



Academic Plan 2011-2015
September 2012 update

Ratified by Faculty Council, October 16th, 2012

Background

The Faculty of Social Science at Western

The Faculty of Social Science at Western is widely recognized for the quality and range of its research programs, its excellence and innovation in undergraduate teaching, and, increasingly, as a preferred destination for graduate study. The Faculty has been ranked in the top 100 Faculties of Social Science in the world and in the top 5 in Canada¹. Our goal is to be acknowledged as the premier Social Science Faculty in Canada and to improve our international standing.

Ours is the largest Faculty of Social Science in Canada. We are also more diverse than other Social Science Faculties. As well as housing traditional Social Science departments, including Anthropology, Economics, Political Science and Sociology, the Faculty includes departments that often reside in Faculties of Arts (History) or Science (Psychology, Geography). We also house four interdisciplinary units: the cross-Faculty Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research, the Aubrey Dan Program in Management and Organizational Studies, the First Nations Studies Program, and the Centre for Theory and Criticism.

The variety of different disciplines and approaches to research requires quite different sources of funding and facilities, as does the variety of academic programs that we can offer. In developing this Academic Plan, we are mindful that we must address the needs of a very eclectic group of faculty and students.

Within the University, Social Science is the largest Faculty. In 2009-10 undergraduate program enrollment was 6,211, graduate enrollment was 503 (300 Ph.D.s and 203 Masters), and we had 31,168 registrants in Social Science courses. In the same year, there were 239 full-time faculty members and 93 full-time staff. Faculty members held just under 500 research grants totaling nearly \$9.8 million in annual expenditures². At the time of this update (August 2012) we have seen another jump in undergraduate and graduate admissions with course registrants passing the 33500 mark, social science enrollment surpassing 6600 and graduate enrollment over 560 FTEs.

The strength of the Faculty lies in its capacity to offer a comprehensive undergraduate education in the Social Sciences combined with areas of internationally renowned excellence where we can provide high quality graduate programs. The Faculty is defined by a number of common research themes that cross disciplinary boundaries, transcend individual departmental contributions, and bridge research and teaching strengths. In acknowledging these themes we recognize also that they

¹ The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council (HEEACT) [<http://ranking.heeact.edu.tw/en-us/2008/Page/Methodology>]. We are ranked 76nd for 2010 (82nd for 2009) for the world and 5th in Canada (2009). This is the rating of research productivity and impact. The QS corporation which has been the Times Higher Education list developer till 2010 ranks Social Science at Western 96 in the world for 2010 (95th in 2009) and 4th in Canada for 2010 [<http://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2010/subject-rankings/social-science>]. The QS ranking is across a series of measures.

² This represents a decline in staff numbers of 10% from year one of our Academic Plan 2006 and no growth in tenured/probation faculty. At the same time we have maintained our undergraduate numbers and increased our graduate students by >23%. Our annual research expenditures from grants have increased substantially during the last plan, peaking at \$14.8 million in 2008/09.

represent a balance between the basic research that is so fundamental to the scholarly health of an institution and the applied research that makes Social Science such an important part of our society. In our last Plan we listed six major themes that defined the core interests of the Faculty. We have modified this list in the current Plan to reflect the changing in emphasis in some areas. For example, we are now placing a much greater emphasis on policy research than we did previously. This is a reflection of the increased level of interest and activity in this area by our faculty members.

The new themes are:

- Human-Environment Interactions & Sustainability
- Knowledge Translation and Mobilization
- Neural, Cognitive, and Social Foundations of Behavior
- Social Change
- International and Intercultural Relations
- Social and Biological Dimensions of Health and Well-Being
- Society, Economics and Management
- Society, Power and Governance

The Faculty is also characterized by its empirical approach to issues. Within every academic unit there is a strong emphasis on both the quantitative and qualitative analyses of disciplinary data. The Management and Organizational Studies program has recently revised its curriculum to one that explicitly promotes evidence-based management. On the other side, there is considerable strength in “theory”, which is reflected both within individual departments like the Women’s Studies and Feminist Research and Political Science as well as the interdisciplinary Centre for Theory and Criticism.

While these themes provide a context for the planning process, and serve as a guide in making decisions about the allocation of resources, it is important to acknowledge that there will always be pockets of excellence that do not fit neatly into this framework. The Faculty will continue to support and encourage development of excellence in these smaller areas.

