

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC PLAN

2012–2016





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ACADEMIC PLAN 2012–2016

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY: MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

Concordia is increasingly recognized for a big thinking approach to teaching and research that examines societal issues from a broad perspective. We are an open and engaged university that encourages its 46,000 students to become active, critical and concerned citizens.

Recognizing that research drives big thinking, 17 per cent of our student population is enrolled in graduate studies, which contributes to increasing our community's intellectual temperature and elevating its ambitions. Concordia offers more than 433 undergraduate and graduate programs, diplomas and certificates, and maintains formal ties with more than 100 institutions in 33 countries.

MISSION - WHO WE ARE

Concordia University is welcoming, engaged, and committed to innovation and excellence in education, research, creative activity and community partnerships. It dares to be different and draws on its diversity to transform the individual, strengthen society and enrich the world.

VISION - WHAT WE ASPIRE TO BE

Concordia's vision is to rank among Canada's top five comprehensive universities before the next decade, and to be a first choice for students and faculty locally, across Canada and internationally in a wide variety of defined areas of research and study.

VALUES - WHAT DRIVES US

Concordia's core values stem from those long prized by its founding institutions. Concordia has adopted the motto of the city of Montreal, *Concordia salus*, which speaks to well-being through harmony. The union of two very different institutions of higher education has led to an exceptionally successful synthesis of compatible and timely values.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST

Concordia University's *Academic Plan 2012-2016* is a landmark document that is guided by the mission, vision and values articulated in our Strategic Framework, *Reaching Up, Reaching Out*.

The plan identifies the concrete actions we will take over the next several years to enhance Concordia's reputation and reach our goal to be recognized as one of the top five comprehensive universities in Canada by 2019. It will strengthen our research capacity, promote student success and support our faculty in the delivery of high-quality, innovative programs.

Putting this plan into action will require the commitment, collaboration and creativity of our faculty members, students and staff. In keeping with the rigorous and broad-based consultation process for developing the plan, implementation will be highly participatory and responsive to emerging challenges and needs. We will undertake regular reviews of our progress to ensure that we meet our objectives.

The *Academic Plan* builds on our achievements, strengths and potential and will take us to even greater levels of success.

We look forward to reaping the rewards of our collective efforts.

Frederick Lowy

President and Vice-Chancellor

David Graham

Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs

INTRODUCTION

Concordia University's modern history begins in 1974, with an audacious decision to create a new university by combining the classical liberal arts education that Loyola College had already embodied for three-quarters of a century with practically oriented educational opportunities for wide audiences enshrined in the deep traditions of Sir George Williams University.

We inherit an academic mission whose goals are lofty, yet firmly grounded in an ethos of dynamism and social responsibility. This is the essence of what makes us Concordia.

Concordia's *Academic Plan 2012-2016* reflects our commitment to drawing fresh energy from our founding tensions as we continue to make Concordia a university where all those who seek us out will engage in thoughtful inquiry, develop and apply their creativity, and improve the societies in which we live.

This plan is guided by the mission, vision and values articulated in the university's Strategic Framework, *Reaching Up, Reaching Out*. Concordia's vision is to be ranked among Canada's top comprehensive universities. The five objectives identified in this plan will support our efforts in advancing the framework's three strategic directions: academic work of the highest quality, outstanding student experience and student engagement, and community engagement and social responsibility.

OBJECTIVES

The plan's five objectives are interconnected and serve to benefit every segment of the Concordia community:

1. Expand our research strength
2. Promote program quality and innovation
3. Build support for student success
4. Increase experiential learning and community engagement
5. Improve academic leadership and administrative support

To reach these objectives, the plan calls for substantial new investments in seven areas of vital academic importance: graduate student funding and teaching assistantships, library acquisitions, faculty research and scholarship, dynamic and effective teaching, targeted faculty hiring, major grant initiatives, and the improvement of our students' written and oral communication skills, grounded in and nourished by critical thinking.

These investments promise significant positive impact on Concordia's academic environment, and implementation of actions in these areas will be among our first priorities.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The *Academic Plan* was developed by a working group made up of representatives from the university's academic community, including the four Faculties, the School of Graduate Studies, the School of Extended Learning, and the Office of Research. The working group was guided by the Academic Plan Steering Committee.

The working group received more than 300 pages of responses to its first draft, released February 2, 2011. This groundswell of input from individuals and departments, in combination with numerous constructive discussions in many venues, led to a large number of revisions to the plan. Responses to the second draft of the plan, released August 24, 2011, had a similar impact on its final form. Every revision to both drafts was substantially informed by the community's feedback.

PLANNING COMMITTEES

ACADEMIC PLAN WORKING GROUP

Chair

Bradley Tucker, Director, Institutional Planning Office

Faculty Members

Michael Carney, Professor, Management (through April 2011)

François Morelli, Professor, Studio Arts (through December 2010)

Bradley Nelson, Associate Professor and Chair, Classics, Modern Languages and Linguistics

Marius Paraschivoiu, Professor, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

Rae Staseson, Associate Professor and Chair, Communication Studies

Haidee Wasson, Associate Professor and MA Program Head, Film Studies (from April 2011)

Administrative and staff members

Serge Bergeron, Associate Vice President, Academic Operations, Office of the Provost

Carole Brabant, Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Operations and Director, Office of Research (through December 2011)

Olivier Dyens, Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning

Jason Ens, Academic Policy and Planning Analyst, Office of the Provost

David Gobby, Director, Student Transition Centre

Paula Wood-Adams, Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies

ACADEMIC PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Chair

David Graham, Provost and Vice-President, Academic Affairs

Members

Gerald Beasley, University Librarian

Noel Burke, Dean, School of Extended Learning

Graham Carr, Dean, School of Graduate Studies

Louise Dandurand, Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies (through December 2011)

Robin Drew, Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science

Alan Hochstein, Interim Dean, John Molson School of Business (from July 2011)

Brian Lewis, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

Sanjay Sharma, Dean, John Molson School of Business (through June 2011)

Catherine Wild, Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts

ROLLOUT OF THE ACADEMIC PLAN

Plan implementation begins in spring 2012. Collaborative efforts will move Concordia toward realizing its full potential, fulfilling our commitment to academic work of the highest quality, outstanding student experience and student engagement, and community engagement and social responsibility.

PRIORITIES

Priority areas identified for immediate action include the following:

Research

- Allocate increased graduate student funding
- Allocate Library acquisitions funding

Student success

- Develop and test new academic integrity initiatives
- Allocate increased TA funding
- Initiate writing/communication skills efforts
- Develop accessibility policy
- Begin development of course evaluation

Administration

- Launch Open Administration Initiative
- Establish coordinated, equitable workload principles

ONGOING ASSESSMENT

The Academic Plan Steering Committee will liaise with Senate to ensure the success of plan implementation. Regular reporting and annual reviews will provide particularly important forms of accountability, as well as opportunities to make adjustments, if required.

