



Moving Forward:  
a Strategic Plan for the  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
2021–2026

## Land Acknowledgement

Brock University is situated on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

## Cover image:

**Top row:** Dean Ingrid Makus, Assistant Professor Valdeep Saini (Applied Disability Studies), Carly Magnacca (BA '16, MA '20), Brennor Jacobs (BA '19), Amanda Smits (Environmental Sustainability Research Centre)

**Bottom row:** Tefari Bailey (BA '19), Professor Catherine Mondloch (Psychology), Jon Davey (BA '05), Madeleine Jones-Aceituno (BA '20), Zain Virani (MBE '19)

## About the Faculty of Social Sciences

The Faculty of Social Sciences (FOSS) is a vibrant community of internationally renowned researchers and scholars, award-winning teachers, dedicated staff and experienced academic advisors. As the largest Faculty at Brock University, we offer a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs and provide multiple avenues to learning, research, community engagement, and career development. FOSS is home to the following departments, centres and programs:

Applied Disability Studies

Applied Linguistics

Child and Youth Studies

Communication, Popular Culture  
and Film

Economics

Environmental Sustainability  
Research Centre

Forensic Psychology and Criminal  
Justice

Geography and Tourism Studies

Labour Studies

Political Science

Psychology

Social Justice and Equity Studies

Social Sciences

Sociology

Centre for Women's and Gender Studies



## Vision, Mission, and Principles

### Vision

Dedicated to the advancement and exchange of knowledge, the Faculty of Social Sciences is a hub of cutting-edge research and teaching excellence. Equipped with the academic and practical skills to navigate the complexities of the social world, our students are empowered to push boundaries and tackle social justice issues today and in the future from a variety of perspectives.

Principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion—including the effort to Indigenize and decolonize the academy—are integral to our vision and mission.

### Mission

We advance knowledge through continued encouragement and support of research excellence.

We actively foster research collaboration across disciplines and engagement with the wider community.

We impart knowledge and critical thinking skills to students through creative and innovative learning opportunities, including a focus on experiential education and community engagement.

We foster transdisciplinarity in the advancement and imparting of knowledge by supporting transdisciplinary collaboration and programming.

We affirm the principles of academic freedom, intellectual integrity, scholarly autonomy, and individual expression in teaching, administration and research. Our internal governance and external partnerships, contracts, funding, and commercial projects respect these principles.

We enrich the larger contexts in which we are embedded, actively engaging with and contributing to our local, national and international communities.

### Guiding Values and Principles

The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to upholding the guiding values of the University, namely:

- Integrity and respect
- A unique student experience
- Freedom of thought and expression coupled with academic responsibility
- The generation and mobilization of knowledge
- Innovation through disciplinary and transdisciplinary scholarly activities
- Inclusivity, diversity, equity
- Reconciliation and decolonization
- Sustainable, accountable, transparent stewardship



## Strategic Plan for the Faculty of Social Sciences 2021–2026

The strategic goals for the Faculty of Social Sciences 2021–2026 are:

1. Recruit and retain excellent students.
2. Enhance teaching and research excellence and effective knowledge mobilization within a context of transdisciplinarity.
3. Support the University's focus on community engagement.
4. Promote equity, diversity and inclusivity with particular focus on Indigenization, reconciliation and decolonization.
5. Foster a respectful workplace environment.

Many of these goals help to scaffold the others; thus, achieving one can help us to achieve others. For example, establishing FOSS as a hub for teaching and research excellence, focusing on equity, diversity, and respect, and creating a culture that celebrates success will enhance our ability to recruit and retain excellent students, staff, and faculty.

The Faculty of Social Sciences recognizes the value of both qualitative and quantitative data to the evaluation of our progress and the accomplishment of our goals.

The following section describes strategies and suggested indicators associated with each goal and identifies the relevant institutional strategic priorities that the Faculty of Social Sciences will help to advance.