Review of the 2006-2010 Social Science Academic Plan

The 2006 Academic Plan laid out a series of goals in five areas:

1. To provide a rich and challenging undergraduate education;
2. To continue as a top destination for graduate students;
3. To foster excellence in research;
4. To recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff members and;
5. To provide adequate space to fulfill the Faculty needs

In each of these areas we listed a number of specific priorities. A review of our progress towards these goals shows that we were very successful in satisfying the major elements of the Plan. These include:

- the restructuring of the DAN Program in Management and Organizational Studies, better defining its place in the Social Sciences;
- the expansion of our Career Services program for undergraduates;
- the significant expansion of our graduate programs;
- the introduction of a new funding model for graduate students;
- An almost 100% increase in research expenditures (\$7.5 M to \$13.1M);
- Making a research impact. Social Science at Western is evaluated by HEEACT as 82nd in the world for research productivity and impact;
- Continuing to hire excellent faculty at different levels and increasing the number of awards won by Social Science faculty;
- Moving forward on a space reallocation plan that included the relocation of History to Lawson Hall, and the establishment of the Brain and Mind Institute in the Natural Science Centre;

For the current Plan we intend to keep working towards these goals and we have introduced others to reflect our new priorities.

Objectives of the Academic Plan

The primary aim of *The Faculty of Social Science Academic Plan 2011-15* is to identify how we will build on our current areas of strength while we seek emerging opportunities for advancing excellence. We have done this in the context of our identified strategic priorities and the strategic plan of The University of Western Ontario. Our goal is to maintain our top five ranking in Canada and move up in world rankings. Within the next decade we want to be recognized as the top ranked Social Science Faculty in Canada. To that end, our aspirations in the new Plan are:

- **To become Canada's top undergraduate destination for the Social Sciences;**
- **To continue as a top destination for graduate students;**
- **To foster excellence in research;**
- **To be recognized for our international focus;**
- **To further promote interdisciplinarity;**
- **To recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff members;**

- **To ensure that resources and infrastructure are available to fulfill our needs.**

Goal: To become Canada's top undergraduate destination for the Social Sciences

Background: Undergraduate education has been a recognized strength of the Faculty for decades – and we are committed to providing the best student experience at Western. The fact that we are currently teaching more undergraduates than any other faculty and we have sustained current levels for the last plan period is evidence of our success. Not only do we excel at teaching small, interactive seminars, but we have established a world-wide reputation for teaching large classes in an effective and engaging way. Our success at teaching is reflected in the number of teaching awards our faculty members have received, including 3M (National), OCUFA (Provincial), and Pleva (University) Awards, among others.

Over the next four years, our challenge is to continue to innovate the way in which we deliver undergraduate education to ensure that we maintain and extend the rich and challenging environment for learning while increasing our program registrants.

Priorities:

- **To increase student engagement.** One of the best ways to enhance the student experience is to increase student engagement. This will include, among other things:
 - i) Integration of service learning into coursework where possible
 - ii) Expansion of out of classroom experiences, either within courses or as extracurricular activities. In the current plan, departments will examine their courses to see whether service learning is appropriate and where appropriate, add it to the course requirements.
- **To encourage international experiences.** For many of our programs, participating in an international exchange has the potential to complement the educational experience of our students. Thus, in the next four years, departments will be supported in attempts to establish exchanges with institutions that are discipline relevant and will enhance the student experience.. In line with the strategic directions of the University we will encourage student exchanges, joint degree offerings related experience abroad.
- **To increase the quality and quantity of online learning opportunities.** Currently, most of our online course offerings are concentrated at the first- and second-year level. We will explore the feasibility of introducing more third- and fourth-year courses on-line. Our aim is to better serve students (e.g. students needing a single course to graduate, but wishing to live or work outside London) and expand our reach to more international students who may want to take a course over the summer or try to complete their degree in less than four years.
- **To encourage the growth of interdisciplinary modules.** The Faculty is committed to expansion of interdisciplinary modules in areas where there is high student demand for a more broad-based education. The recent curriculum revisions to Aubrey Dan Management

and Organizational Studies Program will exemplify this type of initiative. We hope to launch an undergraduate program in Migration and Ethnic Relations and one in neuroscience. In keeping with University priorities, we will be looking for opportunities to develop modules with a more international emphasis.