Up-to-date information on *Academic Plan* implementation can be found at concordia.ca/academicplan.



SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 1: EXPAND OUR RESEARCH STRENGTH

Research, scholarship, and creative work are essential activities that distinguish universities from other educational institutions. These activities are fundamental to Concordia's institutional reputation, and a significant factor in making the university an attractive place for prospective faculty and students. The *Academic Plan* will boost Concordia's research profile by investing in faculty and graduate students and heightening awareness of current and emerging areas of research strength.

OBJECTIVE 2: PROMOTE PROGRAM QUALITY AND INNOVATION

Concordia prides itself on its innovative and distinctive programs, enriched and expanded by disciplinary permeability. Recognizing that a well-grounded disciplinary course of study remains the necessary foundation of a solid university education, the actions under this objective will lead to more highly contextualized and focused criteria for defining the success of all programs.

OBJECTIVE 3: BUILD SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Student success is a core purpose of universities, as well as source of great satisfaction for instructors and students alike. The actions under this objective build on Concordia's current practices around providing an outstanding learning experience. They also serve to refresh Concordia's continuing commitment to preparing all our students, traditional and non-traditional, to master the academic skills we consider essential to their success.

OBJECTIVE 4: INCREASE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Experiential learning and community engagement are two closely related facets of our core academic mission: they allow us to test knowledge against experience and to put knowledge to use for the benefit of society. The actions under this objective focus on improving Concordia's longstanding commitment to engaged learning experiences, in the knowledge that practical experience can round out a strong university education and heighten student engagement, motivation and success. The actions also aim to heighten Concordia's commitment to forging partnerships and building bridges with constituencies outside campus boundaries.

OBJECTIVE 5: IMPROVE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Effective administration is essential to support the realization of Concordia's academic goals. It involves a clear understanding that Concordia's academic mission is the university's top priority, a strong commitment to leading collegially and collaboratively, and unremitting dedication to improving transparency and efficiency.

OBJECTIVE 1



OBJECTIVE 1:

EXPAND OUR RESEARCH STRENGTH

1.1 ATTRACT MORE TOP GRADUATE STUDENTS AND POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWS.

Training graduate students and postdoctoral fellows is a core component of the university's mission of knowledge creation, because they are crucial in recruiting and retaining top faculty for our classrooms, studios, and labs. They also promise to improve the undergraduate experience, given our commitment to fund an increased number of graduate student teaching opportunities, including teaching assistantships and tutorials (as described in Objective 3, action item 3.4.2. below).

1.1.1 Commit substantial additional resources to fund outstanding graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Why this matters: Increasing our investment in highly capable students promises to have an immediate, direct impact on student recruitment, retention, and graduation, and an indirect positive impact on external funding for faculty research and creative activity. The competitive environment in which we recruit graduate students makes it imperative that we offer increased funding. Given the relative underfunding of international graduate students historically, these students are currently the focus of this targeted funding. Numerous funding opportunities exist for domestic students that are unavailable to international students.

1.1.2 Significantly improve the processes we use to recruit and admit the graduate students and postdoctoral fellows we want to attract.

Why this matters: Delays caused by current processes place Concordia graduate programs in an uncompetitive position to attract top students. Timely revisions need to be made to the Student Information Management System, the process for allocating graduate fellowships, and the timing of internal grant competitions, among other things.

(This is part of a larger set of actions related to admissions; see action 5.4.)

1.1.3 Establish equitable workload policies to ensure that increased numbers of graduate students will receive the best possible supervision, and that the work of supervision is adequately recognized in faculty workload assignments.

Why this matters: Increased numbers of graduate students will directly affect the workloads of the faculty members who supervise them. Revisiting the faculty workload guidelines, in collaboration with departments and Faculties, will help ensure that these increased cohorts of students will continue to receive excellent supervision.

(This is part of a larger set of actions related to faculty workloads; see action 5.3.)

1.1.4 Undertake a comprehensive review to ensure that infrastructure, space, information systems, and staff resources are in place to support, manage and accommodate increased numbers of graduate students, intensification of research activities and outreach to our communities in this domain.

Why this matters: It is imperative that the university take stock on a regular basis of its resources and infrastructure, and that we take measures to improve and adapt them according to strategic priorities. This action may involve coordinating with academic units to identify additional funds needed to update research infrastructure, undertaking a space costing initiative, and examining assistance available to faculty for administering research grants.

1.2 IMPROVE OUR ABILITY TO FACILITATE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FACULTY MEMBERS IN THEIR RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITIES.

Faculty have identified the need for more opportunities to dedicate focused time to research and creative work as a top priority. Some universities provide faculty with flexibility to focus on different aspects of their work to greater or lesser extents at different times in their career. Attaining this objective will mean improving Concordia's flexibility in this regard while ensuring continued faculty engagement in teaching and in service activities.

1.2.1 Revisit major internal award programs so as to increase the frequency of application opportunities and ensure maximum effectiveness.

Why this matters: Concordia's major initiatives to recognize and support the outstanding accomplishments of its faculty in research and creative activities (e.g., Concordia University Research Chairs, Mobilizing Knowledge) have been effective in increasing our research capacity. It may nonetheless be advisable to revisit them in order to widen opportunities, especially for junior and mid-career faculty.

1.2.2 Create opportunities for timely, short-term teaching load reductions to enable faculty to undertake intensive research and creative work.

Why this matters: Time is the most important factor in the creation and dissemination of research and other forms of knowledge. Under this action, a criteria-based, competitive process would be developed to fund a limited number of research awards. Early-career faculty might use the award within their first two years in order to establish a successful research program, or as a pre-sabbatical research term in or near the sixth semester, depending on Faculty practices and preferences of individual faculty members. For mid-career and senior faculty members, on whose work the institution's research reputation rests, recipients would be asked to communicate the results of their research projects through master's classes, talks, workshops, University of the Streets café sessions, etc., in order to ensure contributions to the larger learning environment at the university and greater visibility to the research and creative activity of faculty.

1.2.3 Test mechanisms for fulfilling teaching responsibilities more efficiently by concentrating teaching assignments, in order to create periods of time for faculty to undertake intensive research and creative work.

Why this matters: Focusing work activity and aggregating tasks are key practices in making best use of available time. Concordia may reap unexpected benefits from a concerted effort to optimize its practices around assigning teaching responsibilities, while continuing to ensure high-quality learning experiences for students.

1.2.4 Develop and implement the means to recognize and reward diverse and innovative forms of research and creative activity.

Why this matters: Evaluating diverse forms of research and creative activity in Concordia's various communities can be challenging. The development of suitable criteria for recognizing and assessing varied forms of research and creative activity, including those involving university/community partnerships and other forms of community engaged scholarship, will encourage faculty to undertake innovative work.

1.3 INVEST IN CONCORDIA'S CURRENT AND EMERGING AREAS OF STRENGTH IN RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY.

