



## MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Governors

From: Amit Chakma

Date: September 8, 2016

Re: Priorities for 2016-19 – Strategic Capacity Building

---

Each September, I outline high-level priorities to pursue in the academic year ahead that will help achieve the broader teaching, research and service mission of our university. These priorities are informed through my ongoing interaction with individual colleagues and groups within our campus community, as well as with key external stakeholders who play important roles in Western's success.

As I enter the third year of my second five-year mandate, rather than providing my annual list of priorities, I have decided to focus on four high-level priorities which will receive my personal attention during the remaining period of my mandate. In arriving at this list of priorities, I was guided by the four pillars of the Strategic Plan and a focus on academic excellence to drive Western's upward journey beyond my presidency.

- I. **Internationalization:** Supporting the Strategic Plan's pillar: *"Lead in learning by providing Canada's best education for tomorrow's global leaders"*

Western has made significant strides in meeting our internationalization goals outlined in our Strategic Plan. A few examples include:

- We have increased the percentage of international students in Year 1 from less than 3% to over 11% this year.
- Similarly, we have increased the percentage of students taking part in international learning opportunities from less than 3% to over 6%.
- Our students are participating in The Undergraduate Awards competition along with students from other prestigious universities from around the world and winning "Highly Commended" honours in record numbers.

With the progress made to date, Western has already differentiated itself from our national peers. The aspirational goal of making Western a national leader in internationalization is in near sight and I plan to stay focused on the task.

- II. **Strategic Infrastructure:** Supporting two pillars of the Strategic Plan: *"Lead in learning by providing Canada's best education for tomorrow's global leaders" and "Raise our expectations by creating a world-class research and scholarship culture"*

Over the past decade and a half, we have continued to modernize physical infrastructure on campus and we have expanded our physical capacity through the addition of new buildings. A few examples include the modernization of Physics and Astronomy and University College, as well as new construction of the Ivey Building, FIMS and Nursing Building, Music Building,

Engineering Building, Interdisciplinary Research Building, and the Ontario Hall student residence. We are reviewing our current and future infrastructure needs and would like to identify “shovel-ready” projects. We will do some preliminary planning and design work so we are better prepared for opportunistic investments in the future. At this stage, we have identified two major infrastructure projects to be undertaken as soon as possible. The first will be an education and innovation-focused building designed to meet students’ growing demand for modern and innovative teaching and learning space and facilities on our campus. The second project will be a combination of renovation and new construction to accommodate growing interdisciplinary medical-focused research activities. We also intend to look at other facilities modernization projects. In addition to physical infrastructure, I also plan to focus attention on modernizing key support infrastructure, such as IT systems, to support various operations including Advancement and student information systems.

- III. **Strategic External Partnerships:** Supporting two pillars of the Strategic Plan: *“Raise our expectations by creating a world-class research and scholarship culture”* and *“Reach beyond campus by engaging alumni, community, institutional and international partners”*

The days of working alone are at best limited. The future success of our research enterprise will depend in many ways on our ability to forge meaningful partnerships with external partners. Such partnerships are difficult to develop and require significant time commitment to pursue without any guarantee of success. We have had some successes in recent years, including the Advanced Manufacturing Consortium with McMaster and Waterloo and the recently announced Canada First Research Excellence Fund project in partnership with McGill. These partnerships are in their nascent stages and will require a lot of nurturing for them to be fully established. I plan to work with my colleagues at Western and our partner institutions to consolidate these strategic partnerships.

- IV. **Endowment-building, with a particular focus on endowed chairs:** Supporting two pillars of the Strategic Plan: *“Take charge of our destiny by generating and investing new resources in support of excellence”* and *“Raise our expectations by creating a world class research and scholarship culture”*

Western’s endowment will be an increasingly important strategic asset to Western in the decades ahead. In the long run, building the endowment will help us meet one of our strategic goals of growing our non-provincial revenues by at least 1% annually. With our modest beginning in 1979, starting with a \$10-million endowment, we have come a long way. At the beginning of my presidency in 2009, the endowment stood at \$265 million. We set a goal of nearly doubling it to \$500 million by 2018. We exceeded that goal in 2016 and are nearing the \$600-million mark. It is important to continue this positive momentum. An essential component of the endowment is funding for faculty chairs. We have succeeded in adding 21 new endowed chairs primarily through our matching chairs program. This needs to continue. All of these initiatives will require my personal attention and I plan to devote a significant portion of time during the remaining years of my presidency to build capacity for continued growth of our endowment in general and our endowed chairs program in particular.

While I have outlined four high-level strategic capacity building priorities, the priorities outlined in the previous years will also continue to be pursued through the leadership of other members of Western’s senior team under my general supervision, and to continue effective engagement with campus community leaders. A number of structures have been put in place to allow ongoing, regular meetings with key stakeholders.

In addition, there will be a need for me to engage in other externally driven activities such as the reviews on science and innovation policy currently underway at the federal level and the funding formula review underway at the provincial level.