Representative Sample of Academic Planning Processes and Principles in Canada
Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers
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This document presents a summary of research undertaken by AUNBT into academic plans from a range of universities in Canada. It includes a review of current approaches to planning at UNB and how this differs from academic planning elsewhere, and offers insight into key elements that remain absent from or are underdeveloped in our current approach to academic planning at UNB, including: 1) statements of core principles that inform academic planning processes, and 2) broad objectives or strategic directions with consideration of implementation strategies. These two elements are presented as lists of "best practices" that members of the Academic Planning Committee and the Academic Planning and Resources Committee, and AUNBT members, in their role as members of the collegium, can use to contribute to the development of planning at UNB. Some of these reinforce and expand on concepts that planning committee members have already outlined in the draft planning document, but many open up important new directions. What we do not do in this document is discuss specific planning processes at UNB; such material will be reviewed in a second AUNBT statement on academic planning, "Academic Planning Processes at UNB", which we will circulate shortly.

It has been repeatedly stated that the draft academic planning document, circulated in September 2017, is a "living document" that will continue to evolve. We present this analysis in a spirit of constructive discourse with the intent of contributing to that evolution, and to the final document that will be brought to Senates in November.

RECENT APPROACHES TO PLANNING AT UNB

In 2015, UNB embarked on a process of academic planning. This process has involved two unit-based stages: stage one consisting of baseline data and context analysis at the unit level, widely called "LCC", after the Local Campus Committees that pulled together this analysis[1], and stage two consisting of needs and opportunities analysis. In the spring and summer of 2017, the Senate committees tasked with academic planning on the two campuses (the Fredericton Senate Academic Planning committee, or APC, and the Saint John Senate Academic Planning and Resources committee, or AP&R) came together to begin work on a university-wide document. An Academic Planning Update was presented to the university community on May 1st, 2017 and a draft University Academic Plan was released on September 18th, with a correction circulated on September 25th, 2017. The releases of both update and the draft plan were accompanied by town hall-style "campus conversations". The September 25th

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[1] The Stage 1 "LCC" Reports were endorsed by senate votes on each campus under specific conditions – that they be only viewed as preliminary (and as yet incomplete) baseline documents for understanding the context in each academic unit at a particular point in time, and for allocating *additional resources*, and NOT as a basis for withholding resources or as a "cost cutting aid" (Fredericton LCC May 11, 2016). This is inconsistent with statements by the Vice-President Finance about the current importance of "academic planning" documents (presumably LCC documents) for decisions about resource allocation (Town Hall, October 26, 2017).

draft consists of three broad parts: a detailed statement asserting UNB's role as a comprehensive university, a preliminary discussion of the process of academic planning, and short-term resource statements in terms of programs and units that will be targeted for funding (framed as "pilot projects").

The draft academic planning document has generated widespread discussion and deep concern, as evidenced in senates and faculty councils, university-wide town halls, and stakeholder meetings. Although the 'pilot projects' approach has raised serious process questions, concerns have been directed at all parts of the document, and reflect an unease in how this current planning exercise has evolved. In its earliest phases, it became clear to many that there was a risk that the academic planning process could be too similar to program prioritization espoused by Dickeson[2]; both the broad, consultative approaches of Fredericton in stage one, and Saint John in stage two can be seen as resistance to this possibility. However, while the notion that UNB could develop its own approach is laudable, as the larger university-wide process unfolded, a decision was made to keep to tight timelines which has in turn precluded the continuation of a broad, consultative approach. The result is a document that is born in consultation but that narrowed in perspective and vision as it grew, and ultimately fails to deliver on both its promise and intent.

To evaluate this conclusion, and to consider the full potential of academic planning at a high level, we undertook a preliminary analysis of academic planning exercises and their results across Canada. We selected 15 universities in a way that cross-cuts Maclean's categorization and our comparison group; they represent a diversity of budget models, planning processes, and structural and program contexts. Despite this diversity, these plans share many features that are absent from the current UNB document.

These shared features include articulation of:

- strategic visions, unifying, university-wide goals, and values,
- principles for the academic enterprise, for planning and for implementation, and
- broad objectives or strategic directions (often coupled with recommendations and consideration of strategies for implementation).

In the university plans we consulted for this analysis, the purpose of these components is to provide tools and frameworks for unit-based planning, for the creation of strategically-informed plans in departments and faculties, and for their evaluation and approval for implementation by faculty councils and senates, and by administrators such as Deans and academic Vice-Presidents[3]. The focus of the UNB draft Academic Planning document, which culminates in the selection by the APC and AP&R of programs, areas, and particular themes without reference to unit-based processes for ongoing maintenance of academic activities of all kinds, differs greatly

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[2] Dickeson, R. C. (2009). *Prioritizing academic programs and services: Reallocating resources to achieve strategic balance, revised and updated.* John Wiley & Sons.