1.3.1 Strategically hire 10 new faculty members over and above replacement-level hiring, to build up Concordia's current and emerging areas of strength.

Why this matters: Investing in highly capable faculty promises to have both an immediate and long-term impact on the teaching, research and creative activity, as well as the graduate supervision capacity of the institution. Specific hiring numbers will be contingent on budgetary circumstance, and will be re-examined as part of the annual hiring plan review.

1.3.2 Allocate new resources and develop a more comprehensive infrastructure and support system to encourage more applications for major grant initiatives.

Why this matters: This action will improve Concordia's ability to attract major strategic research funding, an area in which Concordia has room to grow. Application support might be accomplished through teaching reductions, administrative assistance, and/or matching funds. This action would be pursued without decreasing support for smaller, individual research grants.

1.3.3 Foster Concordia's research institutes and centres as locations in which to develop trans-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary initiatives in research and teaching.

Why this matters: Many of Concordia's existing research centres already house an array of outstanding researchers from a variety of related disciplines; as well, they possess the administrative and infrastructural foundation on which to build such initiatives.

1.4 HEIGHTEN EXTERNAL RECOGNITION OF CONCORDIA'S AREAS OF STRENGTH.

1.4.1 Establish a mechanism to facilitate, coordinate and streamline all Concordia submissions for major external awards.

Why this matters: Possible mechanisms include an institutional awards and prizes committee, or an institutional awards officer. This action supplements efforts such as the Provost's Circle of Distinction and initiatives being led by the Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies and the Faculties to increase the number of nominations of Concordia professors for major external awards. A central awards committee or awards officer would liaise with Faculties and departments to identify research and recognition opportunities and in putting forward candidates for external recognition.

1.4.2 Actively seek opportunities to host more high profile research events at Concordia.

Why this matters: This action will require additional administrative support in the coordination and promotion of these events, but will bring increased visibility to Concordia and its areas of research strength.

1.4.3 Develop a proposal for creating innovative knowledge dissemination platforms, like an electronic press, at Concordia.

Why this matters: Traditional modes of disseminating research and creative activity are being challenged by new media and by rapidly developing and changing technologies. By this action, Concordia will discern how best to take a leadership role in knowledge dissemination, building on the open-access initiative and the Libraries' Spectrum project.

1.5 IMPROVE THE LIBRARY'S CAPACITY TO SUPPORT RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY.

Libraries have long provided a vital foundation for learning, teaching and research. In the current context, though, many electronic resources most needed by our faculty and students are not available through other universities. In addition, the Library's ability to meet the needs of a rapidly growing population of researchers and scholars—faculty members, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows in particular—is seriously hampered by a sustained shortfall in core funding. Investing in the Library's capacity to support leading researchers is essential to our success.

1.5.1 Substantially increase the Library's acquisitions budget.

Why this matters: This action entails providing increased, sustainable funding to enable the Libraries to build collections of monographs, periodicals, multimedia, and electronic resources for graduate degree programs and advanced research and teaching. This envelope also helps the Libraries to build a rich discovery environment for access to library collections and other information.

1.5.2 Encourage greater collaboration between faculty and librarians in research and creative activity.

Why this matters: Librarians are important potential research collaborators with faculty members and graduate students. Librarians are an underutilized resource for making best use of rapidly evolving tools, platforms and methodologies of research in the humanities, social sciences, and other disciplines.

1.5.3 Develop and implement a new vision of the Library's expanded role in support of the goals of this Academic Plan.

Why this matters: The role of university libraries is evolving rapidly as we traverse a shifting terrain where technologies of information and communication are ever more pervasive in our academic work. A new vision will anticipate developments and will place Concordia in the best possible position to take full advantage of these developments.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

1. Increase the average external research funding received per full-time faculty member.

External research funding is an important input indicator that gauges our capacity to support graduate students and research and creative activity. Using a range of indicators based on consistent, widely available information to gauge our progress, we will increase our research income to bring us closer in line with our aspirational comparators.

2. Review the number of external awards won by faculty members and students, and set targets for increases where appropriate.

The external awards won by our professors reflect their increasing local, national, and international reputations, as well as our ability to support their nominations for such awards. Using standard lists of major external awards, we will benchmark ourselves and set targets for annual increases in this indicator. In addition, as we increase our capacity to attract our preferred graduate and post-doctoral students, we expect a larger number of them to win major external awards from granting agencies or from elsewhere.

3. Increase our peer-reviewed publications.

A primary output of increased research and creative activity is publications. Using a range of indicators based on consistent, widely available information to gauge our progress, we will increase output of published peer-reviewed articles to bring us closer in line with our aspirational comparators.

4. Work expeditiously and collaboratively to develop suitable research and creative work indicators for humanities, fine arts, and related disciplines.

Recognizing that our humanities and fine arts professors, and other faculty members in related disciplines, engage in research and creative activity that is not as readily or consistently tracked as that in other disciplines, we will engage as a university community in developing benchmarking activities in these disciplines that will allow us to gauge our progress toward increasing our research and creative activity in these areas.

5. Develop discipline-specific targets for reducing the amount of time our graduate students take to complete their degrees.

Increased graduate student funding promises to lower one major obstacle to timely degree completion. Differentiated targets for completion times helps to ensure that degree completion is not unduly delayed, and thus program spots that other qualified students might fill are not held longer than necessary. Target setting must to be undertaken in a way that does not compromise academic standards, and that appropriately accounts for a program's student profile (e.g., a large number of students studying part-time because they are working in a related field while completing a degree).

OBJECTIVE 2



OBJECTIVE 2:

PROMOTE PROGRAM QUALITY AND INNOVATION

2.1. DEVELOP NEW RESOURCES AND PROCESSES TO SUPPORT INNOVATIVE PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND BROADEN THE USE OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAM DESIGN STRATEGIES.

2.1.1 Implement streamlined processes to facilitate program creation and planned growth.

Why this matters: Though rigorous processes are needed to vet program proposals and meet external requirements, Concordia can be better at facilitating the process of starting or growing programs that fulfill clear and compelling needs, particularly in areas of current and emerging strength.

2.1.2 Create a consultation team and develop a diverse array of blueprints to support program creation and innovation.

Why this matters: Programs are unique, but ready access to knowledgeable people and effective practices and structures can help shorten development time for program faculty. The consultation team might include faculty leaders in teaching and in curriculum and program design. The blueprints would be based on a broad inventory of successful disciplinary and interdisciplinary practices, and online or online/classroom hybrid approaches to instruction. An important preliminary task is establishing clear principles for assessing the academic and pedagogical value of course management systems such as Moodle or First Class, and delivery systems such as eConcordia, as platforms to facilitate achievement of program objectives.

2.1.3 Identify and remove structural impediments to program experimentation.

Why this matters: Our legitimate respect for past practice and current structural arrangements may in some cases hinder our ability to experiment and innovate. An implementation team will need to identify structural or cultural roadblocks and devise solutions for how best to remove them.

