansion.

### **Action 3.6**

The Vice-President Research should publish an annual report on research activity at Brock analyzing multi-year research funding by individual, department, Faculty and Transdisciplinary Hubs (or other collective research groups). This report would assess the progress of Faculty research plans in relation to their targets; identify emerging opportunities for individual or group research in relation to new external funding opportunities (including competitions for major national projects); report on Brock faculty initiatives in partnership with scholars at other institutions or with government, private or non-profit organizations; identify the total number of peer reviewed articles and books published by faculty since the previous report (including a useful measure of the impact of this research); and report on University events to celebrate such achievements.

### **Action 3.7**

In cooperation with Faculty Deans and the Provost, the Vice-President Research should help quantify the number of tenured faculty without active research programs, assess possible reasons for lack of productivity in this area and help develop strategies to encourage renewed scholarship through individual initiatives or in partnership with other faculty colleagues.

### **Action 3.8**

The University should consider a strategic capital allocation to help support externally funded research projects that require matching funding.

### **Action 3.9**

In collaboration with Faculty Deans and the Provost, the Vice-President Research should explore opportunities to provide more numerous small grants to help seed research projects with the potential to eventually secure external research funding.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: DELIVER AN OUTSTANDING STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

Brock is rightly proud of its goal to provide the best student experience in Canada. Its achievements lead many universities and colleges to contact us regularly for advice on best practices. Success in this area plays a critical role in the academic achievements of our students and our ability to enhance academic excellence, and contributes significantly to our community engagement strategy. As we look ahead, we can identify a series of action items that will strengthen our efforts and lead to even better results.

University student service departments must make a priority of avoiding service silos and working together to achieve high levels of formal and informal organizational integration. Students' problems, whether personal or academic in character, rarely fit neatly into the University's administrative arrangements, so it is essential that we develop a service model that avoids issues falling between organizational cracks. A common database for all student information will greatly assist these efforts.

The role of academic advising within a student services model is complex. Good advising is very important to students finding their way through our academic regulations, as well as helping them identify their best strategy to achieve academic success. Our enrolment goal to enhance student retention record depends heavily upon good performance. How should such advising be provided? Some universities have centralized units to provide such services, some depend upon faculty and administrative advisors at the departmental and Faculty level, and some offer a hybrid model. Brock should review its current arrangements to provide this vital service to ensure that we are as effective as possible.

The old adage about a strong body and a strong mind still applies to most students. We know that students' wellbeing, physically and emotionally, plays a significant role in their academic success. Brock provides a wide range of services in this regard, but there are limits on our financial capacity to perform what many would regard as essential public services. In the absence of further government funding for such services, we should engage our Student Union to identify priorities for action and work with us to develop alternative sources of funding for necessary improvements in service delivery.

Healthy eating habits are an important component of a healthy lifestyle. Our campus is host to thousands of meals each day, as students in residence, commuter students, faculty and staff purchase some or all their meals and snacks at one of our campus facilities. It is important that we routinely review our performance in this area, with our community and with our food service providers, to ensure that we offer healthy, affordable and diverse menu options at all times when demand is high.

One of the great challenges of providing outstanding experiential learning opportunities is finding organizations willing and able to work with us to create sites for student practice, whether they be paid co-op placements, volunteer work or service learning assignments. Brock must constantly expand its outreach to leaders in our community to work with us to create such opportunities. Such partnerships not only provide a highly valuable learning experience relevant to students' academic programs, they expose our students to ways in which they can engage with their communities to make a difference in the quality of life we all share, which is to say we help create engaged citizens as well as successful students.

Long experience teaches us that students (and their families who help support them) always worry about their future career opportunities as they make their way toward graduation. We cannot guarantee graduates jobs, but we can ensure that we help them develop skills that are essential for life success and provide them with a variety of information about what career options are available with different kinds of academic preparation. Brock's academic program leaders should work more closely with our academic and career advisors to ensure that our students are well informed about such opportunities.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

#### **Action 4.1**

Brock must continue its efforts to develop an integrated student service model. This should encompass, wherever practical, a consolidation of student services space, organizational alignment of services, a review of sufficient resource allocation and the provision of more effective communication outreach to and with students.

#### **Action 4.2**

Brock must continue to enhance its efforts to provide excellent student mental health services, counseling, suicide prevention and health and wellbeing, with a focus on prevention, intervention and follow-up. Where Provincial financial support for such services is insufficient, the University should work with the Student Union to determine an appropriate funding model.