- **To serve the needs and aspirations of Indigenous students.** We recognize that attracting and retaining First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students is a multidimensional challenge. Although we already offer a First Nations Studies program that may act as an incentive for Indigenous students to attend Western, we must also offer support to students from the recruiting process through to graduation. We will continue to provide both academic and social support by working in collaboration with other units in the University. It is our intention to increase the number of students enrolled in First Nations Studies significantly over the course of this Plan period. Through the Interdisciplinary Initiative “Indigenous Health and Well-being, The Faculty will be encouraging a “best experience for Indigenous students” and encouraging all our disciplines to improve their study of issues related to Indigenous populations history, culture, and knowledge systems. During this period we will be taking on other Faculties as partners in the development and growth of FNS. These new partners are Arts and Humanities and Health Sciences.

Monitoring Progress

In order to determine whether we are achieving our goal of becoming Canada’s top undergraduate destination for the Social Sciences, we will track a series of indicators that include, but are not limited to: the number of students who list Western Social Science, including MOS, as their first choice of universities; entrance averages for all Social Science students; and the Faculty ranking in the QS International Ranking of Universities, the HEEACT rankings and Academic Ranking of World Universities ..

We will investigate working with the Central Administration to track the career outcomes of Social Science graduates.

Goal: To continue as a top destination for graduate students

Background: The Faculty already provides strong graduate programs in many areas. The majority are within single disciplines, but the number of multi-and interdisciplinary programs have increased since our last Plan. In addition to the graduate programs in Neuroscience and in Theory and Criticism, the Migration and Ethnic Relations Collaborative M.A. and Ph.D. programs, the M.A. in American Studies, and the Women’s Studies and Feminist Research MA and Ph.D. have been added. While every department currently offers a traditional research-based M.A. and/or M.Sc., and a Ph.D. program, some have very vibrant course-based M.A. options. The opportunity now exists for the development of selected new professionally-oriented degrees which will add to our current offerings such as the Masters of Public Administration. Two priorities for new professional degrees include the Masters of Financial Economics and a masters of Management in Applied Sciences.

Our graduate programs are particularly well served by our Faculty strengths in quantitative empirical methods and several of our departments, including Economics, Geography, Political Science,

Psychology, and Sociology, are nationally known as leaders in graduate research methods training. This training is enhanced by Social Science Network and Data Services which houses the Statistics Canada Research Data Centre. We have also developed a much more extensive training program in qualitative methods, that will enhance our reputation as an institution with innovative methodological approaches to scholarly research in the Social Sciences. During this plan we will take this a step forward and establish Western's leadership in the training for longitudinal analysis.

Priorities

- **To review the allocation of Faculty resources to determine the best relationship between undergraduate and graduate programs;**
- **To rationalize resource allocations for existing programs, and to develop plans for new and innovative programs that take advantage of our existing disciplines as contributors to multi- and inter-disciplinary initiatives including new professional masters degrees ;**
- **To provide funding at a level that attracts the very best students, and to provide competitive support for all students;**
- **To develop and execute a plan for increasing the complement of international students in our existing and new programs.**

Monitoring Progress

The indicators we will use to determine whether we are achieving our goal will include, but not be limited to: entering averages for graduate students; the QS International ranking of Social Science Faculties; and graduation rates and completion times for both for PhD and Master's students.

Goal: To Foster Excellence in Research

Background: The Faculty of Social Science at Western is widely recognized as a premier centre for research as indicated by our high rankings in national and international surveys. As one might expect in such a large Faculty, the range of interests of individual faculty members, and of departmental areas of strength is enormous. Nevertheless, there are common themes that are shared across departmental and disciplinary boundaries. The Faculty has a particularly strong grounding in both quantitative and qualitative empirical research as well as in the realm of social theory. The dimension of time touches all departments, be it in terms of the history of a discipline or the history or prehistory of humankind. Most important, our faculty members are united by their fundamental interest in the social world.

In our last Academic Plan we identified six broad themes that characterized its research activities in a way that cuts across disciplines and transcends individual departmental contributions. We used these themes to provide a context for setting our priorities. However, within that context, individual departments had the freedom to maintain their own areas of excellence and priority as expressed in their own Academic Plans. Although the overall direction of the Faculty has not changed

dramatically in the past four years, the emphasis on certain areas has shifted and that is reflected in the revised list of eight themes described below:

- Human-Environment Interactions & Sustainability
- Knowledge Translation and Mobilization
- Neural and Social Foundations of Behavior
- Social Change
- International and Intercultural Relations
- Social Dimensions of Health and Well-Being
- Society, Economics and Management
- Society, Power and Governance

It is the goal of the Faculty of Social Science to be recognized as the premier social science research faculty in Canada and to increase our rankings internationally.