2.1.4 Devote a small pool of funds to undergraduate and graduate program experimentation and course offerings, including interdisciplinary innovations.

Why this matters: This action entails funding an annual competition for courses that are listed across disciplines, team-taught across disciplines, and/or directly in line with innovative faculty pedagogical interests, over and above departmental allotments. Successful courses would be given incremental resources through the course allotment process. Non-departmentalized interdisciplinary programs (e.g., SIP) will need special support to sustain them.

2.1.5 Meaningfully incorporate part-time faculty members into the creation, revision, review, and delivery of academic programs.

Why this matters: Recognizing the fundamental contribution of part-time faculty members to program innovation and delivery will make academic programs more sustainable and university cultures more collegial.

2.2 ENSURE THAT OUR PROGRAM APPRAISAL PROCESS IS USEFUL, TIMELY, AND EFFICIENT.

2.2.1 Deploy and refine a new program appraisal process that uses multifaceted and contextualized criteria for assessing the effectiveness of academic programs.

Why this matters: Properly undertaken, the program appraisal process provides a critical periodic opportunity for programs to assess their performance and weigh it against internal and external benchmarks. In this regard, the role of objective external reviewers of high standing is crucial, as is ensuring that all accepted recommendations are properly followed up and implemented, and their impact assessed, before the next review. The aim is not to micromanage programs through a central process, but to enable programs to be refreshed and revitalized, to support program initiative and innovation, and to focus on improved outcomes for students and faculty alike.

2.2.2 Develop and implement generally accepted principles, criteria, and procedures to identify programs for growth, maintenance (stable or steady-state enrolment), or phasing out, and develop program transcripts that report on these criteria.

Why this matters: The work of developing principles, criteria, and procedures will be accomplished by departments and Faculties in collaboration with administrative support units. Likely criteria include national and international recognition of research, teaching, and creative work; a program's ability to admit and register students, move them toward graduation in timely ways, and graduate them with program-defined skills and abilities; internal and external recognition of student success; significant contributions to experiential learning and research; potential employment prospects for graduates; contributions to service courses and training; and a program's net financial impact on the university. The financial contribution of programs to the university will not be used to take decisions about program status in isolation from the full set of other criteria.

2.2.3 Ensure that the recommendations resulting from program appraisals are systematically followed up in a timely manner and that resource implications of potential changes are addressed as part of appraisal follow-up.

Why this matters: Program appraisals represent a significant investment of time and resources, and this investment should not be made in vain.

(This is part of a larger set of actions related to resource allocation; see action 5.2.)

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS ON THIS OBJECTIVE

1. Provide departments with better access to key program performance data for use in their decision-making processes, and ensure broader access to such data generally across the university.

Knowing the health of our programs is key to determining the impact of the actions listed under this objective. Departments will be given online access to program review charts, which will allow them to monitor their programs in terms of first-choice applications, registration rates, retention rates, and so forth. These charts will also be used in program appraisals, and a regular report on program health will be distributed to the community.

2. Realize gains in recruitment and satisfaction of faculty members.

Faculty members appreciate opportunities for program innovation and experimentation, seeing such opportunities for curricular development as an additional creative, reputation-enhancing outlet. We expect that our ability to attract faculty members, and their subsequent satisfaction at Concordia, will improve over the life of this plan. We will monitor and report on progress on these measures.

3. Measure the degree to which our programs are truly distinctive and innovative, for example, by tracking the proportion of Concordia programs offered in relatively few universities.

Concordia prides itself on doing things differently, but these differences are not always well articulated in ways that strengthen our claim. Using the Canadian Classification of Instructional Programs, we will monitor areas in which Concordia has programs that are both innovative and unique in Canada, and report on the progress of such programs over time.

OBJECTIVE 3



OBJECTIVE 3:

BUILD SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

3.1. BOOST PARTICIPATION OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN CONCORDIA'S RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.

3.1.1 Increase the regular presence of established researchers in the undergraduate classroom.

Why this matters: Students benefit immeasurably from exposure to the full range of Concordia's research community, furthering the aims of student success and bringing research and teaching together.

3.1.2 Initiate an Undergraduate Research Initiative to increase the number of undergraduate students who take part in faculty research activities.

Why this matters: It is often the case that undergraduates are unclear about the research activities of the faculty who teach them. Giving interested undergraduates the opportunity to work side-by-side with faculty on research projects, in labs, or in studios will help bridge this divide and involve undergraduates in the creative work of the faculty. This action may entail small grants that facilitate undergraduates and faculty pairing up on a research project or creative activity.

3.2 IDENTIFY, REWARD AND PROMOTE CONCORDIA'S OUTSTANDING STUDENT ACHIEVERS WITH THE AIM OF INSPIRING MORE STUDENTS TO EXCEL.

3.2.1 Encourage donors to fund more merit-based awards and in-program awards for new and continuing undergraduate and graduate students of high academic promise and achievement.

Why this matters: Though need-based awards continue to be important, Concordia's outstanding student applicants, both graduate and undergraduate, increasingly look to the University to recognize their achievements through strengthened financial support. In the case of graduate students, donated funds could be integrated into the School of Graduate Studies pre-allocated award envelopes to units, either to provide additional recruitment tools or incentives for completing degrees, or to be used to attract top students.

3.2.2 Systematically identify candidates for high-profile external awards, encourage them to apply, and provide support to help them develop and present their applications.

Why this matters: Knowing that many qualified students simply miss deadlines, increased awareness is one area for improvement. One possibility is to create a channel for directly notifying top-ranking students of award opportunities.

3.2.3 Develop new mechanisms for student recognition to promote success and foster networking.

Why this matters: Giving more visibility to Concordia's most successful students will lend impetus to the growth of our academic reputation. Initiatives such as a Circle of Distinction might help to bring together top students from across Concordia, enable networking, and facilitate the nomination of our most outstanding students for external awards.

3.3 PROMOTE AND REWARD STUDENT INITIATIVES THAT FOSTER PARTICIPATION IN AND INTEGRATION INTO THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY.

3.3.1 Cultivate student engagement with Concordia's academic standards, including intellectual integrity and research ethics, in collaboration with students and student groups.

Why this matters: While disciplinary procedures for breaches of expected conduct remain necessary, the aim of this action is to make Concordia more proactive about socializing students with respect to academic norms and values.

3.3.2 Create a consolidated fund to support projects that focus on improving Concordia and the local community.

Why this matters: Many small funding envelopes for student initiatives are currently available, though they are independent of one another. These envelopes could have greater impact if they were combined into a single fund and supplemented with additional resources in order to encourage greater involvement in projects likely to have a positive impact on Concordia and local communities.

(This action is aligned with those in Objective 4.)