#### **Action 4.3**

Brock should review its organizational structure for student advising, as well as the role of advisors, to consider whether a more integrated model would be more effective.

#### **Action 4.4**

Brock must ensure a regular review of food services for students to ensure affordable healthy choices, dietary diversity and availability across all academic terms. This will buttress our efforts to provide a strong residence experience.

#### **Action 4.5**

Brock should investigate the opportunity to provide students with online, just-in-time advising regarding the full range of academic and social issues they face during their time at the University.

#### **Action 4.6**

Brock should work with community leaders in government, social and business organizations to ensure that students can be active and engaged citizens.

#### **Action 4.7**

Brock should work with community leaders to identify additional co-op and voluntary service learning opportunities.

#### **Action 4.8**

Wherever possible, Brock should provide students with relevant career information linked to their academic program. This may be an area where our Alumni Department can work with academic units to provide examples of career choices by Brock graduates.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORT EXCELLENT HUMAN RESOURCES**

Brock should strive to instill a campus culture that values a supportive, caring, respectful and inspiring workplace and that emphasizes teamwork and collaboration, as well as collegiality,

personal wellness and service excellence. Such values and actions require thoughtful leadership within every academic and administrative department, and mindful engagement by every Brock employee. The articulation and implementation of such goals depends upon a clear Human Resources Strategy.

A successful strategy, in turn, requires a strong commitment to training and developing the skills and ability of all employees. Such efforts not only enhance personal performance outcomes, they can also develop new career paths for long-service employees to pursue and satisfy their personal ambitions.

Good work merits high praise, and at Brock many employees go beyond the ordinary to contribute extraordinary amounts of time, talent and energy to making us a better university. We already recognize some of this achievement with annual awards, but we can and should do more. If we want an inspiring workplace, we should recognize and celebrate the people who inspire all of us.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

#### **Action 5.1**

Brock should support the implementation of a Human Resources Strategy focused on attracting, developing and retaining the talented people we need; creating an organizational culture with a shared responsibility for safety, inclusion and engagement; developing organizational structures that support accountability, personal achievement and university objectives; and ensuring we have the administrative systems and processes that meet the needs of end users efficiently and are aligned with our organizational structures.

#### **Action 5.2**

Brock should invest in training and development for all personnel to facilitate exceptional performance and career development, with a special focus on leadership capacity.

#### **Action 5.3**

Brock should practice a culture of appreciation to recognize outstanding contributions and achievements within all facets of the work and mission of the University.

### **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 6: DEVELOP CAMPUS INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

Excellent campus facilities are crucial to the success of Brock University. They enable faculty and staff to work to their highest potential, help us attract excellent students, facilitate a positive student experience and reflect a positive image of the University to campus visitors and nearby communities alike.



The University currently operates under a five-year strategic capital plan that accounts for infrastructure maintenance, updated space and other operational needs like classroom modernization and new capital projects. This approach to planning must continue. Wherever possible, infrastructure improvements should always consider energy efficiency targets, and we should always practice good environmental sustainability stewardship.

Brock should continue to implement its five-year Information Technology strategic plan and ensure that all campus buildings are well equipped for WI-FI capability. The University should also examine the organizational structure through which it delivers IT services across the campus to determine whether the current pattern of a centralized IT department that operates alongside independent Faculty-based operations is our most productive option.

Brock currently has an evergreen replacement program for campus computer laboratories and is implementing a long-term classroom improvement plan, but we have not kept pace with updating equipment in our science laboratories. The University should develop a multi-year strategy to update teaching equipment in all laboratories.

Brock is notionally one of the largest "cities" in the Niagara region, with well over 20,000 people a day traveling to, from and across campus. The University should develop effective transportation policies in cooperation with local governments where appropriate, develop safe bicycle pathways and promote car pools with clear drop-off areas as part of our sustainable energy policies. Brock should also develop clear way-finding signage to help internal traffic, and consider the development of an online GPS-based map system.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

**Action 6.1**

Brock should continue to articulate a five-year strategic capital plan for campus infrastructure maintenance and improvement, clearly related to updated space needs, operational requirements and the facilities condition index of all University assets.

**Action 6.2**

Brock must continue its efforts to establish energy efficient construction and operational systems on campus, and encourage best-practice sustainability initiatives in all University activities.