Priorities:

- **To maintain our support for research initiatives, including assistance in the development of grant proposals;**
- **To continue efforts to obtain funding from the major infrastructure programs such as CFI, and ORF;**
- **Ensuring we maintain our support for increasing the core of the research enterprise : operating grants while competing for prestigious awards and special calls for funding**
- **To seek funds through the Development Office to provide additional support to Centres and Groups;**
- **To continue providing research infrastructure support through Social Science Network and Data Services, and the Statistics Canada Research Data Centre;**
- **To encourage international partnerships and cooperation;**
- **To continue promoting the achievements of Social Science at Western.**

Monitoring Progress

We will assess whether we are achieving our goal using indicators that include, but are not limited to : The Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council (HEEACT) World Academic Ranking for Universities: Social Science; annual research expenditures, the number of grants held and; the number of annual research grant applications and success rates. We will also monitor the funds received per successful grant as a percentage of funds requested.

Goal: To increase our international orientation

Background: In our last Plan we did not emphasize internationalization or developing international partnerships. Nevertheless, we did achieve a healthy growth in international outreach and initiatives, particularly in the area of research. Almost all of our Research Centres and Groups have an international component; some explicitly, like the Centre for Migration and Ethnic Relations, or implicitly, like the Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium (International).

We are committed to extending internationalization, which for us means more international research with international topics and partners. It also means attracting greater numbers of international undergraduate and graduate students. And finally it means forming lasting partnerships for student joint degrees, exchanges, visiting faculty fellowships and joint research.

Priorities:

- **To seek additional university-to-university partnerships that include student exchanges, joint degree offerings, joint graduate supervisions and research partnerships;**
- **To support Research Groups, Centres and Institutes that wish to increase their international components;**
- **To work with the wider university to attract greater numbers of international graduate and undergraduate students;**
- **To respond to the interest in new undergraduate modules that have an international dimension.**
- **To support additional initiatives to enhance student experience abroad, including field schools.**

Monitoring Progress

Annual reviews of the work across these five priorities will be used to assess our success with this goal. We will follow the number of students coming to Western as well as the outside Canada experiences of our own students. As well we will review the research projects involving foreign partners and/or dealing with international issues to determine progress on this front.

Goal: To promote interdisciplinarity

Background: In our last Plan we made the commitment to explore how we could facilitate growth across disciplinary boundaries. We now have several well-developed interdisciplinary graduate programs and research initiatives in the Faculty. The Migration and Ethnic Relations M.A. and Ph.D. Collaborative Program involves multiple Social Science Departments and now includes Hispanic Studies in Arts and Humanities. The Centre for Theory and Criticism and its associated graduate program and our newly developed M.A. in American Studies together have links with

Anthropology, Sociology, Comparative Literature, History, Political Science and English. We also have the cross-Faculty Department of Women's Studies and Feminist Research. On the research front we have a large number of successful groups, including the interdisciplinary initiative on Population and Life Course Studies (PLCS), the Centre for Brain and Mind, the Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium, the interdisciplinary Initiative on Indigenous well-being, the Canada-US Institute, AFAR and inter-Faculty programs such as Environment and Sustainability, Research Group in Integrative Avian Research and Linguistics.

We will promote the existing interdisciplinary initiatives and continue to engage our Faculty leaders in a discussion of interdisciplinarity and how it can work in a disciplinary environment. We will continue to explore processes for the development and resourcing interdisciplinary initiatives in the Faculty.

Priorities

- **To provide resources for the continuity and development of research groups, undergraduate and graduate programs that are interdisciplinary in nature;**
- **To develop a communications strategy for interdisciplinary developments;**
- **To continue our support for Interdisciplinary Initiatives within the Faculty.**

Monitoring Progress

Annual consultation with those involved in interdisciplinary endeavors will generate an evaluation of successes and will target shortcomings that we will have to address.