3.3.3 Increase peer tutoring and mentoring across the university.

Why this matters: Involvement in peer tutoring and mentoring helps build a culture of shared responsibility for learning. Using information about effective practices here and elsewhere, programs can augment and adapt their peer tutoring and mentoring practices. This will enable student support, enhance student performance, and foster greater collegiality and sense of community.

3.4 BUILD ON EFFECTIVE CURRICULAR PRACTICES THAT DEVELOP STUDENTS' FOUNDATIONAL ACADEMIC ABILITIES AND FACILITATE THEIR PROGRESS TOWARD PROGRAM OBJECTIVES.

3.4.1 Increase the use of scheduled tutorials across the university in support of large class learning environments.

Why this matters: Small group sessions effectively support instruction in large classes, and provide important training opportunities and funding for graduate students.

3.4.2 Increase the use of Teaching Assistant-supported skill development, particularly in writing and communication, and bolster training available to TAs to ensure their pedagogical effectiveness.

Why this matters: TAs provide important assistance to faculty in facilitating smaller group activities and tutorials, which is especially important for new undergraduate students. Incorporated into this action is the expectation that better graduate student funding will increase the size of the pool of TAs with the requisite skills and talents necessary to succeed in this capacity. As financial constraints have made it necessary to increase class sizes in many disciplines, TAs can help maintain Concordia's small class experience for undergraduate students, while at the same time they develop invaluable professional skills.

3.4.3 Assist departments and programs in developing courses to help their students acquire discipline-specific skills in written and oral communication, where these are lacking.

Why this matters: "Writing Across the Curriculum" is frequently cited as a model of good practice, though the precise form of this assistance, and the mechanisms used to address student needs, should be determined on the basis of results from a comprehensive inventory of current practices within and beyond Concordia.

3.4.4 Define and foster the role of librarians for training of research competencies in library and information literacy.

Why this matters: This action integrates librarians into curriculum practices that aim to build a key academic skill set.

3.4.5 Test a range of integrated assessment practices to complement existing gauges of teaching effectiveness in anticipation of provincial ententes de partenariat.

Why this matters: The recent increase in funding for provincial universities comes with a requirement for universities to forge 'partnership agreements' that must include measures of teaching quality. Currently, the primary sources of this information are student course evaluations and, indirectly, statistics about graduation rates, job placements, etc. These provide only a fragmentary picture of teaching effectiveness and student achievement.

3.5 TAKE EARLY, DECISIVE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT ENTERING STUDENTS HAVE THE SKILLS, ABILITIES, AND GUIDANCE NEEDED TO SUCCEED IN THEIR COURSES AND PROGRAMS.

3.5.1 Develop a university policy on accessibility that identifies how our commitments are realized in programs, Faculties, and across the institution.

Why this matters: Despite Concordia's longstanding commitment to accessibility, the university has never formally articulated a coordinated, justified approach to translating the commitment into action. The primary foci of this policy would be the Mature Entry Program, Independent student status, and open enrolment programs, and it would more clearly articulate the interfaces between the School of Extended Learning (SEL) and the Faculties.

3.5.2 Test various means to identify underprepared and at-risk students who might benefit from targeted academic interventions.

Why this matters: The increased TA support mentioned in 3.4.2 offers one tool for intervening early with students who need additional academic preparation. Another possibility is discipline-specific tests to be developed by programs, with assistance and support where required, and administered to their own students during the early semesters. Pre-program placement testing may be appropriate in some areas. The School of Extended Learning would become a more widely recognized portal for students whose academic record and/or performance might indicate a likelihood of struggling in regular programs. Over time, this higher degree of support could permit open enrolment programs to raise their admission standards without sacrificing accessibility.

3.5.3 Build on current practices in the School of Extended Learning to develop focused and innovative pre-program preparatory pathways for underprepared students, in particular those entering open enrolment programs.

Why this matters: This action builds on the pioneering work of Counselling and Development, the Student Transition Centre, and the Continuing Education Language Institute. In consultation with these and other units possessing relevant expertise, further progress will be made in preparing motivated students for success in academic programs. Preparatory courses need to be designed by faculty from the programs students want to enter and would be differentiated from CEGEP-level coursework. Distinctive pre-program features might be achieved through more intensive and immersive coursework, cohort-based arrangements, a problem-based and experiential curriculum, etc.

3.5.4 Develop coherent curricular pathways for students who have additional course credit requirements.

Why this matters: Such pathways help to ensure that additional credits assigned to students (e.g., under the Extended Credit or Mature Entry programs) are used fruitfully to develop the skills and build the knowledge necessary for success in a program, and to support broad-based, liberal arts education. A clear connection between supplemental (or, in the case of underprepared students, developmental) coursework and a desired program is a strong predictor of perseverance and graduation.

3.5.5 Design and implement a plan to improve coherence and quality of advising, in particular for first-year students, in order to help them understand and achieve their educational objectives.

Why this matters: This action would be undertaken in close collaboration with student advisors. An early step involves comprehensively mapping current academic advising practices and monitoring the impact of the newly implemented degree audit system. This step will allow us to devise ways to inform students more effectively about expectations, progress, and achievement.

3.5.6 Intensify and coordinate current work focused on improved Cegep-university alignment.

Why this matters: There has been an explosion of policy recommendations in North America over the past decade on facilitating improved university readiness. This action focuses on redoubling our current efforts in order to coordinate more effectively with the Cegeps on the skills and abilities that students should have upon entering university.

3.5.7 Develop proactive strategies to address the changing characteristics of the entering student population.

Why this matters: This action is made necessary by the changing cognitive, psychological, technological, and social landscape of contemporary students, and by the tensions, strengths and weaknesses of their diverse backgrounds. One possible mechanism for developing strategies in this area is a biennial report with concrete recommendations for adapting Concordia's teaching and learning culture, and for ensuring that we appropriately facilitate students' adaptation to university culture and expectations. A first area of investigation might be digital culture, focusing in particular on academic integrity in the Internet age.

3.5.8 Explore the development of a certificate to recognize completion of preparatory coursework.

Why this matters: While many pre-program courses offered through the School of Extended Learning may not be accepted by Faculties in partial satisfaction of the requirement to complete 90 credits, they do qualify as university credits, and recognition through the awarding of a certificate should encourage more students to undertake them when needed.

3.6 ACTIVELY PROMOTE AND REWARD EFFECTIVE AND DYNAMIC PRACTICES IN TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SUPERVISION BY FULL- AND PART-TIME FACULTY.

3.6.1 Make focused investments and increase faculty involvement in the leadership of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Services in order to boost its role in supporting excellence and innovation in teaching and learning.

Why this matters: At Concordia, the CTLS has long played a central role in developing a vibrant teaching and learning culture, though it is significantly underdeveloped not only in comparison to similar entities at our peer institutions, but also in comparison to those in many highly regarded research universities. This action expresses a commitment to strengthen the capacities of CTLS and to generate greater faculty involvement in steering and performing its work—which could involve an enlarged mandate to undertake research on learning and assessment; provide expertise in the area of writing across the curriculum; develop strategies for effective online learning and teaching with technology; facilitate course, curriculum, and program design efforts; and play a more prominent role in facilitating TA training.

