

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the University community  
From: Amit Chakma, President  
Date: July 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Re: Update

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In mid-April, I began a concerted effort to listen more intently to the concerns, ideas and suggestions offered by all members of our community.

I have met with hundreds of faculty, staff, students, academic and administrative leaders, and alumni in large and small groups as well as many individuals. The dialogue has touched on a wide range of issues, and I have found the feedback to be highly informative and energizing.

A few key themes have emerged, including resources, research, governance, communication and administration and support services. While many of the discussions were focused on challenges facing us, the underlying thrust of all these conversations was a strong desire from all concerned to strengthen Western. Many have identified opportunities for improvement and suggested ways to pursue them.

Together, our community has already begun addressing the issues in each thematic area.

Several task forces have been commissioned and each will generate reports and recommendations that will be made publicly available and inform our future actions. Further details about these reports, how they will be generated and the timelines are included below.

These initiatives and our consultation process will continue into the fall academic term. They represent concrete steps to involve our entire community in

understanding, engaging and together addressing some of the issues raised. I am confident these activities will result in positive outcomes for the University and I look forward to continued dialogue as we move forward together.

## **Resources**

Issues related to resource availability constituted a majority of the concerns raised. At a time of declining provincial funding and increasing enrollment, these issues are understandable. The system-wide issues facing public education in Ontario and in other jurisdictions are difficult to deal with, at least in the near term. Notwithstanding cyclical government investments in public education, the long-term trend has been one of gradual decline. In 1985, government support accounted for 74 percent of Western's operating revenue. In 2014 this had declined to 43 percent. These fiscal challenges are going to be with us for the foreseeable future. As the economy recovers and our government's finances improve, we will advocate and hope for better times in the years ahead. In the meantime, in recognition of these system-wide challenges, Western's strategic plan made revenue diversification a key long-term strategy. Among various measures, growing our endowment has been a top priority. We have made huge strides in this area. Since 2009 our endowments have nearly doubled from \$300 million to \$586 million. We have also made progress in our target of 100 new chairs, including 50 endowed and meeting this target would significantly increase the university's flexibility.

Concerns have also been expressed about how resources are allocated internally. Our budget is very complex and a challenge to explain clearly. The current budget model has evolved over time but the base model has been in place for nearly 20 years. There is a strong desire to examine whether it is best serving the needs of our community. In fact, most of Ontario's U-15 member institutions have revamped their budget models. Before we can engage in a conversation, it is important for us to understand how the current budget process works. To learn more about the current budget model, processes, timelines and consultations, please visit the [2015-16 Budget website](#).

In response to the desire to examine our budget model and processes, the

Provost has convened a task force to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our current budget model, including graduate student support, alternative budget models and an assessment of the effectiveness of our model in supporting our academic mission. The task force will solicit input from members of the Western community in its work. It will be chaired by the Provost and its membership includes the Vice-President (Resources & Operations); Dean of the Faculty of Social Science; Acting Dean of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry; seven members elected by Senate (one graduate student, one staff, four faculty from academic units outside of Social Science and Medicine & Dentistry and with current or recent experience as a Department Chair or School Director and one from any constituency); two support unit leaders (one named by the Provost and one by the Vice-President (Resources & Operations)); and one undergraduate student identified by the undergraduate student Senators. Resources to the task force include the Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy & Faculty) and the Associate Vice-President (Planning, Budgeting and IT). The task force will issue a public report by the end of 2015. The terms of reference and the membership of the task force are posted online:

[http://provost.uwo.ca/planning\\_reports/taskforce.html](http://provost.uwo.ca/planning_reports/taskforce.html)

## **Research**

Many have expressed concerns about inadequate funding available through the federal granting councils and other external agencies, particularly in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Western recognizes that internal support in non-STEM disciplines is critical. Although we are operating in a fiscally constrained environment in which it is difficult to find additional ongoing resources within the operating budget, we intend to establish an endowment to support scholarship in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. Over the next several months, we will develop the specifics of this proposed endowment with the goal of having it in place during the 2016-17 academic year.

