

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

A STRATEGIC STATEMENT FOR 2007-2016

UPDATE AND FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

JANUARY 2012

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PREAMBLE TO THE UPDATE AND ACTION PLAN

Five years ago, we set out to create a Strategic Statement that would guide the University for the next decade (2007-16). It is a tribute to the entire Mount Allison community that we have already realized a considerable portion of what we set out to do in that statement. At the half-way point in this plan, it is appropriate and timely to evaluate what has been accomplished and to consider what our priorities for action should be over the second half of this ten-year plan.

When we began, our goal was to make Mount Allison the best primarily undergraduate university in Canada. Now our goal is to make Mount Allison one of the best in North America and in the world, building on our unique, high quality experience.

If we are to achieve this goal, we must continue to deliver, improve and lever the immersive social and intellectual experiences and advantages that our students, alumni and supporters report as being so important in defining the Mount Allison character.

Mount Allison offers a robust liberal arts and science curriculum that enhances learning and enriches the university experience, thereby providing a living/learning environment where career-related skills are developed alongside critical thinking skills and the broad perspective that a liberal education encourages.

Research has confirmed that Mount Allison's differentiation lies in its intimate nature and smaller scale, which fosters meaningful engagement between students, and between students and their faculty and community. The immersion of engaged students into a total academic and community experience provides a positive momentum for future success (graduate/professional programs or career), personal growth, and engagement in society domestically and internationally.

This update is divided into two parts. Part I identifies the six broad categories of the Strategic Statement. Part II then sets out an updated strategic statement and 'action plan' for each of these six components.

The broad objective is to operationalize our strengths, advantages, and values into concrete and specific actions that will build Mount Allison's reputation, accelerate our accomplishments, and move us to our long term goal of being one of the best undergraduate universities in the world.

The update to this Strategic Statement is informed by two instrumental approaches.

On the one hand, we seek to maintain and enhance our high **quality**, innovative and immersive programming in all dimensions of the student, faculty and staff experience. On the other hand, we seek to ensure that we maintain and extend our organizational capacity to pursue this programming in a financially, physically, and environmentally **sustainable** way.

PART I

COMPONENTS OF THE STRATEGIC STATEMENT

The following categories will continue to comprise the components of the strategy that will guide our actions over the next five years. Each component is informed by the twin goals of maintaining/increasing **quality** and contributing to institutional **sustainability**.

1) Student Recruitment and Retention

This remains at the core of our sustainability and the foundation of the quality of the Mount Allison experience. We need to attract and retain an adequate number of students to sustain our budget. We also need to attract and retain a varied array of excellent and engaged students to maintain the quality of the Mount Allison community and experience.

We have had solid success in recruiting 750 students or higher. We must build on our improved recruitment infrastructure, personnel, strategy and data, as well as our improved university programs and services (from residence/dining facilities and improved academic and extracurricular programming, to international/summer programming and branding and communications).

2) The Academic Experience - Quality and Differentiation

The quality imperative is at the heart of Mount A's identity and differentiation, and will continue to be the foundation of our capacity to attract excellent students in the numbers that will sustain the institution.

We have had successes in this realm: the Academic Renewal Plan, the re-introduction/ roll-out of external reviews of all academic units, and differentiation in areas such as environmental studies, international studies, and the Ron Joyce Centre. We must continue to maintain a low student-teacher ratio, to provide students with experiential, international and research experiences, and provide increased advisory and academic support services and facilities. Our students should continue to be successful in attaining top scholarships and prizes and accessing graduate and professional schools as well as careers.

3) The Extracurricular Experience - An Integrated Approach

This remains a strong feature of our differentiation and quality: the Mount Allison community and programming provides an immersive experience for the engaged student. We have had notable accomplishments: in organizational structure, residential programming, international activities, career counseling and summer research/internships, the recreation and athletics strategy, student governance and leadership programming, and summer activities.

We will continue to build on this legacy of engagement and experiential learning, and link this dimension more closely to our core academic mission in a coherent and integrated way.

- 4) The Faculty Experience - Teaching, Research and Service
Mount Allison's reputation, success and sustainability rests on the reality and experience of a high quality faculty, who themselves enjoy and offer a high quality experience. Over the last years, we have attracted and retained an exceptionally able cohort of active, engaged and committed faculty, with demonstrated excellence in publications and activities, in attaining external research funding, and in winning regional and national teaching awards. We have modernized many of our classrooms and increased their technological support, and have also strengthened our research office and support.