3.6.2 Support departments in incorporating various forms of e-learning into their academic program offerings, as appropriate for the program content and pedagogy, and respecting the university's standard academic policies, processes, and quality assurance mechanisms.

Why this matters: This action commits Concordia to a principled use of e-learning. Like any form of learning experience, e-learning is most effective when there are principled frameworks around its use, when instructors are guided in best practices, when there is adequate support for course development, and when there are mechanisms in place to judge the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach. All of these things are necessary components of a comprehensive e-learning strategy at Concordia.

3.6.3 Create “teaching development grants” for intensive investments by faculty in professional development in teaching and learning.

Why this matters: Transforming one's approach to teaching often requires a significant investment of research, time, and energy. This action provides institutional support for this work, which may range from significant course redesigns to retraining in the use of effective and/or emerging practices and technologies for teaching and learning. Particular emphasis in selection criteria will be given to pedagogies that foster active and collaborative learning and that promote a high level of academic challenge and engagement.

3.6.4 Increase pedagogical, supervisory, and curricular training for new full- and part-time faculty.

Why this matters: Early investments in new faculty promise to yield ongoing commitments to and engagement in a studied approach to continual improvement in teaching and learning. Much of this work will be tethered to new faculty orientation.

3.6.5 Encourage and develop stronger faculty mentoring practices in teaching, learning, and supervision, and develop tools and practices to foster informal peer exchanges.

Why this matters: Concordia has many examples of excellent practices in teaching, learning and supervision. In the absence of formal mechanisms by which such practices can become the focus of discussion and critical reflection, these examples tend to remain hidden. Putting in place opportunities and tools to help generalize good practices will contribute to a greater sense of collegiality and to collaboration around highly effective teaching and supervision.

3.6.6 Develop a validated course evaluation questionnaire for use across the university.

Why this matters: Appropriately developed and used, course evaluations can be useful tools for improving pedagogical practice, and for providing input for evaluations of teaching performance. This action commits us to creating a locally developed questionnaire that will likely include a shared set of core questions asked in all courses university-wide, while allowing for differentiation outside this core on the basis of Faculty, discipline, and instructor priorities.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

1. Increase our NSSE benchmark scores for Level of Academic Challenge and Active and Collaborative Learning.

We generally perform well in these two measures when comparing ourselves to other Canadian comprehensive universities. When we look at ourselves in comparison with others among the other 600 universities who use these measures as a gauge of their impact on students, we can improve. We will delve into these measurements and discuss with the departments and programs their meaning and differentiated applicability in order to see how the results can inform our practice.

2. Increase number of students completing programs and successfully graduating.

We know that student retention is impacted by a variety of factors, many outside the university's control. Still, we also know that program fit, the ease of obtaining needed academic services, the preparatory support, and the ability to receive timely academic advising are key factors within the university's control. Programs, departments, and the university will receive updates on how we are progressing in this measurement.

3. Increase positive employer evaluation of our students in our periodic reputational survey.

It is clear that students attend university for a variety of reasons. It is equally clear that employers expect certain competencies from university graduates. We will ensure that our periodic reputation survey gives us the chance to examine the way employers of our graduates view the Concordia education.

4. Understand, and improve where possible, the employment success of our graduates.

While students attend university for a variety of reasons, what happens to our students after graduation is of great interest to us in terms of knowing whether we met their expectations and the expectations of the society of which we are a part. We will find ways to increase response rates to our alumni survey.

5. Improve the satisfaction with Concordia of both our undergraduate and graduate students.

We expect that satisfaction with Concordia (overall and recommendation), based on measures taken by the *Globe and Mail's* Canadian University Report, NSSE, and the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, will improve based on the actions taken above. We will closely monitor these measures and report on changes.

6. Use results from piloted learning assessments (action 3.4.5) to understand better how well our students are doing in acquiring fundamental academic skills.

While writing and communications skills figure prominently in this plan, we recognize that higher education serves to develop critical skills that cut across disciplines and help prepare our students to adapt to the many realities they will face in their post-Concordia lives. The actions in this objective should serve to improve such skills among our students, which we should gauge as part of our efforts to continuously improve.



OBJECTIVE 4



OBJECTIVE 4:

INCREASE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

4.1 INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO GAIN EXTRAMURAL EXPERIENCE THAT COMPLEMENTS FORMAL CLASSROOM LEARNING AND FOSTERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

4.1.1 Provide workshops and increased online resources in support of discipline-specific forms of professional preparation, where appropriate.

Why this matters: Students often realize that they complete their formal university studies without having acquired the professional skills that will assist them in creating their post-Concordia lives. Through further development of programs funded by the “insertion professionnelle” envelope, including the Graduate Professional Skills program, “francisation” initiatives, student travel awards and thesis completion grants, Concordia will address important aspects of these needs.

4.1.2 Increase opportunities for students to engage in local, national, and international internships, service learning, research projects, and other forms of applied learning.

Why this matters: This action commits Concordia to expanding avenues for students to engage in learning activities that complement their programs of study. Such opportunities, including student entrepreneurship initiatives, attract highly motivated students who gain important practical experience as well as new perspectives on their academic coursework.

4.1.3 Increase collaboration and coordination among Concordia’s several entities already active in this area, including the Institute for Co-operative Education, the JMSB Centre for Career Development, the Institute for Community Development, Career and Placement Services and placement officers in individual academic programs.

Why this matters: Concordia’s existing entities can very likely coordinate their efforts more effectively in order to ensure that students are made aware of the range of community-based opportunities and can make choices appropriate to their program and their personal goals. One possible outcome of this action, for example, would be to ensure that placement providers are not being contacted separately by multiple Concordia units and that opportunities managed by one unit that might be appropriate for students in another are made visible to all. Such efforts should impinge as little as possible on existing placement arrangements.

4.2 EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO EXERCISE ETHICS, CITIZENSHIP, CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT, AND GLOBAL AWARENESS IN THEIR COURSES, RESEARCH, AND CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

4.2.1 Develop a proposal for a program to promote and reward academic programs, which encourages community-engaged approaches to building academic skills and knowledge.

Why this matters: Other universities have moved actively in this direction, and several interesting models exist. One possibility would be to initiate a “Univer/cité Scholars” program that might operate with a seed fund to support development and/or growth in courses and programs focused on critical engagement with local communities. It might also involve the expanded and/or adapted offering of a common course akin to School of Extended Learning’s “Orientation to Service Learning,” if a survey of current faculty interests and course offerings showed one to be needed, to provide foundational knowledge and skills to prepare students for learning that takes place beyond the classroom—e.g., a critical interrogation of ethics of community engagement. The university will fund the development of a detailed proposal that is drafted in consultation with all the relevant parties and provides a clear sense of the resources necessary to carry out this action.

