

**MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY
A STRATEGIC STATEMENT FOR 2007-2016**

PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE GROUP

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THE BROAD OBJECTIVE OF THE STRATEGY

The broad objective of this strategy is to make Mount Allison University the best primarily undergraduate university in Canada and among the best in North America. We want to be known for our academic and program excellence, and to be identified as a distinctive and top quality university in a number of concrete areas and ways. Our aim is to be the destination place for lively, imaginative, creative and talented students, faculty, and staff, and for our alumni to characterize it this way after they graduate.

Our mission is to work together to make the Mount Allison experience a unique and creative one, which integrates an excellent academic program with compelling and lively extracurricular activities, in a series of communities that students establish amongst themselves and with faculty, staff and the local community. There is no one single Mount Allison experience but, rather, a series of rich and compelling experiences, opportunities and possibilities that reflect students' interests, decisions, and choices.

The Mount Allison experience is more than a degree: it is a stepping stone to a larger world, whether of further graduate or professional studies or employment. This experience aims to help students – and faculty and staff – to develop their capacities and their potential as fully and widely as possible, from the intellectual and the social, to the physical and the creative, so when they leave Mount Allison they have the personal capacity to make a successful, meaningful intervention into and contribution to their society and the world.

COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGIC STATEMENT

There are a number of components that make up our strategy:

- 1) Student Recruitment and Retention: the challenges and opportunities we face in attracting qualified students to Mount Allison;
- 2) The Academic Experience – Quality and Differentiation: the challenges of maintaining an academic experience for our students that is unique and top quality;
- 3) The Extracurricular Experience – An Integrated Approach: the opportunity to build on Mount Allison's legacy of extracurricular activity and link this dimension more closely to our core academic mission;
- 4) The Faculty Experience – Teaching and Research: the challenges and opportunities involved in attracting and retaining high-quality faculty and assisting their professional success in a balanced teaching, research, and service environment;
- 5) People, Infrastructure, Budget, and Support: our challenges in attracting and maintaining a high-quality management and staff and ensuring a physical and technical environment that supports the Mount Allison experience;
- 6) Accountability: the challenge of establishing clear, transparent lines of accountability to demonstrate to ourselves and to our communities the extent to which we are attaining our mission and strategic objectives.

Within these components, we seek to aggregate our core values and principles into operational practices, and address them in light of our conjunctural circumstances, our strengths, and our challenges.

1 **STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

Our recent experience has seen sub-target enrolment as well as lower student retention than many other universities; this has undermined our capacity to fulfill our mission. The first requirement for a successful university is to attract an adequate number of qualified students to underpin our academic programming and activities. A second requirement is to attract those students who would be in tune with our mission, ambitions, and programming, by clarifying and articulating clearly and compellingly who we are and what we do. Third, once they are here, we should aim to retain a higher proportion of students than at present, by offering appropriate and promised experiences and the academic and community supports that will help them to fulfill their expectations.

a) *STUDENT RECRUITMENT*

- Establish an appropriate organizational structure in this area, review staff and resources, and create and pursue a strategic enrolment management plan. Increase role of faculty, staff, students, and alumni in a ‘total’ strategic recruiting orientation for the University.
- Set a modest growth target to generate an overall enrolment commensurate with our strategy and plans.
- Define area targets to meet other enrolment, international, and program objectives (e.g. 50% Maritimes, 40% rest of Canada, 10% international) and allocate resources in pursuit of these targets.
- Set a long-term objective: qualified students who want to attend Mount Allison should not be discouraged from attending by lack of financial capacity. Diversify and increase our enrolment mix of non-traditional students and under-represented groups (e.g. part-time students, transfer students, mature students).
- Intensify our pursuit of student financial support in fund raising, to target quality students and area recruiting, and to help offset student expenses.
- Work to neutralize the external image of Mount Allison as an expensive experience: highlight financial aid, lower cost-of-living and income-generating research, teaching, and employment opportunities.
- Make particular efforts to expand and deepen our reach in our local and regional communities (e.g. the greater Moncton area).
- Create partnerships with the town of Sackville in building and highlighting its attractions to potential students.

b) *TARGET RECRUITING*

- Re-articulate external publications and communications to sharpen Mount Allison’s image and message, in light of the strategic statement. Update and strengthen our image in our traditional (arts, culture) and new areas of strength (e.g. science).
- Make web development a high priority and tie it closely to external relations.
- Fine-tune or target scholarships and financial aid to recruiting strategy. Consider ‘travel awards’ to neutralize distance expenses.