Recent changes in how internal funds are allocated have generated much criticism. In order to understand these issues better and design an improved support mechanism, the Vice-President (Research) has asked the University Research Board (URB) to convene an ad hoc task force to examine the current

suite of internal funding programs available to support research in the non-STEM disciplines and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in SSHRC-related research at Western. The task force will recommend action plans consistent with our Strategic Plan for achieving research excellence, as well as strategies to better value, communicate and celebrate the importance and impact of research in the non-STEM disciplines at Western. The URB, as a committee of Senate, will choose the leadership, membership and terms of reference for this ad hoc task force. We expect the committee to report to Senate by the end of 2015. This report will also be publicly available.

Concerns have also been raised about the length of time required in our ethics review process. The Vice-President (Research) is aware of issues and pressures in the ethics review process. He will be looking into operational and structural issues that affect these processes with a goal to making them more efficient and accountable.

## **Governance**

In our bicameral governance system, the Board of Governors and the Senate both play critical roles; however, it is clear that their respective mandates are not well understood by some members of our community. These two governing bodies derive their respective authorities from the University of Western Ontario Act. To learn more about the Act please visit [www.uwo.ca/univsec/](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/). Information about the Board of Governors is available at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/board](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/board) and the Senate at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/senate](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/senate)

The Board of Governors is aware of the concerns expressed by the members of our community on various aspects of governance and communications issues. In response, the Board has convened a task force to study these matters. Work has already begun and progress will be discussed by the full Board at its retreat in September. This task force will reach out to a broad group of the Western community. It is expected that the Board will have a report from the task force, including recommendations, in late fall 2015 or the early months of 2016.

The Senate has also created an ad hoc committee to study decision-making practices and processes at Western. This committee will review governance, Senate by-laws, regulations and procedures and the terms of reference for Senate committees, and it will reach out to stakeholders across campus for their advice. Membership was determined through the Nominating Committee of the Senate. The committee will report back to the Senate, with a preliminary report in January, 2016 and a final report by the end of the 2015-16 academic year.

Terms of reference for and membership of the ad hoc committee can be found here: [www.uwo.ca/univsec](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec)

## **Communication**

Western is a large and complex organization with diverse stakeholders including faculty, staff, students, alumni, community leaders, partner organizations, governments and donors. It is therefore important to find effective and efficient means to facilitate clear communication. To this end, I will continue to meet regularly with the internal and external groups who make up our campus community, including faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, alumni, institutional partners, donors as well as our city and government stakeholders. In an effort to reach more people, I will also begin sharing a regular e-newsletter that will help to inform the community about my activities and highlight the successes happening across our campus. The Vice Presidents will also be examining their internal channels of communication within and between their portfolios to see how they may be strengthened.

## **Administration and Support Services**

Concerns have been expressed regarding levels of staffing and workload in the face of constrained resources. There is a need to examine practices and timelines around recruitment, staffing, position evaluations and related compensation, and implementing process changes. The work of staff needs to be more visibly recognized and appreciated by senior administration.

We are committed to ensuring Western remains among the best workplace environments in Canada. We continue to receive your suggestions for improvements and the Vice-President (Resources & Operations) will be carefully reviewing processes and procedures with this goal in mind.

In April, I committed to a review of the salaries of senior administration. The Vice-President (Resources & Operations) will engage an external firm, in a competitive process, in the fall, to do this work. In drafting their report, we expect they will benchmark against similar universities across Ontario and Canada. They will report to the President and their report will be publicly available.

## **Our Successes**

The initiatives and actions taken so far will make our community stronger and help advance Western's strategic plan, [Achieving Excellence on the World Stage](#). While we are focusing on how we can strengthen Western in the future, it remains important that we not lose sight of the accomplishments our faculty, staff and students continue to achieve together.

### **Leading in Learning: Provide Canada's best education for tomorrow's global leaders**

Western continues to maintain its leadership position in student learning. Contrary to provincial trends, demand for a Western education continues to grow. Western has become a destination of choice for talented young women and men from across Ontario and increasingly from across Canada and beyond. For example:

- Average entering grade of 89.3% for incoming high school students in 2013-14, the highest in Ontario.
- Increased the number of National Level Scholarships from 15 to 39.
- Enrolled more than 1,370 out-of-province students in 2014-15.