## Goal 1: Recruit and retain excellent students

### Relevant Institutional Strategic Priorities

Offer a transformational and accessible academic and university experience (1)

Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond (3)

Foster a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation, and decolonization (4)

Strategies	Indicators may include
Encourage programs to engage in specific recruitment activities and connect them with available supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs that participate in recruitment events/activities within the Niagara Region</li> <li>Programs represented by faculty at national/provincial recruitment events</li> <li>Programs represented by student ambassadors at local/national/provincial recruitment events</li> </ul>
Offer resource support for graduate and undergraduate students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fellowships and awards available to FOSS students at the undergraduate and graduate level</li> <li>Undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in FOSS</li> <li>Support for international students</li> </ul>
Offer 3-yr BA Social Sciences degree option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student enrolment in the BA Social Sciences</li> <li>Students who pursue a BA Social Sciences as preparation to attend college to obtain a professional certificate</li> </ul>
Offer programs that meet the educational and career plans of potential students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs developed/revised in response to educational and career plans of potential students</li> </ul>
Work with Student Success Centre to develop and offer a first-year academic skills module for students at risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student performance (grade average) in first-year courses</li> <li>Use of academic skills module</li> <li>Students maintaining grade average necessary to progress through their programs</li> </ul>



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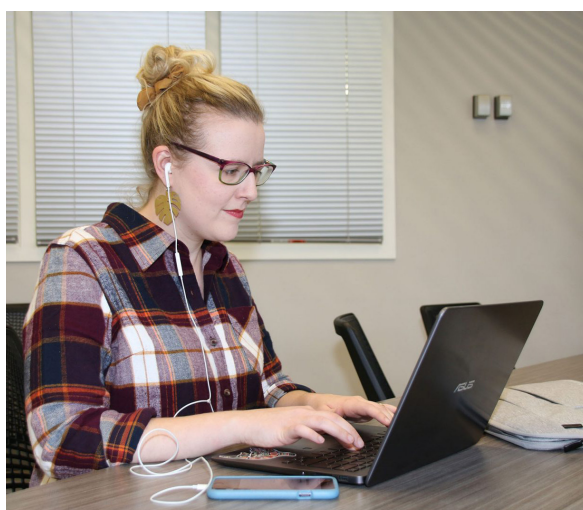


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*Goal 1: Recruit and retain excellent students, continued*

Strategies	Indicators may include
Encourage program-specific initiatives on retention and share lessons learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal opportunities to share best practices across FOSS</li> <li>• Retention levels across FOSS programs</li> </ul>
Provide effective advising for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students able to successfully navigate their programs and meet graduation requirements</li> <li>• Academic advisors who attend internal/external professional development</li> <li>• Level of student satisfaction with academic advising</li> <li>• Students who are encouraged by advisors to seek assistance through Student Success Centre, attend relevant workshops</li> </ul>
Encourage diverse learning opportunities, where applicable, including flexible and inclusive courses and program delivery formats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergraduate courses that include seminars/labs/tutorials</li> <li>• Enrolments at senior undergraduate and graduate levels</li> <li>• Opportunities for small group learning or other pedagogical modalities,</li> <li>• Second-, third-, and fourth-year courses without access restrictions</li> <li>• Collaborative programs, pathways, and articulation agreements with other institutions</li> <li>• Strategic selection of FOSS courses available to support spring/summer terms</li> <li>• Courses that are cross-listed</li> <li>• Availability of co-major options</li> </ul>
Share best practices among FOSS faculty and support staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching awards, levels of engagement with the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation, other avenues for sharing best practices</li> <li>• FOSS faculty and staff participation in events for training, sharing best practices</li> </ul>



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## Goal 2: Enhance teaching and research excellence and effective knowledge mobilization within a context of transdisciplinarity

### Relevant Institutional Strategic Priorities

Build research capacity across the university (2)

Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond (3)

