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MARCH 10, 2016 | 051-16

Laurier unveils aspirational Strategic Academic Plan

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University has developed an aspirational Strategic Academic Plan for 2015-2020 that focuses on three pillars: advancing academic excellence, expanding experiential learning, and enhancing diversity. Each pillar is connected to specific, measurable strategies that will be enacted over the next five years.

“In the context of system differentiation, a declining number of Ontario high school graduates, and ongoing technological transformation of higher education, this plan will enable Laurier to navigate our current environment and to continue to deliver high quality, relevant undergraduate and graduate programs,” said Deborah MacLatchy, provost & vice-president: academic.

Under MacLatchy’s leadership, the plan was developed by Laurier’s Senate Academic Planning Committee and the Vice-President Academic Advisory Council. MacLatchy praised the work of the two committees, which “grappled honestly and creatively with the key challenges facing the university to forge a plan that is bold and aspirational, but also practical and achievable.”

With a focus on academic excellence as its first pillar, the plan points to Laurier’s sector-leading academic programs – Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Music, and Master of Social Work – and outlines strategies for supporting all programs to achieve their goals.

The second pillar — experiential learning — is a long-standing strength at Laurier and, as such, is ripe to be delivered in a more intentional and broad-based manner. The plan calls for opportunities for every student to participate in experiential learning, through such formats as cooperative education, community service-learning, laboratory work, research and teaching apprenticeships, entrepreneurship and social innovation, and curricular international experiences.

In the plan’s third pillar, diversity is identified as critical both to meet the needs and aspirations of under-represented groups and to reflect the cultural, societal, political, environmental and economic complexities that define our age.

At six pages, the plan is focused and concise. “We were committed to bringing forward a plan that would facilitate sharp focus on a small number of priority areas,” said MacLatchy. “We recognize that the real work of implementation will happen at the program, department and faculty levels.”

The plan is built on the foundation of the university’s 2010-2015 academic plan and is set in the context of Laurier’s evolving self-understanding, as captured in the 2014-2019 Strategic Research Plan and the 2014-2017 Strategic Mandate Agreement.

To read the plan, click on the Strategic Academic Plan, 2015-2020 document at wlu.ca/academicplan