- Enrolled more than 3,700 international students from 117 different countries.
- Doubled the percentage of international undergraduate students in the last four years.
- Achieved one of the highest retention rates of first-year students and students who find employment two years after graduation in the province.
- Two of the three Canadians who have been awarded the Queen's Young Leaders Award are Western's recent graduates, Aaron Joshua Pinto and Melissa Kargiannakis.

### **Raising Our Expectations: Creating a world class research and scholarship culture**

- Colleagues recognized for their outstanding teaching and research in the past year include:
  - Canada Council for the Arts' 2015 Killam Prize awarded to David Bentley, Faculty of Arts & Humanities.
  - Guggenheim Prize for History of Economic Thought was awarded to Professor Emeritus David Laidler.
  - Six new Royal Society of Canada fellows, elected by their peers in recognition of outstanding scholarly, scientific and artistic achievement.
  - Four researchers recognized by the Royal Society of Canada as inaugural members of The College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists.

- We continue to recruit senior talent from top-ranking universities around the world thus enriching our academy.
- Western's Department of Philosophy was ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in the world by the 2015 QS World University Rankings by Subject. Together, Western programs ranked among the world's elite institutions in 23 of 29 subject areas. Other programs listed in the top 100 include English and Psychology.
- Ivey placed first overall out of 27 international schools and achieved a first-place ranking in employer satisfaction in the 2014 Bloomberg Businessweek MBA rankings.

### **Reaching Beyond Our Campus: Engage alumni, community, institutional and international partners**

- The Africa Institute is an example of interdisciplinary research that is collaborating and partnering to address some of the world's most pressing issues.
- In partnership with the City of London, we have created the Advanced Manufacturing Park, which houses our wind research facility, the WINDEEE dome, the Collider and the Fraunhofer Project Centre.
- Western is a lead partner, along with the University of Toronto, in SOSCIP, a unique combination of high performance, cloud, and agile computing resources.
- Western was designated by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) as one of 18 public institutions in the 2015 class of Innovation & Economic Prosperity Universities – the first and only Canadian university to be recognized.
- Western has established an aggressive goal of doubling alumni engagement. One example of how we are doing this is the new alumni



career services program, which has served more than 5,300 alumni, since January 2014.

### **Taking Charge of Our Destiny: Generate and invest new resources in support of excellence**

- Raised \$595 million as of April 30, 2015 towards our campaign goal of \$750 million by the end of 2018, of which \$84.5 million will support student scholarship.
- Created 35 new chairs (19 of which are endowed) including the Alice Munro Chair in Creativity to honor the 2014 Nobel Laureate in Literature.
- Increased operating revenue from non-provincial sources by 6 percent during the past six years.
- Managed our resources prudently thus earning us AA stable rating from Standard and Poor's, two notches above the Province of Ontario, our primary funder.

These are all remarkable achievements and are due to the dedication and commitment of members of our community. However, we aspire to reach greater heights and much work needs to be done. A stronger community working together can move Western towards a better and brighter future.

## **Let's keep the conversation going....**

I look forward to continuing conversations about our University's future with faculty, staff, students and alumni, and our friends and partners as well as the Senate and Board of Governors. Western's leadership team also intends to engage and work with you on an ongoing basis to determine how we can further strengthen Western.

I encourage you to share your concerns and ideas in the following ways:

Send me an email:

[amit.chakma@uwo.ca](mailto:amit.chakma@uwo.ca)

Drop me a note:

Office of the President, Stevenson Hall, Suite 2107, London, Ontario, Canada N6A 5B8

Visit my website:

<http://president.uwo.ca/consultation/>

Follow me on Twitter:

[@PresWesternU](https://twitter.com/PresWesternU)

Thank you for your support and for making this process meaningful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amit". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke for the 't'.

Amit Chakma  
President & Vice-Chancellor