



BRANDON
UNIVERSITY

Looking Ahead

ACADEMIC PLAN 2015-2020

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT
ACADEMIC AND PROVOST

October 2014

Introduction

Brandon University was established in 1967, building on Brandon College, founded in 1899, through the visionary efforts of generations of faculty, staff, students, and community members across several decades. Today, this Academic Plan honours their work, the rich history of Brandon University, and its strong relationship to its stakeholders.

The Academic Plan spans the period 2015 to 2020, and includes our 50th anniversary which will be celebrated in 2017. It aims to harness the dreams and aspirations of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the community for this remarkable institution and provide a strong foundation for the future so that the generations celebrating the 100th anniversary of the University may look back with pride on the work that we have done in contributing to the building of an outstanding academic institution. Throughout the Academic Plan, the University reaffirms its commitment to Academic Freedom.

The Academic Plan serves many purposes and reflects the multiplicity of the stakeholders involved in supporting and benefiting from the activities and outcomes of the University. The priorities articulated in the Academic Plan establish the trajectory of all aspects of the University. The direct benefits to the University are clear and include fostering new possibilities while meeting societal needs. Our city, surrounding rural areas, and province also benefit from the contributions made by the University community to the quality-of-life and wellbeing of all citizens.

The Academic Plan identifies priorities and strategic actions of Brandon University. The Academic Plan provides a framework of priorities upon which more unit-specific Faculty, School, Department, and Service Unit plans can be developed. The integration of the academic program and service unit plans into a single framework will support coordination and shared action within the university. These individual plans together become the Integrated Academic Plan. The Integrated Academic Plan orients the University from its current to its future state. It envelops all the academic programs and services of the University: the Faculties of Arts, Education, Graduate Studies, Health Studies and Science, the School of Music, the Indigenous Peoples' Centre, the Library, and Student Services as well as the Offices of the Vice-President (Academic and Provost), Vice-President (Administration and Finance), and President and Vice-Chancellor. The aim of the Brandon University Integrated Academic Plan is to build a shared vision, a consensus that supports the development of a university that is collaborative and collegial as well as innovative and leading the way among peer institutions.

The Integrated Academic Plan is a fundamental part of the University Institutional Plan and will guide the alignment of institutional services and infrastructure towards the support and attainment of the key academic priorities of the institution. These institutional services include Finance and Registration, Human Resources, Information Technology, Facilities Management Services, Institutional Advancement, the John E. Robbins Library, and the S.J. McKee Archives. Infrastructure includes items such as technology and facilities (e.g., teaching and learning space, research laboratories, and residence accommodations).

The Academic Planning Process

The current academic planning process was initiated in January 2014, following approval of an integrated academic planning framework by the University Senate. The steering committee structure and membership were established and approved by Senate in February 2014. The steering committee consisted of 19 representatives from across the University community and community at large (see p.20).

The academic planning process (see Figure 1) consists of five key components:

1. self-assessment, institutional review, and environmental scan
2. institutional priorities and strategic positioning
3. University and Faculty strategic action plans and alignment
4. integrated Academic Plan confirmation
5. monitoring and feedback

The self-assessment, institutional review, and environmental scan activities were conducted through a comprehensive review of institutional data, a literature review of evolving trends in post-secondary education and approaches to academic planning, and data collection and analysis. Data were collected by (a) the hosting of eight town-hall or consultation meetings with a variety of internal and external stakeholder groups (Faculties of Arts, Education, Health Studies, and Science and the School of Music as well as with the Academic Service Units such as Brandon community and students, Indigenous Peoples' Centre and Aboriginal community, and Student Services and the Library), and (b) an online institutional survey distributed to students, faculty, alumni, board members, and external stakeholders with 417 respondents.

Institutional priorities and strategic actions emerged from the analysis of current trends and stakeholder input collected. The Integrated Academic Plan aims to establish an understanding and consensus across the University community around the key priorities that Brandon University will pursue over the next five years to fulfil its mission and vision, uphold its values, and meet the needs of the individuals and communities we serve. The key priorities are contextualized across a setting that recognizes the current position and the future desired state of the University as well as forces influencing post-secondary education as a whole.

The Integrated Academic Plan is a part of a recursive process envisaged to support continuous progress towards the achievement of the mission of Brandon University.



Figure 1. Academic Planning Cycle

Post-Secondary Education Trends

Brandon University is affected by the many trends in post-secondary education (PSE).