[3] The AUNBT will release a second document on academic planning processes at UNB in early November that comments on how these tools and frameworks could be integrated into existing approaches to planning at UNB.

from the practices of academic planning at other universities in Canada. In particular, the current planning exercise at UNB has yet to fully integrate broad intersecting interests and issues such as student learning, engagement and success, diversity, equity, governance, health, wellness, and the larger university community.

A key lacuna at UNB is a current strategic vision. While the sequence of academic planning in relation to strategic planning is an important discussion for academic staff, faculty councils and senates, it is outside the scope of this analysis. The elaboration of broader visions for the University certainly should involve a weaving together of the unit-based perspectives with overall strategic visions, and the inability of authors of the draft Academic Plan to integrate their work into the high-level vision statements of a current strategic plan should be considered in this context. However, the lack of an up-to-date strategic plan notwithstanding, the integration of broad-based and far-reaching principles and objectives should have been fully within the scope of academic planning at UNB.

As noted above, the following pages review practices and concepts relating to principles and objectives taken from a range of academic plans in Canada. It is not our intent to propose them as a kind of shadow academic plan. Rather, we suggest they represent a more appropriate way of thinking about academic planning and university-wide priority setting, and may help to further refine academic planning at UNB by allowing us to reposition our efforts away from a prescriptive, narrow approach of selecting programs for particular emphasis, and towards a planning framework that can be used for actual academic planning by departments and faculties. The list of universities consulted in this analysis is by no means exhaustive, but was sufficient for the identification of recurrent practices and themes in planning. The universities are listed alphabetically at the end of the document, and concepts are coded to their source university by superscript letters (a through o).

PRINCIPLES

Most academic plans involve framing statements about principles and parameters for the academic exercise. In this regard, the Queen's University Academic Plan,[j] which focuses on general and planning principles, is particularly helpful; some (i.e. St. Mary's) frame them as "academic values". The specific principles and their categorization below draw on but develop these further.

General Principles

General principles articulate a shared understand of the institutional context in which universities operate in Canada, and provide a critical framework to keep planning efforts true to that institutional context.

1) The common good of society depends on knowledge and its free exposition. As the foundation of the academic mission through teaching and scholarship, we value discovery and dissemination of knowledge in all its forms. [l]
2) As a comprehensive university, we must balance undergraduate experience, [c] professional programs, graduate teaching and research. [j]
3) Teaching, learning, discovery and research activities are fundamentally interconnected and are mutually informing in a university. [b,f,j]
4) The University must provide all students, regardless of their chosen program or discipline, with core competencies and skills. [a,c,f,j]
5) The University must foster disciplinary learning and research while supporting efforts that seek to work across these traditional disciplinary boundaries. [j]
6) In all aspects of the work of the University (in student recruitment and admissions, hiring within the University at all levels, research and service) the University must promote diversity, inclusivity, and equity. [j]
7) The University recognizes the distinctiveness of our two campuses and is committed to addressing both the challenges and opportunities that arise from distinctiveness in ways that will allow both to thrive and fulfill our University's vision and mission. [f]
8) The University must find a balance between its role as a provincial institution, its place in the region and within Canada and with its promotion of global citizenship. [j]
9) As an academy of scholars, we value institutional autonomy, collegiality, and shared governance; [l] the University is committed to collegial governance in all aspects of its planning and operation. [f]
10) The University unequivocally embraces academic freedom, freedom of thought and expression. [k, l]

Planning Principles [j]

Rather than being prescriptive about the academic planning process and/or its results, planning principles are intended to inform how academic plans and related decision-making processes (including academic hiring, implementation of plans and use of allocated resources) emanate from units. While academic planning is fundamentally about the generation of plans, it also serves to create a framework for shifting the academic direction of the institution in a

gradual, incremental way, by outlining areas that units can creatively and adaptively respond to within their own disciplinary context.