We will continue to strive to attract and retain high quality faculty, and work to assist their professional success in a balanced teaching, research and service environment that serves the needs of our students and our community.

- 5) Organization and Infrastructure for Sustainability and Quality
Mount Allison's reputation and sustainability rely substantially on the wide range of people and supports that underpin the delivery of our quality programs and services to our students. We have invested \$100 million over 15 years to maintain and improve our campus. We improved our IT, technological and instructional infrastructure; energy use and right-sizing; environmental attainments and introduction of green budgeting; professional, administrative and human resource services and training; and improved our residences and dining services – as demonstrated clearly in external and internal satisfaction surveys.

We must continue to attract, maintain, and retain a professional and capable management and staff, who will ensure an excellent and sustainable physical and technical environment to support the quality of the Mount Allison experience for our students over the long term.

- 6) Governance and Accountability
Both our external reputation and our internal assessment and decision-making require robust governance and accountability mechanisms, if we are to maintain and improve quality and increase our capacity for sustainability. We have re-organized, improved, and professionalized our organizational structure and capacity, and expanded the use and range of internal and external accountability mechanisms (NSSE, CUSC, Macleans, Globe and Mail, MPHEC external reviews, Review of Operations, financial reporting, carbon and environmental reporting, government reporting, etc).

We will continue to explore ways to strengthen our governance and accountability mechanisms, to ensure intelligent, collegial decision-making that will increase our capacity to attain our mission and strategic objectives – while demonstrating to our communities and supporters the extent to which we are doing so, including regular progress reports on this document.

PART II

PRIORITIES AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

1 STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

RECRUITMENT

- We will improve our strategic recruitment strategy, to recruit 780 first year students annually; this will increase our enrolment slightly going forward
- We will adopt and optimally use the best technical tools to this end, including Recruiter software, and improve the capacity and effectiveness of our website
- Given the soft Atlantic market, we will focus on key countervailing demographics (e.g. Ontario, International, under-represented groups)
- We will continue to expand our summer conferences and camps (in a sustainable way) to expose potential students and influencers to Mount Allison
- Building on our branding project, we will raise the external awareness, understanding and appreciation of Mount Allison’s reputation and performance in those sectors most likely to reach appropriate potential students
- Marketing and communications will work closely with Student Affairs and academic units to convey the message of Mount A’s distinctive immersive experience (improved publications, a strengthened web, effective messaging)
- We will work with alumni to support student recruitment
- We will strive to use our scholarship/bursary resources to attract top students and minimize the impact of financial need on students’ decisions to attend Mount A
- The entire institution will work to ensure the quality of our programs and activities in all areas of the university, as part of strengthening and projecting our external image

RETENTION

- We will develop a formal retention paradigm, with appropriate metrics and targets
- We will strengthen our capacity to carry out exit surveys to this end
- We will enhance student services to support the goal of retention: e.g. academic support services, mental health programming, disability services, transition programming for international students, addressing students at academic risk
- We will enhance our advising and academic support services (see below)
- We will improve disability services and physical accessibility and support
- We will update our university governance policy (student discipline)

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE (see also section 6)

- We will continue to present and report on the results of our enrolment plans, which will be designed in light of improved measurement, data and results
- We will develop an appropriate retention paradigm to include metrics to assess our performance

2 THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE: QUALITY AND DIFFERENTIATION

- Within the sustainability paradigm, we will work to maintain a low student-teacher ratio at the heart of the academic experience that will focus on the individual student and will provide and increase student opportunities to participate actively and critically in their academic experience
- The VP's Innovation Fund will be used to stimulate innovations and quality improvements in program design, course delivery, and pedagogy
- We will explore ways to improve pedagogy through the PCTC and other instruments (e.g. teaching chair)
- We will explore practical and effective ways to strengthen academic advising and support services, and broad community supports for success, with appropriate funding and organizational structure, particularly with regard to writing, numeracy, and broad skills development
- We will explore ways (programs and facilities) to make improved use of the Library in providing academic support
- We will maintain, strengthen, and report on our support for disability services
- We will continue to explore, improve and increase the ways to measure and evaluate the success, impact and outcomes of academic courses and programs
- We will seek ways to include employability/life skills in our academic programming (e.g. oral presentations, group work, and so on) and work with Student Affairs on providing co-curricular opportunities in such programming
- We will complete fundraising initiatives for the Ron Joyce Centre for Business Studies and for the proposed Fine and Performing Arts Centre
- In the context of updating the Campus Master Plan, we will seek out sustainable ways to improve the infrastructure (facilities, space, classroom technology) that supports the academic experience. Top priorities include the completion of the Fine and Performing Arts Centre; improved classroom facilities; renewal of Hart Hall, the Library, Avard-Dixon, and Crabtree buildings.
- We will ask Senate to consider ways to increase the coherence and effectiveness of Mount Allison's unique 'build your own program' approach, and to the interesting array of experiential and service learning and internship activities that have developed recently
- We will continue to be highly focused and selective in considering and pursuing graduate programs (e.g. M.Sc. program in Environmental Science) that support the broad academic mission of the university