### **Action 6.3**

Brock should update and implement multi-year information technology plans for the campus and its user communities. The University should also examine the current organizational structure for the delivery of IT services across the campus to determine whether it should be completely centralized, fully decentralized or operate with some version of a hub and spoke model of embedded local services supplied by a centralized organization.

### **Action 6.4**

In addition to continuing its current information technology evergreen fund, Brock should work with its Faculties to develop and implement a periodic teaching laboratory equipment renewal program.

### **Action 6.5**

Brock should actively pursue its ongoing plans to update all teaching and residence facilities, with an emphasis on video and WI-FI capacity.

### **Action 6.6**

Brock should continue to work closely with its surrounding communities to assist in the development of active transportation strategies and the improvement of bicycle access routes on campus.

### **Action 6.7**

Brock should introduce more effective way-finding systems on campus among all its facilities.

### **Action 6.8**

Brock should encourage carpool initiatives among its students and staff, and establish clear drop-off points on campus for automobile passengers.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 7: MAINTAIN STRONG COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT**

All universities depend upon strong community support for their development and, in turn, can be vital components of community development alongside the multiple partners with whom they engage. This notion expresses itself in many areas of University activities, including but not limited to marketing to fulfill our enrolment strategy, fund raising, government relations, research partnerships, support for experiential learning opportunities, participation in university events, as well as community regard for the value of the University.

We need to have a strategic approach to the many groups that concern themselves with the University. The list is long: local social and cultural organizations, the business community, politicians from the region and beyond, professional organizations, neighbours surrounding the campus, regional planners and so on. While we are many things to many different groups and people, we cannot be everything to everyone, so we must make priorities and we must have a strategy of what we hope to accomplish in these multiple relationships. This strategy must also synchronize with and advance our agenda on many other elements of our approach to external relations.

University marketing is a complicated process. It requires the Brock community to determine its goals and objectives, clarify the identity we present, understand how our multiple audiences see us and utilize a wide range of communication techniques to reach targeted audiences. Brock must develop clear marketing plans in cooperation with all interested elements of the campus community, and regularly review the success of these efforts in the context of past practice and evolving circumstances.

Our fundraising, marketing and communications activities are all embedded in central University offices, but similar functions exist in other Faculty and administrative units. What is the best way to organize these committed professionals to advance Brock's agenda? Should they all be part of newly centralized departments delivering services to a list of "Brock clients"? Should they operate, as now, in various silos? Should they be organized centrally and then assigned to operate in a decentralized form of hub and spoke model to ensure good service delivery to their "client" groups? However we organize ourselves, how can we be sure that everyone with some external relations responsibilities always acts to advance the University's broad agenda as well as specific events for which they are responsible? Finally, how can we ensure that all external relations specialists gain the professional benefits of working with and learning from the larger external relations community employed at Brock? These are all important questions. We spend a lot of time and energy, not to mention financial resources, on these critically important functions and we need to be sure that we are getting maximum value from these commitments.

In an era of constrained government funding to support universities, voluntary fundraising efforts become ever more important. From time to time, Brock has ramped up its capacity to pursue major financial campaigns, but as these efforts reach a successful conclusion, it is important to press forward from a new and greater base of annual giving. The Brock community must regularly update its fundraising priorities and ensure that its fundraising team has sufficient resources, organization and clear targets to boost external support for the University.

Brock alumni are not the only donors to university fundraising campaigns, but they constitute a core group of supporters and it is important that we maintain active engagement with alumni interests as well as keep them informed about the University's annual progress in diverse fields of endeavor. Satisfied alumni can help the University, not only with fundraising but playing a role in student recruitment, mentoring students, volunteering in various campus initiatives as

well as participating in university governance. It is important that the Alumni Department develop a clear understanding of what our graduates want from their alma mater in the many years following their time on campus, and offer attractive opportunities for them to stay connected and involved with Brock.

Brock already benefits from a wide range of relationships to the world beyond our campus. One recent survey identified more than 400 different types of activities that Brock employees engaged in. Much of this activity goes on under the University's official radar, since our employees participate because they live here and simply want to build stronger communities. That said, these activities also benefit Brock and we should celebrate them. It is an important priority that we organize a central database to pull all this information together in a usable form. Brock should consider instituting a series of Community Service Awards that would celebrate Brock participants in the community and also recognize external organizations whose partnerships or contributions matter a great deal to our mission.