In 2007-2008, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC, 2008) published a three volume series on trends in PSE. Several other publications have outlined trends affecting the PSE sector (e.g., Billing, 2004; Lebeau, Stumpf, Brown, Lucchesi, & Kwiek, 2012; Mayhew, 2013; McArthur, 2010). Based on these documents and other research, trends in post-secondary education can be clustered into the following areas:

- ▶ *Competition for domestic and international students is becoming fiercer. The Statistics Canada (2007) report, entitled Postsecondary Enrolment Trends to 2031: Three Scenarios, provides three different scenarios for projections of college and university enrolments for the population aged between 17 and 29 years. Each of these scenarios points to increased competition for domestic students in Canadian universities.*
- ▶ *In 2011, the Aboriginal population, consisting of First Nations Peoples, Metis and Inuit, was 157,740 or 14 percent of Manitoba's total population (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Between 55 percent and 65 percent of the Aboriginal population aged 18-44 years plans to return to school or to take further training. Across Canada, the average age of the Aboriginal population is less than that of the overall population, with 18.2 percent in the age range of 15 to 24 years as compared with 12.9 percent in the general population. At Brandon University, 13-15 percent of the student population self-identify as members of an Aboriginal community. It can be anticipated that the number of Aboriginal students in the age range 15 to 24 years aiming to attend post-secondary educational institutions in Manitoba will increase.*
- ▶ *Between 2006 and 2011, the City of Brandon has experienced a strong population growth of about 11 percent to over 46,000 and, in 2014, at about 53,000 as compared with the provincial growth rate of 5.2 percent over the same period. The region's immigrant population is growing.*
- ▶ *Brandon University plays an important role in rural education in Manitoba. Statistics Canada (2011b) data estimate the rural population of Manitoba at 333,554 for 2011, a number that has been relatively stable over the past 50 years (e.g., the rural population was 332,879 in 1961). The urban population in Manitoba over this time period has significantly increased, reaching 874,714 in 2011 as compared with 588,807 in 1961.*
- ▶ *A Statistics Canada factsheet (2012) shows tertiary (college or university) education attainment at about 46 percent within Manitoba compared to a high of 58 percent in Ontario and 51 percent overall across Canada. University degree attainment for Manitoba is 18.4 percent compared to the high of 24.7 percent for Ontario and a Canada-wide average of 22.2 percent.*

- ▶ *Individuals in the workforce within Manitoba as a whole, and Brandon and southwestern Manitoba in particular, are competing for opportunities at national and global levels, with professional advancement that is often dependent on possessing post-secondary education at the undergraduate or graduate level.*
- ▶ *There are financial pressures for government funding and tuition freezes or reductions when adjusted for operating cost inflation. In addition for some universities, pension plan actuarial deficits are demanding that up to 10 percent of operating budget be channeled into pension sustainability funding.*
- ▶ *Research costs are accelerating, while funding opportunities are shrinking, and universities are required to establish research strategies as part of the Tri-Council framework. Brandon University recently completed its Research Strategic Plan with a focus on community-engaged research.*
- ▶ *Across Canada, community colleges are increasingly being permitted to offer applied degrees. Most provinces have established educational goals and degree classification frameworks based on the Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education that emerged from the Council of Ministers of Education in 2007. A drive towards university accountability, differentiation, and specialization is evident in response to the government-articulated mandate of the PSE sector (e.g., the U15 drive across Canada and the university differentiation framework in Ontario).*
- ▶ *Universities play an important part in fostering innovation, productivity gains, and prosperity within society. Brandon University is viewed as an important partner and catalyst for community and economic development within the southwestern Manitoba region.*
- ▶ *We are experiencing increased information technological sophistication of students, rising in-class and distance technology-augmented courses, and varying readiness on the part of faculty and staff to adopt new technological changes (including changes in Campus Manitoba towards facilitating more credit transfer through increased online courses and inter-institutional mobility).*
- ▶ *Society is re-evaluating the value of university relative to community college or apprenticeship training, and concerns are rising about youth unemployment and job permanency in the wake of raising student debt and perceived diminished capacity to attain parents' standard of living.*
- ▶ *There are growing institutional domestic and international strategic partnerships to realize opportunities for joint academic programs, collaborative research, and shared infrastructure and operating costs (e.g., the Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College Memorandum of Understanding for collaborative programming).*
- ▶ *Globalization demands that education prepare students to be global citizens, and students expect universities to meet national as well as international standards.*
- ▶ *Students expect universities to provide them with the critical skills and practical training to gain employment while attaining knowledge and understanding through lifelong learning.*