- Increase opportunities for ‘in-course’ scholarships and support, to reward merit and accomplishment at Mount Allison, to improve retention, and to offer possibilities of four years of financial support.
- Rejuvenate and sharpen our sense of the Mount Allison experience, and communicate this experience externally as being more than a degree.
- Highlight and profile Mount Allison experience and opportunities: research, teaching and mentorship, interdisciplinarity and innovation, citizenship, community, creativity.
- Consider increased summer campus programming in recruiting future students.
- Increase availability of non-traditional courses and programming (electronic, off-campus, and evening courses).

c) STUDENT RETENTION

- Survey non-returning students (and faculty and staff) to assess why students have left Mount Allison after first or second year.
- Ensure that we have adequate academic support services and counseling available to students to help them attain academic success.
- Re-establish mandatory academic advising for students, particularly at early year levels.
- Introduce system of peer mentorship (possibly through Leadership Mount Allison or residence life program).
- Build an academic needs or skills program, to increase writing and other skill levels, to increase possibilities for academic success, and to deal positively with students in academic distress.
- Consider an increased role for the Library in increasing information literacy, providing learning support, and complementing and strengthening the academic program.
- Ensure that we are moving towards full physical accessibility and support.
- Promote retention issues in the Academic Renewal process (section 2 below), particularly to mitigate student concerns over limited academic variety and choice.

2 THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE: QUALITY AND DIFFERENTIATION

Our ultimate goal continues to be to provide excellent academic programming and a quality and critical learning experience for our students – and to be known for this. The classroom experience, particularly in first year, has not been as consistent with a ‘small university’ experience as it should be. Not all classes or courses need be ‘small’ and it is desirable that students have a variety of learning experiences. But there should be a healthy mix of small class experiences in each year. Moreover, the academic programs in the calendar and our external materials need to be brought in line with more recent developments including our new strategic statement. In a highly competitive market, it is important to differentiate ourselves programmatically, as far as this is practical, to become better known, to be perceived as academically innovative, to make us a destination place, and to focus our energy and resources.

- a) *ACADEMIC QUALITY AND THE MOUNT ALLISON EXPERIENCE*
- Guarantee a substantial and meaningful small group experience in first- and second-year courses: set class size targets as well as targets for total number and range of classes with small group component.
 - Maintain small class size in upper-year courses where important and appropriate.
 - Strengthen students' focus, opportunities, and experience in their courses on participation, writing, critical thinking, creative problem solving, and a personal touch: set quantified targets.
 - Increase research opportunities and support for students, as term and summer research assistants and in courses where appropriate. Highlight research opportunities as a core, defining student opportunity in the Mount Allison experience.
 - Increase the opportunities for Honours student teaching in appropriate small group settings as part of the teaching-learning environment: set targets and increase resources and opportunities. Highlight teaching opportunities as a core, defining student opportunity in the Mount Allison experience.
 - Increase student opportunities for self-directed learning (within courses and in stand-alone courses).
 - Increase opportunities for experiential and community learning: set targets.
 - Increase international opportunities for our students, both off-campus and within our campus academic experience.
 - Increase encouragement and opportunities for students' engagement in and contribution to the shaping of their education.
 - Renew and strengthen academic counseling and academic support services (as noted in section 1). Re-introduce mandatory academic advising for students in first and second year. Explore opportunities for upper-year student mentoring of new students, particularly in the residence environment.
 - Consider expanding the Teaching Centre into a Teaching and Learning Centre (with a strong writing and skills component) or the creation of a stand-alone Writing or Academic Skills Centre. Consider mandatory skills testing for first-year students, with appropriate follow up.
- b) *ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING AND DIFFERENTIATION*
- Working with the academic deans, the Vice-President Academic and Research will initiate an academic renewal process, which will among other things: consider major/minor/honours; minima/maxima courses in majors; distribution requirements; total course requirements; course delivery (including the small group experience); academic programming link to research, interdisciplinary links, and differentiation; academic programming link to recruiting.
 - Create incentives for academic renewal, including simplifying and easing the bureaucratic processes of academic program change.