- We will extend the ‘Years of...’/pillars approach that has been so successful over the last years, and explore ways to create even more opportunities and results from this approach:

1 CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

We will work to extend and deepen the connections amongst drama, fine arts, music and other programs that deal with creativity and culture.

2 THE ENVIRONMENT

We will use the environment as a prism through which to explore science, society and humanity – locally, nationally and internationally.

3 GLOBALIZATION

We will explore globalization in all its consequences, from politics, commerce and environment, through culture, religion and ideas.

4 PUBLIC AND COMMUNITY SERVICE AND CITIZENSHIP

We will continue to pursue ways to connect our academic study and programming to our personal identities and roles as citizens in the community and in the world, in order to prepare students to make a contribution to their society.

5 SCIENCE: IMAGINATION, EXPERIENCE, DISCOVERY

We will work to deepen our strengths in Science by offering students active research practice and opportunities in the creation of knowledge, and by exploring the roles of science in understanding the natural world and society.

3

INTEGRATED EXTRACURRICULAR EXPERIENCE

- We will explore ways to lever the five ‘pillars’ to further integrate the academic and extracurricular experiences.
- We will finalize the review of Leadership Mount Allison, and formulate a program to further opportunities for an integrated extracurricular experience (from citizenship through international and environmental experiences)
- We will work with the SAC (and other student groups) to improve opportunities for professional training and experience, with possible links to academic programming
- We will expand the range and number of student opportunities for engaged local and international experiences, including possibilities for service and experiential learning for credit
- We will both encourage student diversity and support it through programming

- We will continue to provide and improve programming and facilities – e.g. Fine and Performing Arts Centre – to allow all students access to all dimensions of Mount Allison’s academic programming and facilities
- We will continue to explore and strengthen ways to connect residential life programming with the broad academic experience
- We will continue to build our summer programming to create a larger and stronger Mount Allison summer community to expand the range and depth of offerings that will expand opportunities to connect academic and extracurricular activities and experiences
- We will increase the capacity for Students Affairs to provide support to faculty who wish to offer co-curricular and experiential programming
- We will offer increased opportunities for faculty, students and staff for professional development, training and leadership in these areas
- We will ask Senate to review, reflect on, and make recommendations to bring increasing coherence and effectiveness to the interesting array of experiential and service learning and internship activities that have developed recently. The objective is to ensure sufficient degree of academic content in service and experiential learning and internship courses and programs
- We will evaluate the extent to which our programming increases opportunities for students’ acquisition of life (‘soft’ or backroom) skills and strengthening career opportunities and success
- We will explore ways to strengthen career development opportunities including internships and strengthening/projecting Mount A’s external brand
- We will explore with students the idea of creating a record or ‘portfolio’ of skills, to be used after graduation

4 THE FACULTY EXPERIENCE: TEACHING AND RESEARCH

- Within the sustainability paradigm, we will work to maintain the low student-teacher ratio and an appropriate workload that provides a foundation for a humane, student-focused and engaged teaching experience
- We will continue to explore sustainable ways to provide increased teaching, lab, technical, professional, and infrastructural support to the teaching experience
- We will explore ways to strengthen academic advising and support services, and broad community supports for success, with appropriate funding and organizational structure, including writing, numeracy, and broad skills development
- We will maintain and strengthen our support for disability services