Strategies	Indicators may include
Celebrate excellence in staff, faculty, and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominate FOSS faculty for teaching/research awards at the institutional, provincial, and national levels</li> <li>• FOSS faculty with Faculty-level, institutional, and external teaching awards</li> <li>• FOSS faculty with Faculty-level, institutional, and external research awards</li> <li>• FOSS graduate and undergraduate students with Faculty-level, institutional, and external awards</li> <li>• FOSS students nominated for Spirit of Brock Award, Dean's gold medal, and other University awards</li> <li>• Levels of engagement with the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation</li> <li>• Levels of engagement with other avenues for sharing best practices</li> </ul>
Support effective knowledge mobilization/ dissemination of research information/findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FOSS communications team</li> <li>• Levels of social media engagement at the Faculty level</li> <li>• Use of BrockuFOSS accounts to amplify reach of faculty members who are active on social media</li> <li>• FOSS faculty who participate in media training offered by Marketing and Communications</li> <li>• FOSS faculty included on Brock's list of media experts</li> <li>• FOSS faculty who participate in Kmb activities</li> <li>• Brock News stories and media releases highlighting research happening within FOSS</li> </ul>
Support faculty in obtaining teaching awards, developing pedagogical innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching awards held by FOSS faculty</li> <li>• Levels of engagement with the Centre for Pedagogical Innovation</li> </ul>
Support existing and develop new programs that have a transdisciplinary focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs with a transdisciplinary focus</li> <li>• Student enrolment in programs that have a transdisciplinary focus</li> <li>• Levels of satisfaction of students enrolled in programs that have a transdisciplinary focus</li> </ul>
Celebrate transdisciplinary research being done by FOSS faculty members and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stories highlighting transdisciplinary focus of FOSS research</li> <li>• Faculty and student engagement with activities that highlight transdisciplinary focus of FOSS research</li> </ul>



### Goal 3: Support focus on community engagement

#### Relevant Institutional Strategic Priorities

Offer a transformational and accessible academic and university experience (1)

Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond (3)

Strategies	Indicators may include
Include community input and involvement in program development, where appropriate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FOSS programs that include community involvement component</li> <li>Experiential learning opportunities that specifically involve the community</li> </ul>
Enhance community engagement with FOSS programs, faculty, and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Events hosted by FOSS or FOSS departments or centres that are open to the public</li> <li>Community members who attend events hosted by FOSS or FOSS departments or centres</li> <li>Students who volunteer in the community</li> <li>Stories highlighting FOSS faculty and student activities within the community</li> </ul>
Develop courses suitable for lifelong learning and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses offered through FOSS that cater to broader community (including non-traditional, non-degree-seeking learners)</li> </ul>



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## Goal 4: Contribute to equity and diversity with particular focus on Indigenization, reconciliation and decolonization

### Relevant Institutional Strategic Priorities

Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond (3)

Foster a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization (4)

Strategies	Indicators may include
Increase the number of Indigenous faculty in FOSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indigenous faculty members in FOSS</li> <li>Supports for Indigenous faculty members and their associated Departments and Centres</li> </ul>
Incorporate Indigenous content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses that include Indigenous content, context, culture, history and/or thought</li> <li>Course syllabi that include Indigenous land acknowledgments</li> </ul>
Support faculty and staff who sit on relevant committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation of FOSS faculty and staff on committees related to equity, diversity, inclusion and social justice, and to Indigenization, reconciliation and decolonization</li> <li>Recognition of faculty and staff participation on relevant committees</li> </ul>
Offer programs, courses, certificates, and other initiatives that focus on equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI), Indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs, courses, certificates and other initiatives that have components dedicated to EDI, social justice, Indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization</li> <li>Students enrolled in programs, courses and certificates that focus on EDI, social justice, Indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization</li> <li>Continue to host the Women in Leadership initiative</li> </ul>
Support cultural competency among faculty, staff and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer cultural competency training module/workshop</li> <li>Faculty, staff, and students who complete/participate in cultural competency training</li> </ul>
Create new FOSS award(s) for faculty, staff and student involvement and dedication to EDI, social justice, Indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FOSS faculty, staff and students nominated for new award(s)</li> <li>Faculty, staff and students presented with new award(s)</li> <li>Faculty, staff and students involved in activities/committees that focus on EDI, social justice, Indigenization, reconciliation, and decolonization</li> </ul>