- Fully develop, celebrate, and capitalize on our differentiation – including fine and performing arts and the sciences – in program development, student opportunities, and in links with extracurricular activities.
- Address the fact that Mount Allison has a strong ‘horizontal’ array of programs – from the fine and performing arts through the humanities and social sciences to the applied and theoretical sciences – that often results in a lack of ‘vertical’ depth or variety in many of these areas.
- Consider the creation of interdisciplinary academic areas of emphasis or programs. These would act as ‘diagonal’ (cross-disciplinary) development centres, to lever our strong ‘horizontal’ array of programs while mitigating our lack of ‘vertical’ depth in a number of areas.
- Highlight (internally and externally) these broadly conceived and defined areas or axes of strategic emphasis for program and research development. Link these broad areas to new course and program development; to existing courses, majors, and minors; as well as to extracurricular programming and student activity. These possible developments will be pursued through the University’s collegial bodies (Senate, Faculties, Departments, and their committees).
- These areas of strategic emphasis would complement (not replace) academic departments and majors, and their effectiveness will be reviewed every three to five years.
- Consider the following broad areas as the basis for strategic emphasis and orientation, for academic program development, for research and professional clustering, and for links with extracurricular activities:
 - 1) Culture and Creativity: Deepen connections amongst drama, fine arts, music, and the other academic programs that deal with creativity and culture, to strengthen and ‘lever’ Fine and Performing Arts and create a fertile context for consideration of a School of Fine and Performing Arts.
 - 2) The Environment: Use the environment as a prism through which to explore science, society, and humanity – locally, nationally, and internationally.
 - 3) Globalization and its Consequences. Explorations in globalization – from politics, commerce, and environment, through culture, religion, and ideas. Explore possibilities in ‘area studies’.
 - 4) Public and Community Service and Citizenship: Link academic study and programming to our personal identities and roles as citizens in the community and in the world, and to prepare students to make a contribution to their society.
 - 5) Science: From Imagination through Experience to Discovery. Deepen our strengths in science by offering active research practice and opportunities in the creation of knowledge and by exploring the roles of science in understanding the natural world and society.
- Strategically align medium-term staffing plan with new academic programming initiatives. Consider cross-departmental appointments.
- Explore program and teaching linkages and partnerships with other universities and post-secondary partners as a way to strengthen ‘vertical’

program development (e.g. Université de Moncton and bilingual programming and training; technology and course delivery across universities; articulation agreements with community colleges).

- Explore possibility of constructing preparatory professional programs (e.g. pre-Law, pre-Medicine, pre-Education).
- Consider professional programs in a broad, liberal academic context.
- Solidify and professionalize existing graduate programming and consider a small or targeted amount of graduate program development that offers student, program, professional, and research opportunities, to the extent that this development strengthens the undergraduate program.
- Renew and expand academic support systems for students (from the library through academic counseling and skills development.)

***HIGHLIGHTS/DIFFERENTIATION OF THE STUDENT
ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE: 'MORE THAN A DEGREE'***

In order to attract and retain students, the quality and uniqueness of the Mount Allison academic experience will be critical. We should work to articulate and practise the following student academic experience:

- ***Academic quality and excellence, with focus on the individual student.***
- ***Emphasis on critical learning and creative problem solving.***
- ***Many opportunities for small group learning experience – with set targets.***
- ***Personal support and attention in strong community setting.***
- ***Opportunities for writing and skills development.***
- ***Research, teaching, internship and mentorship opportunities as TAs, RAs, interns, and mentors: with set targets/guarantees.***
- ***Integration of academic experiences with extracurricular activities and experiences through academic clusters: strong international component.***
- ***Active engagement in their learning and program development.***
- ***Launching pad for graduate or professional studies.***

3 INTEGRATED EXTRACURRICULAR EXPERIENCE

The 'total' or all-encompassing experience at Mount Allison is a powerful inducement for student recruitment and an intense feature of student and alumni loyalty to Mount Allison. The Mount Allison experience – really a series of possible experiences – has had a profound DIY (do-it-yourself) dimension that students find highly attractive, personally rewarding, and satisfying. It also allows students to work with faculty, staff, alumni, and local community members to construct their own community – indeed, set of communities – particularly while living in an intimate town and humane and personal university setting. An important objective of this plan is to increase the possible connections of the extracurricular experience with the academic experience, in a more organic and integrated approach.