- We will assess our requirements for classrooms as part of our review of the Campus Facilities Master Plan.
- We will work to improve teaching facilities (e.g. Fine and Performing Arts Centre) and classroom facilities generally (modernization and equipment – e.g. wireless and technological capacity)
- We will strengthen our mentoring and support of external research applications
- We will explore sustainable ways to provide TA/RA support to enhance research opportunities
- We will monitor changes in NSERC funding and devise complementary internal research support strategies
- We will explore ways to fund sustainable support for SSHRC 4A and other categories
- We will develop a policy on the establishment of research centres/institutes
- We will develop policy for on-campus conference support
- We will explore in a highly selective/focused ways opportunities for graduate teaching on campus (e.g. proposed M.Sc. in Environmental Studies) or externally (e.g. in partnerships with other universities)
- We will explore ways to strengthen the identity, governance, and self-management capacity of the three Faculties
- We will explore ways to strengthen the role and capacity of academic department heads and their professional development
- We will ensure that faculty are aware of, and possibly partner with, Student Affairs programming that can support faculty and course objectives
- We will increase the capacity for Students Affairs to provide support to faculty for co-curricular and experiential programming
- We will develop programming to assist faculty in dealing with challenging student situations that are not directly related to academic issues (e.g. personal, mental health, etc)
- We will explore and develop processes that encourage innovation, experimentation and quality teaching and courses (e.g. strengthen VP's innovation fund)
- We will work to minimize regulations, red-tape and cumbersome processes through adapting the update of web capacity to support the faculty and academic experience (e.g. research applications, permission and application forms, room requests, and so on)

5 ORGANIZATION AND CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY

PEOPLE

- We will provide orientation, information and support to new employees and to employees moving to new positions
- We will encourage and support opportunities for personal, professional, leadership, and performance development and improvement
- We will improve communications with, and customer service for, the entire community, and create enhanced opportunities for staff to participate with faculty and students in implementing the strategic statement
- We will develop a human resource management strategy to address recruitment and retention of quality and committed staff, as well as to implement our performance management plans and develop a formal compensation system for administrative positions

PHYSICAL FACILITIES

- We will maintain the appearance, safety, and functionality of the campus
- We will review and update the Campus Facilities Master Plan with the objective of renewing Hart Hall, the Library, Crabtree, and the Gairdner Building, and improving classroom, teaching and study facilities
- We will manage property holdings and building development, so as to decrease operational costs, lower deferred maintenance, and control gross campus square footage – and make the environment a priority goal
- We will complete the Fine and Performing Arts Centre project and complete the renovation of Hammond (Black) House and then dispose of Cranewood
- We will explore ways to improve facilities for athletics and recreation

BUDGET AND FUNDRAISING

- We will align all budgeting and fundraising (Post-Jump) practices and policies – and resource allocation - with the strategic statement
- We will continue to improve best and simplified practices in Procurement, Treasury, and Financial Services
- We will complete the Financial Sustainability project and establish a financial forecasting model
- We will ensure that ongoing items/priorities receive base funding
- We will create strong alumni and donor stewardship, as well as planned giving programs, to insure continued long term fundraising growth
- We will implement a marketing and communications plan, grounded in the new brand position, that will build national awareness and increase recruiting, fundraising and career/professional capacity and opportunities

INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT

- We will develop a long-term computing infrastructure and technology strategy, budgeted for ongoing upgrade and replacement, that keeps us at the leading edge

- of IT and makes best uses of our comparative advantages in wireless and other technologies; we will take a similar approach to equipment and facilities replacement in general
- Building on the creation of a common data centre with STU, we will promote cooperation with other universities with a view to sharing services and to joint purchasing of services and materials
 - We will redesign the website on a content management system foundation to implement the new brand position and create a platform for emerging multiple delivery channels

6 GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE

- We will pursue and implement any and all possible governance and accountability processes that will improve our performance in maintaining the quality of our programming and increasing our capacity for sustainability
- We will review governance and collegial processes to limit 'silo' structures and processes and increase community and collegial approaches to programming and decision-making
- We will pursue regular strategic review/plans and external assessments across all units and areas of the university, and continue to participate and to support authentic and useful assessments by external organizations
- We will connect professional development with a performance review process across the university
- We will explore ways to ensure the use of improved and adequate data and empirical evidence in decision-making in all areas of the university's operations
- We will expand the range and number of metrics used in the annual Review of Operations, to create an extended report card of performance year-over-year; this could include an annual environmental and carbon audit
- We will continue to develop and present budget and financial plans and decisions in as open and collegial a way as possible
- We will encourage managers to focus on value-added activities by further developing processes that allow for the delegation of day-to-day tasks and activities
- We will review progress on this 'action plan' and provide regular public updates