Goal: To recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff members

Background: An academic institution thrives only when there is the opportunity for renewal and the prospect of establishing and maintaining areas of excellence. This requires both a recruitment and retention strategy. Over the course of the past decade we have gone through a period of major renewal, followed by a period of significant cost cutting and complement reduction. In the next two or three years we will see increasing numbers of faculty above the age of 65 considering their retirement. All of these factors require that we develop a strategy to both recruit and retain faculty and staff. This task is made difficult when it must be done in a period of relative austerity

In a time of limited resources it will be crucial to set priorities. This will require not only that we consider areas of excellence in research, and the replacement of retiring faculty members, but also the areas where we might draw funding from increased student enrollment. Over the short-term, while acknowledging the academic priorities in their strategic plans, Departments will also need to justify their requests for new faculty positions in the context of the need to attract enrollment-based revenue.

We also recognize that the pressures on staff have increased as a consequence of recent cutbacks. Although our flexibility in this area is somewhat limited, we hope to direct funds to Departments that are successful in attracting enrollment-based revenue. We will also be reviewing the centrally supplied services to ensure the Dean's office is able to deliver the support that programs require for excellence building.

With respect to retention, we believe that excellence in teaching and research is fostered in an environment where collegiality is supported, achievement is recognized, and working conditions are maintained or improved. The Faculty will encourage those seeking excellence and recognize those who achieve excellence, both faculty and staff. We will strive to create a working environment that fosters an open, vibrant, and collegial culture for intellectual debate and exchange and recognizes excellence, both in scholarship and teaching. We will also work to ensure that our staff can feel that the Faculty of Social Science is a good place to work and contribute.

Priorities:

- **To make the case to the University that recruitment and retention of the best faculty and staff is essential to the continued well-being of the Faculty;**
- **To continue our efforts to increase diversity among faculty and staff;**
- **To continue our efforts to recognize and reward excellence in Research and Teaching by faculty members;**
- **To establish procedures to recognize excellent performance among staff;**
- **To seek additional ways to enhance the “quality of life” within the Faculty for staff, faculty and students.**

Goal: To provide adequate space and infra-structure to fulfill the Faculty needs

Background: The Faculty began an ambitious space planning exercise as part of our last Strategic Plan. The first phase of this initiative is now almost complete. Several areas of Psychology as well as the University Laboratory School are now well established in Westminster Hall; as of this plan update, History has moved to their new home in Lawson Hall and the Aubrey Dan MOS Program has moved into the space previously occupied by History. The Centre for Brain and Mind has now moved into Natural Sciences. Over the course of this planning cycle we will move into the second phase of the plan – allocating the space freed up by the move of MOS, addressing the ongoing space needs of other departments, especially with respect to graduate students, and considering the concerns of Psychology at the continued dispersion of its members. Lastly, we will develop a plan for the creation of a research space dedicated to research groups Centres and, Institutes and create improved space for the First Nations Studies program. .

Priorities:

- To plan for the reallocation of vacated space in the 2200 and 3200 wings of the Social Science Centre, with a recognition that Geography and Anthropology will have priority, although not exclusive, access to these areas; development of improved space for FNS is also involved in this plan.
- To provide common space to foster resource sharing and collaboration among research groups, centres and institutes;
- To ensure that Geography develops a plan for the use of the former Map library that respects the value of that space to the Department;
- To provide new and expanded space for the First Nations Studies Program;
- To ensure that the space allocated to graduate and undergraduate students is commensurate with increases in enrolment;
- To advocate for a strategy that would allow for the eventual re-amalgamation of the Psychology Department.
- To provide common space to foster resource sharing and collaboration among research groups, centres and institutes

Monitoring Progress Reports on each of the priorities will be produced and reviewed on an annual basis. These reports will be developed in conjunction with the Department(s) involved.

Goal: To Maintain the Financial Health of the Faculty

Priority:

- The University has introduced a new funding model that will provide additional resources to Faculties that are based on: 1) increases in undergraduate and graduate enrollment; and/or 2) additional revenue generation through increased tuition in select programs. We shall introduce a new funding model for departments that will provide both incentives and more financial accountability. Units will have greater access to these funds as they generate them, and greater decision-making over their expenditures.

Monitoring progress: We shall monitor the success of these programs by generating indicators that are easily understood, readily useable and transparent to faculty and staff. These will aid in departmental and Faculty planning. The base year for these indicators will be 2011-12 and they will be replicated each year to facilitate comparisons over time.