1) Key decisions about curricula, programs, and staffing must be made by academic units (departments and faculties),[j] but academic planning is an integrated process that occurs at the levels of departments, faculties, and senates. [f]

2) The purpose of academic planning is to articulate broad principles, objectives, and frameworks for the development of unit-based plans that are linked to clear recommendations, strategies and provisions for implementation. [j]

3) The academic planning process must function to preserve and enhance genuine strengths, [f,j] and foster and promote innovation and creativity for the common good. [j]

4) The planning process and, in particular, the transition from planning to implementation should be fair, open and transparent, [a,b,d,k] and should involve consultation with groups on campus (including academic and non-academic staff, and students). [j]

5) To ensure accountability in planning, roles and responsibilities for both academic units and senior administrators need to be clearly outlined. [b,k]

6) Planning is iterative and adaptive, yet as academic hiring is long-term, planning must involve anticipating long-term directions; planning cycles should accommodate short-, medium-, and long-term goals. [j]

Implementation and Sustainability Principles [m]

Academic planning is also tied to resource allocation and specific plans for implementation. As a process, it is intended to enable the university to persist and grow, and thus be sustainable.

1) The allocation of resources to units will be based on the effective use of unit planning tools in the creation of unit plans (for example, changes in baseline metrics, external review documents, curriculum plans), articulation with the University's principles, goals and directions, as well as evaluation of previously anticipated planning outcomes. [a,m]

2) Limited resources may be set aside for pilot projects to test and adjust new initiatives, but these must not be at the expense of core programming. [j]

3) Unit plans will involve implementation strategies and plans, and will identify anticipated planning outcomes. [m]

4) To create meaningful change in the context of deeply grounded academic visions, the University will develop multiyear academic planning and budgeting, [a,e] with an eye to long-term sustainability and development. [m]

5) Academic units must have the administrative and technical support needed to enable implementation of their plans in a responsible and sustainable way. [d,f]

6) All students should have equal opportunity to study in learning environments that are funded sufficiently to meet prevailing disciplinary standards. [f]

ACADEMIC GOALS OR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Every university has particular contexts and goals in which they must consider their present and future, but the academic enterprise also consists of core values, and many of these inform high level academic planning. Many academic plans view these as overarching goals and objectives, or as "pillars". [j] Most also subdivide these goals and objectives, and link them to recommendations and strategies or pathways for implementation. Also, while some plans refer to specific tools of evaluation, most do not, and instead refer to the iterative nature of planning as a way of suggesting an ongoing process of adjustments to direction and revisions.

The academic goals and objectives outlined below are drawn from academic plans from across Canada, and indicate not only best practices but also areas of particular resonance for UNB. They are ones that recur and are broadly shared as a suite of common goals from Canadian academic plans. By including these, we are not highlighting or indicating the acceptability of any particular idea, but rather intending to broaden the discussion so that important ideas and approaches are not omitted from UNB's plans as we move ahead.

1. STUDENT LEARNING AND STUDENT SUCCESS
2. ACADEMIC QUALITY
3. DIVERSITY AND EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ENGAGEMENT
4. DISCIPLINARITY, INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND UNIT-BASED PLANNING
5. THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY, HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The sections below explore each of these categories in detail, outlining the goals or directions to which they are often linked, and the general implementation strategies that have been used to achieve them.

1. Student Learning and Student Success

a. Students must be seen as learners, but also researchers who engage in research learning and active inquiry. [b,j,k]
b. The University must nurture academic skills and competencies, [b,j,l] such as:
    i. Critical reading, information literacy, and critical thinking, [c,j]
    ii. Effective writing and communication, [j]
    iii. Numeracy, [j]
    iv. Academic integrity, [b,j]
    v. Effective collaboration, [j]
    vi. Intercultural competence and literacy, [j]
    vii. Autonomy, professionalism, [l] and professional capacity. [c,j]
c. Students must be made a part of the academic community. [a,c]
d. A key area of learning involves linking theory and practice as a way of preparing students for the transition to successful careers and civic engagement. [l]
e. There must be support for international students, [a,b] non-conventional learners, [b] students from equity-seeking groups. [b]

f. The University encourages learning as a lifelong activity through accessible, responsive and comprehensive continuing education, and professional development and learning opportunities for students, faculty and staff. [k]

g. The University must acknowledge the complex place of students of all kinds in the University - as learners, collaborators, researchers, mentors, and employees, whose engagement with the University extends through and beyond their time at the University, and not simply as contributors to enrolment figures as a part of revenue generation. [e,j]

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS: Foster community-based [b,g] and experiential [a,b,c,d,g,l] and inquiry-based [b,j,e] learning; pursue broad, trans-departmental program initiatives; [g] foster student-teacher interaction; [l] provide learning support; [l] boost participation of undergraduate students in research activities through incentives – workload recognition –and support); [d,j] involve librarians in the training of research competencies; [d] identify underprepared and at-risk students, and create intervention programs; [a,d] provide workshops and resources for professional preparation of students; [d] evaluate carefully how online resources and mobile technology can be integrated into academic programs in a way that does not sacrifice quality. [m]