- ▶ *Tri-Council funding emphasizes the training of highly qualified personnel (e.g., graduate students) in the determination of research funding allocation. Additionally, universities within Canada are competing for these funds along with the acknowledgement of arguments for research funding to be tilted towards U15 (i.e., the top 15 research institutions within Canada) and away from teaching and learning-focused universities. The importance of research, scholarly and creative activities in informing teaching and learning outcomes at universities is widely accepted, suggesting that a teaching university must move towards being a teaching and research-oriented institution if the interests of students are to be served effectively.*

These trends affecting universities are combined with mounting broad social and institutional issues. Western society has generally viewed education as a key mechanism for social mobility. The rising concentration of wealth has challenged this notion even though education continues to be a key determinant of income and standards of living. Similarly, studies such as Fein (2014) and “Glastris et al.” (2011) have recently found that liberal arts and science education is less likely to support social mobility than professional/career-oriented education in the absence of the pre-existing social network, including parents having completed post-secondary education. As a result, it is not surprising that first generation students look towards the completion of professional and career-oriented programs over liberal arts programs.

On the other hand, liberal arts and science programs focus on literacies and critical thinking skills that are crucial for upward mobility within the job setting. Critical thinking skill development, inherent in liberal arts and science education, is also crucial for broad civic and leadership contributions. Therefore, universities often struggle to find the right balance between liberal arts/science and professional programs to meet their students’ needs. Superimposed on these considerations are institutional issues in the arena of change management.

Faced with budget pressures, government demands for reduction in program redundancies, and transition towards programs demanded by students, universities have developed approaches from doing nothing (hoping the problems will be addressed by another generation of faculty members and administrators) to program prioritization processes. While it may be easy or even justifiable to be critical of either extreme, academic plans are as much about how university faculty, staff, students and others come together to collaborate in making collegial decisions about the future of the university as they are about what decisions are actually made. The aim of Brandon University’s Academic Plan is to build a shared vision, a consensus that supports the building of a university that is collaborative and collegial as much as it is innovative and leading among peer institutions.

Academic Mission and Key Strategic Priorities

Brandon University's strengths lie in its focus on academic success and the student experience; faculty innovative research, scholarly, and creative activities that engage its students and contribute to society; and university commitment as a partner in the growth and vitality of the communities that it serves.

Brandon University has a strong liberal arts and science foundation that grounds its academic, professional, career-oriented, and interdisciplinary programs.

The University is differentiated from other institutions by its core role in supporting post-secondary educational needs within the western Manitoba region as well as its extensive tradition of working collaboratively with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to establish customized educational programs.

Brandon University is recognized as an important asset, catalyst, and partner for economics and community growth within the southwestern Manitoba region.

This partnership extends to local government, business, and community organizations, and to international institutions that are complementary to the prosperity of the region and province.

Looking Ahead

The Academic Plan of Brandon University aims to orient faculty, staff, alumni, donors, partners, and stakeholders to opportunities for serving and meeting the needs of students and society within the context of the post-secondary education system within Manitoba.

Academic Mission

To be a leading engaged innovative university

Academic Vision

Brandon University will be a leading university of choice for students, faculty, and staff among its peer post-secondary institutions.

By fostering an inclusive, collegial, student-centred culture, the University will engage a diverse population of students in scholarly and research activities and active citizenship.

Working with communities, the University will act as a catalyst for growth and innovation.

Academic Priorities

A



To distinguish Brandon University as a leading student- centred institution of choice for students.

B



To establish and promote Brandon University as an institution engaged in innovative research, scholarly, and creative activity.

C



To conduct community engagement and university service activities.

D



To promote diversity and inclusive post-secondary educational opportunities.

E



To foster academic program excellence, renewal, and development.

F



To foster sustainable growth and development in academic programs and services.



PRIORITY A

To distinguish Brandon University as a leading, student-centred institution of choice for students

- i. Support excellence in student experience and academic success through teaching and learning advancements, academic program innovation and renewal, and academic services (i.e., Student Services, John E. Robbins Library, Information Technology, etc.) enhancement and support.
- ii. Strengthen liberal arts and science programs through academic curriculum review and renewal aimed at further meeting student needs, clearly communicating program requirements and, for all academic programs, building a reputation that articulates “Why a Brandon University degree?”
- iii. Establish clear requirements for degree completion for all degree programs and facilitate a balanced educational experience for students across liberal arts, science, and professional study areas.
- iv. Enhance the balance in academic programming available to students through the development and establishment of additional professional, career-oriented, and interdisciplinary programs that respond to the growing student and societal interest in these programs.
- v. Establish new experiential, co-op, and service learning opportunities that will significantly increase the number of students who gain and receive recognition on their academic transcripts from these educational experiences at Brandon University.
- vi. Increase the number of academic articulation and institutional partnership arrangements to support student transfer and mobility involving Brandon University.
- vii. Report University institutional data at the program, Department, and Faculty/School level, in order to support the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at enhancing student retention, degree completion, and student engagement.