STUDENTS AND THE MOUNT ALLISON EXPERIENCE

- Highlight extracurricular experiences and community building as integral to the Mount Allison experience; work to create greater connections with the academic experience (e.g. the tradition of student activism and leadership activities with the Public and Community Service and Citizenship cluster; drama and theatre activity with the Culture and Creativity cluster; and so on).
- Establish an appropriate organizational structure in this area and create and vigorously pursue a coherent strategy.
- Offer both staff and students increased opportunities for professional development, training, and leadership in this area.
- Intensify residential life experience by building on innovative new programming and activities (e.g. Times Not Wasted, Book Clubs).
- Develop opportunities for student experiential learning and DIY opportunities; consider ways to connect these activities to academic activities and programming.
- Focus on regional, national, and international opportunities and connections, including internships, work experiences, and off-campus opportunities.
- Deepen the Mount Allison international experience by increasing the organizational presence and activities of the international experience, targeting a percentage of students to have an international experience, as well as recruiting a target number of incoming international students.
- Increase summer opportunities to create a Mount Allison summer community: set targets for student opportunities in research and extracurricular areas.
- Create a distinctive Mount Allison approach to varsity sports, physical, and recreational programming; tie these activities to the development of life-long skills and strategies for wellness. Set targets for participation in these areas.
- Increase student opportunities for participation in collegial university bodies and in local communities, in order to offer students community experience.
- Build university-student partnerships to expand programming and opportunities.
- Partner with students in the development of a co-curricular record as part of the Mount Allison experience: this ‘non-academic’ record could document and highlight research, teaching, mentorship, public service and volunteer work, community-building, and other activities and accomplishments.
- Explore ways to prepare students for the post-Mount Allison experience, whether in employment or in further professional or graduate studies. Use alumni to greater effect in this area.

4 THE FACULTY EXPERIENCE: TEACHING AND RESEARCH

A critical requirement for a successful university is to attract and retain quality faculty and librarians, in order to develop and deliver our academic programming and activities. A complementary requirement is to attract academic staff who are in tune with the Mount Allison experience and who are committed to our mission, ambitions, and programming. This will be especially important if the strategic statement is to be successfully pursued and implemented. Third, we must offer appropriate experiences and support to fulfill the personal, professional, and community expectations of our faculty and librarians and to ensure a healthy equilibrium amongst teaching, research, and service activities.

a) *ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND TEACHING*

- Offer incentives for course development and curriculum innovation.
- Ensure that the program and academic development interests of faculty and departments are not inhibited by excessive bureaucracy and regulation.
- Consider creative, alternate workload approaches and support in the context of a variety of approaches to design and delivery of courses (e.g. tutorials, seminars, teaching assistants).
- Provide opportunities for faculty members in disciplinary departments to participate in and help develop interdisciplinary program areas of emphasis.
- Increase faculty Teaching and Learning support (e.g. increased TA support, the development of Teaching and Learning Centre and/or Writing Centre, program partnerships with the Library).
- Offer incentives and rewards for teaching excellence and innovation.
- Increase support and recognition for linking Teaching and Research in the classroom and in other professional ways.
- Consider creating a professional university teaching program, to offer graduate students and graduate candidates classroom training and opportunities; link to senior undergraduate training in teaching.
- Consider the possibility of a ‘fifth year’ student-teaching fellowship.
- Adapt and modernize classrooms via our wireless and technological capacity.