4.2.2 As part of regular curriculum appraisal processes, encourage and facilitate focused departmental discussions on how ethics, citizenship, critical engagement, and global awareness are and should be integrated into program coursework and related co-curricular activities.

Why this matters: This action is intended to foster an environment at Concordia in which teaching and learning are infused with a sense of social conscience, purpose, and responsibility. Concordia’s reputation as a leader in developing dynamic and engaged citizens can only be enhanced through such efforts.

4.2.3 Widen the implementation of the International Degree Profile and/or similar initiatives.

Why this matters: This action encourages, enables and recognizes students’ learning and experience in the global community. There is clear demand for graduates with credentials that signal their ability to navigate complex cultural terrain. In consultation with departments, courses and international exchange programs can be identified for this designation.

4.2.4 Encourage students to take advantage of volunteer opportunities, in particular those that mesh with academic program objectives, whether by supporting their inclusion on a co-curricular transcript or diploma supplement, or, where appropriate and properly vetted, through more formal mechanisms such as problem-based service learning for academic credit.

Why this matters: Giving of one’s time without remuneration is a core Concordia value. Concordia’s LIVE Centre is an important resource for facilitating student community involvement, and the School of Extended Learning has implemented some course offerings in problem-based service learning that provide an interesting model for combining unremunerated work and academic inquiry.

4.3 EXPLORE WAYS TO BOLSTER EXISTING UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.

Partnerships with bodies in the external community give real meaning to a university's mission in society. They open opportunities for applied research, co-production of knowledge, networking, and professional development, both for faculty and students. The actions identified below are intended to extend and build upon the effective work already undertaken at Concordia. Action 1.2.4 performs the complementary function of establishing criteria to better recognize and assess the value of this and other novel forms of scholarly work by faculty members.

4.3.1 Develop an inventory of current university/community partnerships and the resources and policies that facilitate them, in comparison to models of good practice elsewhere.

Why this matters: Because so many forms of community partnership already exist at Concordia, a necessary first step in this area will be to take stock of our existing practice, consider leading-edge work in other universities, and develop a clear understanding of the practices we want to emulate and adapt to our own use.

4.3.2 Test the effectiveness of setting aside a small pool of research seed grants to fund community-engaged scholarship.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

1. Increase opportunities for internships and community-based placements across the university, with opportunities identified in each program or department as appropriate.

Our postgraduate surveys indicate that students desire greater opportunities to include extramural application of their learning as part of their degree program. We will track our success in providing students with these opportunities.
2. Implement the International Degree Profile and realize an increase in each year of the plan in the number of Concordia students who go on international exchanges.

Implementing this profile will give us a way to monitor the international impact we have on students and to gauge whether Concordia is meeting student needs with respect to study abroad.
3. Increase our local media coverage for student- and faculty-led community initiatives.

As we implement the objectives above, which make more visible and encourage more broadly our community involvement in various ways, we will work to make these collaborations and activities and opportunities better known.
4. Increase student participation in volunteer activities or community-based credit coursework.

Our students report less activity in community-based work for credit and volunteer work than most other universities among the over 600 who participate in NSSE. We have seen a leap in these measurements between 2006 and 2008; implementation of the actions in this objective should lead to a rise in this measurement.

OBJECTIVE 5



OBJECTIVE 5:

IMPROVE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

5.1. ENSURE THAT ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATORS HAVE ACCESS TO THE TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND STAFF SUPPORT THEY NEED IN ORDER TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES.

5.1.1 Establish clearer protocols to govern service-intensive career periods, and ensure that they are appropriately recognized in career progression.

Why this matters: Faculty service work is critical for fulfilling Concordia's mission, yet many leadership roles — department chairships especially — are often undertaken reluctantly for many reasons, including lack of support and the fear of a negative impact on other professional activities. Setting stricter term limits, communicating that service as chair is a general expectation for faculty, limiting the number of committee responsibilities held at one time, ensuring adequate administrative support, and mandating that effective service is recognized in performance review and in promotion decisions all deserve consideration as key parameters. Concordia's new Centre for Academic Leadership will provide stronger support for faculty members in this vital component of their work.

5.1.2 Bolster training resources for department chairs and other faculty members and librarians who hold academic leadership roles.

Why this matters: This action includes the preparation or updating of "Chair's Handbooks," provision of "hands-on" seminars to develop administrative skills for managing and leading effectively, mentorship by experienced administrators/chairs, integration in project-oriented committees and working groups, and assistance with using and contributing to the ongoing development of financial and human resources systems. Again, the new Centre for Academic Leadership will take the lead in this effort.

5.1.3 Provide targeted and timely professional development opportunities for administrative and technical staff in order to support the efficient functioning of academic programs and departments.

Why this matters: Similar to the training described in 5.1.2. above, this action involves developing "hands-on" seminars to help develop administrative skills for managing effectively, administering collective agreements, mentoring staff, and using existing financial and human resources systems.

5.2 TAKE CONCRETE STEPS TO MAKE PLANNING DECISIONS AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION PROCESSES MORE TRANSPARENT, COLLABORATIVE, AND PRINCIPLE-BASED.

This set of actions helps to ensure that collaborative participation in administration is a characteristic strength at Concordia. An “Open Administration” initiative will build on and reinforce ongoing efforts in this area.

5.2.1 Encourage those responsible for unit management and cross-unit coordination (academic administrators; and academic, technical and administrative support staff) to engage in shared and collaborative decision-making processes whenever appropriate, by recognizing and rewarding their contributions.

Why this matters: Acting in isolation is one of the great weaknesses of large organizations. Concordia has already begun to ensure that major decisions are taken in the context of cross-university discussions (e.g., Budget Review Working Group, Information Systems Policy and Advisory Steering Committee).

5.2.2 Implement and annually review a three-year Faculty Hiring Plan that articulates clear criteria for establishing hiring priorities.

Why this matters: The first Faculty Hiring Plan circulated in the 2010 academic year has moved Concordia toward the kind of transparency needed in this vitally important area.

5.2.3 Articulate clear criteria and procedures for making incremental resource allocations to programs and academic service areas.

Why this matters: Criteria should be linked to generally accepted principles for assessing program performance.

5.2.4 Continue the recently developed collaborative approach to institutional budget development.

Why this matters: Collaborative budgeting ensures that the academic budget is maintained at a level sufficient to meet our needs within the overall institutional budget context.

5.2.5 Create incentives to reward Faculties for performance in such areas as enrolment planning and management and financial management, so that their efforts are visibly rewarded.

Why this matters: Without such incentives, it can be difficult for Faculties to give their wholehearted support to initiatives that promote institutional well-being. It is essential for those who do the work to see tangible, local benefit from their efforts. At the same time, institutional benefits of their collective actions will be better communicated.

5.3 IMPLEMENT COORDINATED, FAIR, AND TRANSPARENT APPROACHES TO ASSIGNMENT OF FACULTY WORKLOADS AND EVALUATION OF FACULTY PERFORMANCE FOR RENEWAL, TENURE AND PROMOTION.