As we refine our external relations strategies and the communication techniques that are so important to their realization, we should also ensure that we have a clearly developed internal communications approach that informs and educates the Brock community about everything from campus events to new policies to people and activities worthy of recognition and celebration. We are a large, complicated organization and we should not assume that everyone who works here fully understands or even knows about everything happening at the University.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

#### **Action 7.1**

Brock should develop community engagement priorities that align with our enrolment, research and fundraising goals, and establish a clear organizational framework that facilitates the attainment of these goals at both the University and Faculty levels, and provides clearly identified one-stop access by community partners to appropriate University resources. To facilitate this work, it should be a priority to develop a common database for the University to record these activities and initiatives.

#### **Action 7.2**

Brock should review its current organizational arrangements to ensure the most effective outcomes for University marketing, communication and fundraising goals, as well as Faculty needs, and develop the capacity of all personnel with such responsibilities at Brock for professional achievement.

### **Action 7.3**

The Brock Alumni Department should develop a long-term plan to engage graduates with the ongoing life of the University as mentors and supporters, and work with our Alumni Association to identify opportunities to provide its members with activities they value.

### **Action 7.4**

Brock must regularly update its strategic marketing plan, based upon ongoing research, to align our marketing goals with our student recruitment, fundraising and public relations goals.

### **Action 7.5**

The Brock Communications Department should develop an innovative social media strategy and develop further channels for the distribution of The Brock News to campus, alumni and community audiences.

### **Action 7.6**

Brock must develop a list of institutional fundraising goals to prepare for a new major fundraising campaign.

### **Action 7.7**

All units with an external relations function at Brock should develop measurable targets to reflect their operational goals.

### **Action 7.8**

Brock should create a series of Community Service Awards that recognize Brock employee and student volunteers, outstanding projects as well as supportive community partners and organizations, and publicize these awards appropriately to develop a deeper appreciation of the contributions of the University and its personnel to the development of our community.

### **Action 7.9**

Brock should develop an internal communications plan that ensures there is a strategy and organization to facilitate effective communication among all campus groups (as appropriate) about matters of interest and importance.

### **Action 7.10**

Brock should develop more events that attract the external community to campus to learn about what the University experience involves. A Brock University Day could include visits to a

handful of labs and participation in brief classroom lectures or other events such as use of our athletic facilities that provide a glimpse into the life of the University, all of which would be designed to enhance community understanding and respect for our mission.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 8: ESTABLISH A SUSTAINABLE FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK**

Brock's financial performance in recent years has been very strong, as multiple balanced budgets and our improved bond rating assessments attest. Our fiscal framework is a requirement set out by the Board of Trustees and it is a good discipline for the University, especially in an environment where we do not anticipate large increases in new revenues.

The major change that we anticipate concerning Brock's budgetary practices is the introduction of a Responsibility Based Budget Model within our Faculties. This will devolve budgetary responsibility in many areas to Faculty Deans, and encourage opportunities for new initiatives that increase Faculty revenues. Of necessity, Faculties will become more responsible for both their revenues and expenditures, and should therefore become more focused on the financial implications of numerous program and staffing decisions within the Faculties.

One of the purposes of a strategic plan is to provide guidelines for future programming and financial priorities. To support new spending on new initiatives, the University budget must include a relative small sum for Strategic Initiatives. An annual report outlining how these funds were spent in relation to our Strategic Objectives will enhance understanding of the importance of the plan as well as provide accountability in this area. Such expenditures can include new allocations to base budgets as well as short-term commitments to complete special initiatives or fund pilot projects that may evolve into permanent components of the budget in future years.

To facilitate a longer-term budget horizon at Brock, we should introduce a rolling three-year budget model. Inevitably, projections for years 2 and 3 would be conditional on evolving circumstances, but this framework will improve our ability for longer-term staffing, program and financial planning at the University.

The following action items will help Brock address the different components we have identified under this Objective:

### **Action 8.1**

Under normal circumstances, Brock must continue to operate under the Board of Trustees' expectation that the University produce a balanced budget annually.

### **Action 8.2**

Brock must introduce a Responsibility Based Budget Model for the operation of its Faculties, and should review its impact for required adjustments on a regular basis over the next few years.

### **Action 8.3**

Brock should develop a Strategic Initiatives Fund within its annual budget, to improve the University by supporting both permanent and one-time initiatives that grow out of the Strategic Plan.

### **Action 8.4**

Brock should develop a rolling three-year budget plan that can be adjusted per annual circumstances. This practice will enhance the fiscal framework within which to develop a multi-year planning perspective on program and personnel decisions, as well as to accommodate multi-year financial commitments for projects.

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