b) *RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT*

- Provide mentoring and administrative support to faculty members applying for external and internal research funding. Address research support and workload through increased TA and RA support and other pedagogic initiatives that engage students in these activities.
- Address needs to ensure a Teaching, Research, and Service equilibrium.
- Link research to (identified) courses and to academic and extracurricular student experiences, through the differentiated areas of emphasis.
- Explore targeted expansion of graduate programming as support to undergraduate programming, faculty research, and professional development.
- Explore the possibility of an expanded role for research centres and institutes in the mix of professional activities and developments.
- Initiate a more coherent and expansive approach to program funding of conferences, academic visitors, and academic activities, by rationalizing and better organizing and delivering the use of available trust funds/soft money.
- Ensure that new faculty are provided with necessary information and support during their early stages of employment.

5 PEOPLE, INFRASTRUCTURE, BUDGET, AND SUPPORT

Mount Allison’s greatest resource is its people. We must ensure that Mount Allison is as much a destination place for staff as it is for faculty and students. We must provide a work environment that supports and recognizes the efforts of all of our people in the accomplishment of the University’s strategic and operational objectives. Mount Allison is blessed with a campus and environment that is nationally recognized as one of Canada’s

most attractive and pleasing – as well as being a safe and secure one. This comparative advantage must be maintained. At the same time, Mount Allison has far more building square footage per student and staff than other universities, which creates an operational and maintenance burden. This excess capacity must be addressed. Mount Allison is fortunate to be free of debt, unlike many other universities. Our strategic orientation will require making choices in a fiscally responsible way. Mount Allison must also provide adequate infrastructural support to the provision of its academic and extracurricular programming, particularly in the area of computing and library/informational service.

a. *PEOPLE*

- Ensure that all new employees are provided with necessary information and support during the early stages of employment.
- Encourage and enable opportunities for ongoing personal and professional development. Provide learning opportunities to enhance leadership skills of managers/supervisors. Implement an effective performance management program.
- Create opportunities for staff to participate collegially with students and faculty in operationalizing the strategic statement.
- Develop a human resources management strategy to address recruitment and retention challenges.

b. *PHYSICAL FACILITIES*

- Maintain campus appearance and safety to existing standards.
- Manage property holdings and building development, to decrease operational costs, to lower deferred maintenance, and to control gross campus square footage.
- Establish the environment as a priority goal: link to environmental academic cluster and community experience, by making a green campus to high standards.
- Review campus building strategy in line with the strategic statement (e.g. appropriately-sized classrooms and teaching space). In particular, consider over the long-term:
 - i) Library development to support learning and academic support agendas;
 - ii) Fine and Performing Arts within broader academic environment;
 - iii) Student Centre: personalized support and student service;
 - iv) Athletics Centre: opportunities for participation/life-long wellness strategies.

c. *BUDGET AND FUND RAISING*

- Align budgeting practices and policies with the strategic statement.
- Bring resource allocations in line with the strategic statement.
- Realign fund raising priorities with the strategic statement.

d. *INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT*

- Develop a long-term computing infrastructure and technology strategy, budgeted for ongoing upgrade and replacement.
- Take advantage of our wireless and other technologies, in teaching areas, etc.
- Orient offices of External Relations, Alumni, and Communications to market, message, and engage the strategic statement.

6 ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

It is important to establish a range of accountability relationships with our various communities, to demonstrate that our efforts and activities have observable and desired outcomes. Similarly, we must demonstrate both our quality to these communities but also our differences or uniqueness. This is an important component of our capacity to compete successfully, for students, faculty, staff, and government and public support.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND OUR COMMUNITIES

- *External* accountability: continue to participate in external surveys; further develop the annual review of operations; present an annual President's Report; initiate regular external academic program reviews; maintain and extend open planning and financial processes and reporting; develop and improve metrics/criteria for evaluation of outcomes; develop narratives that personalize and concretize our ambitions and accomplishments.
- *Internal* accountability: consider ways to better integrate strategic/planning concerns with financial/budget/fund raising processes; expand opportunities for faculty, student, and staff involvement in collegial, strategic, and evaluation processes; evaluate our own performance.
- Performance: at a later stage in the strategic planning process, develop a set of matrices and time frames for implementation of the strategic statement and outline administrative and collegial responsibilities to assess performance.