5.3.1 Develop criteria for equitable workload assignments that respect the qualitative differences in teaching, research and service across the university.

Why this matters: Visibly equitable workload distribution is essential to the morale of the institution. This action entails broad consultation and close collaboration among Faculties and academic units. Particular needs include formal recognition of the implications of faculty members' commitments to interdisciplinary programs and courses, the impact of non-departmental programs on workloads, and the implications of increased expectation with respect to graduate student supervision, both within and across departments. Providing increased support for team teaching may also deserve consideration in this context.

5.3.2 Expect academic units to develop clear statements of expectations for success in teaching assignments, renewal, tenure, and promotion decisions, where absent.

Why this matters: Clear criteria are essential, particularly for assisting newer faculty members in not only meeting but surpassing expectations.

5.3.3 Articulate a set of fundamental principles on the assessment of teaching and develop a flexible set of discipline-specific guidelines for producing and evaluating teaching dossiers.

Why this matters: The primary objective of this action is to assist chairs, personnel committee members and academic administrators in assessing teaching for hiring, teaching assignment, reappointment, tenure, promotion and performance evaluation.

5.4 IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY OF OUR ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES, WHILE ACTIVELY MANAGING STUDENT ENROLMENTS.

5.4.1 Explore new processes to expedite undergraduate admissions.

Why this matters: Efficient, expeditious and flexible admissions processes are essential. This action entails considering the benefits of dual-stage admission for specific programs and student populations, and of simultaneous admissions to open-enrolment programs within the same Faculty in order to expedite admissions and direct students to the most appropriate program offering. All potential changes would be considered as part of extensive consultations with admissions officers from across the university.

5.4.2 Maintain our student population approximately at its current size, while increasing the proportion of graduate students.

Why this matters: This action is directly linked to action 1.1 and entails a commitment to allocating necessary resources and recognizing the workload implications of these planned shifts in enrolment. Concordia has grown rapidly for more than a decade, and the limits of our physical capacity are being reached. While growth may continue to be possible in some areas, particularly when alternative means of instruction such as online and blended learning are used, we should focus our efforts first and foremost on increasing the proportion of graduate students as part of our overall effort to continue strengthening our research capacity.

5.4.3 Develop a mechanism that would allow faculty members to make visible their supervisory capacities and, where appropriate and desired, their availability for recruitment activities, in order to make our recruitment efforts more effective.

Why this matters: Establishing this line of communication between faculty members and recruiters allows information about program capacities to influence decisions about where to invest recruitment resources. This is particularly important in graduate recruitment.

5.5 MAKE BETTER USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE TIME SPENT ON ADMINISTRATIVE TASKS AND INCREASE TIME AVAILABLE FOR PRIORITY ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES.

The university is currently undertaking a study to determine the optimal information systems architecture for Concordia. Recognizing that improvements will inevitably require some modification of existing practice and structures, we will ensure that academic needs are front and centre in the process leading to decisions about systems, software and processes.

5.5.1 Complete the initial implementation and continue development of an efficient electronic teaching assignment and tracking system.

Why this matters: Concordia will continue development of the system first launched in 2010-11 in order to simplify, streamline and make more transparent the assignment of teaching, both initially and when adjustments are subsequently required.

5.5.2 Implement a user-friendly content management system to make up-to-date award and achievement information available through the university's website, and to enable faculty members to create, maintain and publish up-to-date curriculum vitae in a variety of formats.

Why this matters: Such a system promises to simplify the process of maintaining updated CV information, which is required both for internal applications (e.g., reappointment, promotion, sabbatical leave, etc.) and for external funding applications.

5.5.3 Implement an improved research information system (RIS) to improve processes and administration related to research funding and to facilitate networking opportunities in research and creative activity.

Why this matters: The RIS will enable researchers and scholars to manage and track applications and awards, facilitate potential collaborations both within and outside Concordia, and ensure that the accomplishments of Concordia's researchers can readily be made known to the outside community.

5.5.4 Empower departments and administrators by investing in our capacity to collect, manage and analyze data to support reporting, planning and academic decision-making.

Why this matters: Data collection and analysis are not ends in themselves; they provide critical supports for effective and timely planning and decision-making. New information systems are allowing a much greater degree of information sharing at Concordia and creating new opportunities for us to tap collective wisdom when it comes to analyzing the information we gather—all in the service of improving our core academic functions. The investment described here involves adding capacity in the Institutional Planning Office and making small, targeted investments in software systems.

5.6 ENSURE THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACADEMIC PLAN.

5.6.1 Create an *Academic Plan* coordinating committee that periodically assesses and reports to the community on implementation of the *Academic Plan*, and implementation teams that create action plans for specific commitments in the plan.

Why this matters: Concordia needs to ensure that we avoid the trap of having a plan that “simply gathers dust on a shelf,” by putting in place appropriate structures and processes to guarantee transparency, accountability and regular communication of progress. The coordinating committee will include faculty members, key administrators, staff and students. This group will have an advisory role to the Provost concerning the work of implementation teams, the impact of plan implementation on workloads, and the use of the professional development resources mentioned in action 5.1, which are intended to assist in carrying out the commitments articulated in this *Academic Plan*. The implementation teams will have similarly representative memberships and will be given mandates, timelines, and financial and administrative resources, as needed, to ensure efficient completion of their work.

5.6.2 Use electronic tools to provide a public, regularly updated, one-stop overview of the status and effectiveness of *Academic Plan* initiatives.

Why this matters: An easy-to-use, well-organized monitoring tool is a key ingredient in ensuring that the *Academic Plan* is effectively implemented.

5.6.3 Ensure that academic units have the administrative and technical support needed for the implementation of this plan.

Why this matters: The plan will succeed only if we ensure that the necessary resources and support structures are in place to carry out the initiatives foreseen here.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

To a large extent, progress on actions in Objective 5 will be reported by the supervisory team called for in 5.6.1 above. Nevertheless, we expect that the actions will result in specific outcomes.

1. Ensure greater information sharing and transparency, through annual reports from new systems for use by departments, Faculties, and the university, dealing with such aspects as research awards, workloads, enrolments and their rationales, etc.

It is clear that the less information is shared, the less opportunities people have for understanding its interpretation or contributing ideas to its interpretation. Where allowed for by law and good practice, we will make information more widely available on a wide variety of topics of interest to community members and with direct impacts on them.

2. Increased academic administrator satisfaction and performance, and greater ease in attracting candidates to these positions.

We expect that the employee engagement survey will show that not only will academic administrators feel better supported, but that the departments they administrate will feel better informed, more part of decision making processes, and be more confident that the *Academic Plan* is unfolding in ways that benefit them, their departments and programs, and the university as a whole.

Stay informed on the implementation and progress of the *Academic Plan 2012-2016*:

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