## Goal 5: Foster a respectful workplace environment

### Relevant Institutional Strategic Priorities

Enhance the life and vitality of our local region and beyond (3)

Foster a culture of inclusivity, accessibility, reconciliation and decolonization (4)

Strategies	Indicators may include
Raise awareness of policies, supports and opportunities available to staff, faculty, and students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information (reminders) shared with staff, faculty, and students about supports available from relevant organizations and University departments</li> </ul>
Recognize excellence in faculty and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunities to formally celebrate faculty and staff excellence</li> </ul>
Support professional development opportunities for staff and faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support for staff and faculty to participate in professional development opportunities offered through FOSS or in collaboration with other University units</li> </ul>
Offer or promote training for incoming Chairs, Directors and Graduate Program Directors (GPDs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incoming Chairs, Directors, and GPDs who participate in targeted training opportunities</li> </ul>
Encourage faculty, staff, and student participation on committees associated with fostering a respectful workplace environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty, staff, and student participation on committees associated with fostering a respectful workplace environment</li> </ul>



## Next Steps: Actions and Accountability

Upon approval of the Faculty of Social Sciences Strategic Plan, the Office of the Dean will monitor activities within the Faculty (i.e., the implementation of strategies and accomplishment of measurable objectives) toward the achievement of the stated goals. To avoid duplication of efforts, data related to activities that contribute to the goals named in this strategic plan will be collected and collated from existing reports wherever possible.

Chairs and Directors within each unit may be asked to review and provide additional updates regarding their own Departments and Centres that contribute to the goals named in this strategic plan. A report will be developed for presentation to members of the Faculty Council or at an annual Dean's Town Hall on the Strategic Plan.

## Conclusion

The Faculty of Social Sciences has aligned its strategic plan with the priorities listed in *Niagara Roots – Global Reach*, Brock University's 2018–2025 institutional strategic plan, and Brock's Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA3). Therefore, as we achieve the objectives listed in our Strategic Plan, our success will not only strengthen the Faculty of Social Sciences but will also contribute to the achievement of the University's goals.

## Images

1. A field experience in a fourth-year Geography and Tourism Studies course yielded fascinating insights into the volume of plastics washing up on Niagara's beaches and resulted in extensive media attention in the Golden Horseshoe.
2. Graduate students in the Sustainability Science and Society program visited the Vineland Research & Innovation Centre to build their understanding and experience the practical impacts of research firsthand.
3. By supporting our academic advisors and implementing feedback on best practices, we better serve our student community.
4. Encouraging meaningful participation in recruiting events helps attract students with high potential to enrich our community.
5. Our strong experiential education offerings, such as the transcription of interviews with local community leaders mobilizing poverty reduction funding shown here, supports strategic goals of providing excellent student experiences and enriching the local community.
6. Ongoing engagement in traditional and innovative recruitment initiatives will be a priority across the Faculty.
7. FOSS students constantly inspire us with the time, energy, and commitment to key values of the Faculty they show in their volunteer work, as in this effort to prepare 2800 success kits for incoming Brock students.
8. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences is Brock's designated Point-of-Contact for a new MOU with the YWCA Niagara Region, where students and researchers will build on existing relationships to support capacity building and community.
9. Graduate students in the Social Justice and Equity Studies program organized the first Ability Empowerment Day, a daylong conference for high school students to learn about opportunities for students with disabilities to thrive in a post-secondary environment.