PRIORITY B

To establish and promote Brandon University as an institution engaged in innovative research, scholarly, and creative activity

- i. Implement Brandon University's Research Strategy Plan and establish Faculty/School research goals and priorities to support contributions to knowledge and understanding as well as teaching and learning, to humanity and community development, to highly qualified personnel and skills development, and to innovation and research application.
- ii. Strengthen institutional support and recognition for research, scholarly, creative, and innovative activities conducted by faculty, students, and staff across the University.
- iii. Update the Graduate Studies Plan to expand the number of graduate programs (including interdisciplinary programs), to build and expand existing academic programs, to support educational and professional advancement opportunities of members of the community and region, and to contribute to the training of highly qualified personnel at a national and international level.
- iv. Establish partnerships and institutional networks to celebrate and leverage the expertise of faculty, students, and staff as well as the capacity of the university aimed at addressing contemporary challenges and fostering opportunities pertaining to people, communities, governments, and businesses at regional, national, and international levels.
- v. Promote open and frank discussion on knowledge exchange and transfer, research and its application, and public policy and action aimed at contributing to the environment and community.
- vi. Provide continued support for access to scholarly information as well as the tools, services and expertise needed to leverage information in all its forms.



PRIORITY C

To conduct community engagement and university service activities

- i. Partner with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and organizations to enhance the accessibility of post-secondary educational opportunities; student experience and academic success; and engagement in research, scholarly and creative activities with potential benefits to their communities.
- ii. Reach out to the “new Canadian” population to recognize prior learning and provide access to further education.
- iii. Distinguish Brandon University as a catalyst and partner in community development and growth at the local, regional, national, and international levels.
- iv. Develop a University Community Engagement Plan to support faculty, staff, and student involvement and contributions to community development, access to post-secondary and continuing educational opportunities, and utilization of the facilities and resources of the University.
- v. Enhance the brand and reputation of the University to facilitate increased contributions to the prominence and vitality of the community and region as well as to our students and alumni.
- vi. Enhance alumni outreach to increase engagement and benefits to them from their continued involvement in the activities and initiatives of the University.
- vii. Establish a School for Continuing and Part-time Education to promote adult post-secondary education facilitate access to continuing education and professional development certificate and post-degree programs, and enhance part-time degree opportunities and completion.
- viii. Support open access archives to disseminate Brandon University’s research/artistic activities across the wider community.



PRIORITY D

To promote diversity and inclusive post-secondary educational opportunities

- i. Develop diversity and inclusive education plans reflecting the Mission and Value Statements of Brandon University.
- ii. Clearly articulate how our academic programs and service reflect and promote principles of diversity and inclusive education within the curriculum and the student experience.
- iii. Establish opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to engage in experiences and initiatives that embrace diversity and inclusion, involve engaged citizenship and leaders, and address international and global issues.
- iv. Establish outreach initiatives to facilitate the University's reflection of its values of diversity and inclusion in teaching and learning; research, scholarly, and creative activities; and community engagement.
- v. Promote openness of debate, civility of dialogue, and global citizenship.
- vi. Create and develop a positive, safe space across the university to promote and support diversity and inclusiveness.



PRIORITY E

To foster academic programming excellence, renewal, and development

- i. Establish multi-year academic curriculum and enrolment plans for each Faculty and School to support Brandon University's contributions to post-secondary education in the province, by meeting student needs and addressing societal and government priorities.
- ii. Establish institutional supports and mechanisms that further prioritize and advance academic programming, teaching, and learning: the academic service areas, the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, the teaching excellence initiative(s), Senate academic program reviews, and Faculty/School academic program renewal and development activities.
- iii. Establish mechanisms to promote and facilitate timely, effective, and responsive academic curriculum and program development aimed at further meeting student and societal needs, fostering partnerships, and addressing the priorities of government.
- iv. Establish a mechanism for reporting on the enrolment, retention, degree completion, and student experience associated with academic programs based on available institutional data, in order to determine opportunities for initiatives aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of programs and student academic success at the University.
- v. Establish mechanisms to redistribute to individual Faculties, Schools, and Service Units a share of the financial benefits accrued from improvements in enrolment, retention, degree completion, and student experience within academic programs.