2. Academic Quality

a. Academic reputation in teaching and research is a key asset of the University, and must be carefully nurtured. [d,f]

b. Within the intellectual community, scholarly communication is fostered by ethical conduct and mutual respect. [l]

c. A primary goal of the academic plan is excellence in research and creative activity, and innovative and creative accomplishment in teaching. [l]

d. Research is a complex undertaking that involves scholarship, creativity, and seeks to maintain strength in fundamental, inquiry-based, curiosity-driven research while exploring and integrating knowledge mobilization and innovative, industrial applications of research. [a,d,l,m,o]

e. Support for scholarship, research and creativity includes adequate spaces and support services, and should be properly resourced at all levels. [b,e]

f. An important component of academic quality is also academic leadership and administrative support for the academic mission. [b,d]

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS: Invest in graduate student funding; [a,d,g,l] continue to support access to scholarly information and library acquisitions; [a,b] provide access to tools, services and expertise needed to leverage information in all its forms; [a,b] undertake a comprehensive review to ensure infrastructure, space, information systems, and staff resources are in place to support graduate and faculty research; [d] create timely, short-term teaching load reductions to enable intensive research and creative work; [d] encourage greater collaboration between faculty and librarians in research and creative activity; [d] strengthen support for scholarship, inquiry-based research, and creative works; [a] create teaching development grants to support transformation of teaching using emerging practices; [d] establish a multi-year academic budget model facilitate

planning of the multi-year academic curriculum and faculty recruitment; [a] ensure that academic planning contributes to the maintenance of research excellence; [m] ensure students are involved in research; [j, k, m] celebrate the value of both inquiry-based [m] and innovation research; [k] 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; [a] ensure that research facilities can support and evolve with the growing needs of the research community; [b] establish processes for evaluating the performance of leadership. [b]

3. Diversity and Equity, Inclusion and Engagement

a. The University values the equitable, intentional and ongoing engagement of diversity within every facet of university life. [h,l]

b. It is the shared responsibility of all community members to foster a welcoming, supportive and respectful learning, teaching, research and work environment. [e,j]

c. The University values the fair and just treatment of all community members through both creating opportunities and removing barriers as a part of addressing historic and current disadvantages for underrepresented and marginal groups. [k]

d. The University values and respects diversity of knowledge, worldviews and experiences that come from membership in different groups, and the contribution that diversity makes to the learning, teaching, research and work environment. [k,l] The academic plan must foster respect, appreciation for diversity through learning languages (both modern and ancient), histories, cultures. [a,j]

e. The University is committed to implementation of the 2015 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in a substantial and serious way; [f] this involves transforming the academy and integrating indigenous knowledge systems; [j] the University will continue to cultivate and develop relationships with Indigenous communities, both within and outside the University; [a] the campus environment will embrace and support Indigenous learners, [b,g] faculty and staff, and ensure Indigenous people take a leading role in the advancement of Indigenous education. [a,k]

f. The University will work to achieve gender balance in all units and at all levels (including in leadership). [j]

g. The academic plan recognizes the importance of non-academic staff in the academic enterprise. [b,j]

h. An aspect of equity is social justice which requires us to challenge and transform society's understanding and existing norms through civic, scientific and cultural actions. [n,o]

i. The University fosters a collegial environment and collegial institutions where students, faculty and staff work in collaborative ways to support the University's shared mission. [a,k,l]. 'Engagement' is linked to advancing collegial governance; ability to engage in decision-making should be a plank in equity. [o]

j. The promotion of global citizenship and internationalization involve adopting global and cross-cultural perspectives within a range of programs, and seeking to understand and value differences in cultures, people and thinking. [a,h,l,o]

k. International students and new Canadians [a,b,e,n] form a part of the rich fabric of university community, and bring with them a range of experiences, perspectives and insights; they must be supported to be able to engage in the university community. [a,b,e,n]

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS: Form Indigenous advisory councils, [j] recruit Indigenous students, faculty and staff, [c,f] integrate Indigenous culture, history and methodologies into appropriate programs/courses, [c,f] enforce equity policies for hiring, create welcoming spaces for equity-seeking groups of all kinds; [o] support participation of contract academic employees (CAEs) in governance and increase recognition of the value and cost of participation in collegial governance; [o] recognize service-intensive tasks (chair, academic leadership) in both workload and career progression; [d] establish concrete practices to make resource allocation and decision-making more transparent, collaborative, and principle-based; [d] attract and retain high-quality faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds; [k] increase support for students to undertake international exchanges, field courses, and travel-study programs; [a,d,j] require second language skills; [j] improve support for students for whom English is not a first language. [m]

4. Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity

a. Academic units are typically framed around disciplinarity. [e,h] This disciplinarity is central to student learning, especially in terms of professional capacity, positioning for graduate education, and employment. [a,b,h] While interdisciplinary approaches must also be nurtured, it must not at the expense of disciplines. [a,b,h]
b. In addition to the development of priorities that will shape the academic planning of the University, we should also pay attention to the range of current operations that are underway and support existing academic programs. [m]
c. Students benefit from wider educational experiences and an interdisciplinary experience can both contextualize and enrich the disciplinary. [j]
d. Interdisciplinary research is an important complement to disciplinary research as often the most profound solutions emerge at the edges of disparate fields of inquiry, where often unexpected intersections occur. [b]

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS: Understand and thoughtfully remove structural barriers to interdisciplinarity, [b,g] including through mechanisms as prosaic as timetabling; [g] mechanisms to improve the experience of interdisciplinary graduate education must be explored; [b,m] support cross-teaching or co-teaching; [j] carefully consider role of disciplinary activities in the maintenance of institutional accreditation, pathways to graduate education, and linkages to professional programs (i.e. education); [j] find mechanisms to support and nurture interdisciplinary research, [b,l] and develop multi-faculty research priorities. [b]

5. The University Community, Health and Wellness

a. The University is committed to the success of its students, faculty and staff by creating a safe, secure and healthy environment that puts people first, is supportive of the whole person. [c,k] Health, wellness and support for all community members is critically important (counselling services, student health services, etc.). [c,j]

b.   The University will continue to create welcoming and approachable campuses that foster engagement and support for equity-seeking groups. [a,b,j,o]

c.   The University is committed to conducting community engagement and university service activities [a,e] that link the University and the community. [b,k]

d.   The University will insure that its spaces and the education and employment opportunities at the University are accessible to all members and to the communities in which its campuses are located. [a,e,f,k,l]

e.   The University takes responsibility for a shared future with a broader community, and aims to pursue environmental, social and economic sustainability through its activities. [k]

f.   Through relationships with Indigenous communities and students the University will create an educational environment that embraces and supports Indigenous perspectives and experiences, and builds places within the community for Indigenous people. [k]

g.   The University will create transitional pathways leading current students to become engaged alumni who can remain involved in the University after graduation; [k]

h.   Connections between students, academic staff, and alumni need to be nurtured. [b]

i.   The University will continue to enhance the library's role as a provider of exceptional learning spaces, quality digital and physical collections, and innovative services for teaching, learning, research and collaborations. [k]

j.   The University will 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. [a,b,e,l]

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS: Encourage community-building in academic units that build connections among students and to faculty and staff outside of formal learning; [m] create and develop a positive, safe space across the University to promote and support diversity and inclusiveness. [a,j]

RESOURCES:

a. Brandon (https://www.brandonu.ca/vp-academic/academic-plan/, https://www.brandonu.ca/academic-plan/files/Brandon-University-Academic-Plan.pdf)

b. Calgary (http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/files/provost/academicplan2012.pdf, http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/activities/academicplan)

c. Capilano (https://www.capilanou.ca/about/strategic-planning/)

d. Concordia (https://www.concordia.ca/about/strategic-framework/academic-plan.html

e. Dalhousie (https://www.dal.ca/about-dal/leadership-and-vision/dalforward.html)

f. Lakehead (https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/provost-vice-president-academic/academic-plan)

g. Laurentian (https://laurentian.ca/academic-plan)

h. McGill (https://www.mcgill.ca/provost/strategic-initiatives/mcgill-university-strategic-academic-plan-2017-2022-0)

i. Memorial (https://www.mun.ca/vpacademic/APR/ED_2015_PanelReport.pdf)

j. Queen's (http://www.queensu.ca/strategicplanning/academic)

k. Ryerson (http://www.ryerson.ca/provost/academic-plan/)

l. Saint Mary's (http://www.smu.ca/about/vpar-academic-plan.html)

m. Simon Fraser (http://www.sfu.ca/vpacademic/academic_planning/academic_plans.html)

n. Thompson River (http://www.tru.ca/about/tru-mission-statement/academics/academicplan.html, http://www.tru.ca/__shared/assets/Academic_Plan24460.pdf)

o. York (http://secretariat.info.yorku.ca/files/UAP-2015-2016-Final.pdf, http://secretariat.info.yorku.ca/senate/academic-policy-planning-and-research-committee/university-academic-plan-2015-2020-uap/)