PRIORITY F

To foster sustainable growth and development in academic programs and services

- i. Promote a collegial and open teaching, learning, and working environment for students, faculty, and staff, in order to facilitate the foundation for sustained advancement of the University and its academic mission.
- ii. Establish clear and transparent mechanisms for Faculties/Schools, Departments, programs, and academic services to benefit from innovation and initiatives in teaching and learning excellence, academic program development and renewal, and interdepartmental academic program collaboration and coordination that contribute to student recruitment and retention, enrolment, degree completion, and student experience.
- iii. Establish a multi-year academic budget model and institutional information framework to facilitate integrated and effective planning of the multi-year academic curriculum, faculty recruitment, and enrolment management across the Faculties/Schools and University.
- iv. Establish an enrolment plan that reflects the effective utilization of the existing institutional facilities and capacity, and the academic mission of the University to be a leading innovative, engaged post-secondary educational institution with the institutional goal of building the partnerships needed to support infrastructure renewal and growth, including renovation of our institution's classrooms, labs, and buildings.
- v. Recognize the importance of the John E. Robbins Library and the S.J. McKee Archives in the teaching, learning, and research missions of Brandon University, as well as their roles as resources for the wider Brandon community and surrounding rural areas. Ensure that physical and electronic collections are securely and appropriately funded, in order to support the priorities of the Academic Plan and to enable the library to maintain currency with trends in scholarship. Continue to develop physical and virtual spaces that provide environments supportive of study, learning, research, and creativity.
- vi. Enhance international student outreach and recruitment to support international student study and to build effective global understanding, citizenship, and leadership at the University.

Conclusion

The Academic Plan establishes the key priorities that Brandon University will pursue over the next five years to fulfil its institutional mission, to uphold its values, and to place the University on a trajectory that realizes its academic mission and vision.

The Academic Plan reflects a process and framework approved by the University Senate. The first two steps have been taken by the completion of this document: (1) self-assessment, institutional review, and environmental scan, and (2) institutional priorities and strategic positioning. The academic mission and support priorities reflect the strategic positioning of the University. The next phase of the academic planning process includes the following steps: (3) university and faculty/school strategic action plans and alignment, and (4) the integration of the academic program and service unit plans into a single framework (i.e. the Integrated Academic Plan) to support coordination and shared action across Brandon University.

It is anticipated that faculty/school and academic service unit plans will be completed by March 31, 2015. Consistent with the University's Academic Planning Cycle, the final phase in the academic planning process will be the monitoring and feedback of the results of the actions taken towards the fulfilment of the key priorities. Institutional analysis and planning capacity within the University will be established to support the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at achieving the key priorities embodied in the Academic Plan.

The Academic Plan spans the period 2015 to 2020, which includes the 50th anniversary of the institution in its current form as a university. The Academic Plan aims to build a consensus and to propel Brandon University on a trajectory that will involve the building of a leading, innovative, engaged university for generations of students, alumni, faculty, staff, community stakeholders, and partners to come.

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Integrated Strategic Planning Steering Committee

Brandon University gratefully acknowledges the key role played by the members of the internal and external university community who participated in the integrated Strategic Planning Steering Committee.

Chair

Dr. Gervan Fearon Vice-President Academic and Provost (2013-2014)

Committee

Mr. Tom Brophy Associate Vice-president (Student Services & Enrolment Management) and University Registrar
Dr. Chris Brown Faculty of Education (Teacher Education)
Mr. Richard Bruce Former Chief of Police; Executive Director, Westman Immigration Services
Dr. Heather Duncan Dean, Faculty of Education
Ms. Brittani Enns, B.N. Health Studies Student
Dr. Rosanne Gasse Faculty of Arts (English & Creative Writing)
Prof. Greg Gatien School of Music
Prof. Roberta Graham Faculty of Health Studies (Psychiatric Nursing)
Dr. David Greenwood Faculty of Science (Biology)
Dr. Kathryn Hyndman Faculty of Health Studies (Nursing)
Ms. Taryn Jackson/Mr. Joel Springer BUSU Nominated
Ms. Bea Jolly Board of Governors
Ms. Carmen Kazakoff-Lane Extension Librarian
Dr. Michael Kim Dean, School of Music
Mr. Matthew May Undergraduate Student
Prof. Kim Ryan-Nicholls Faculty of Health Studies (Psychiatric Nursing)
Dr. Steve Robinson Faculty of Arts (Philosophy)
Ms. Sandy Trudel Director of Economic Development, City of Brandon
Mr. Phil Weiss Brandon Area Community Foundation

Administrative support

Mrs. Shannon Downey Executive Assistant to the Vice-President Academic and Provost

Looking Ahead

Together with Our Students,
Our People, Our Community



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