

Grow Smartly – FINAL DRAFT - V7.0

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Introduction – the grow smartly challenge

The student population at Concordia has grown by about 30% over the past ten years, and has almost doubled since 1990. To accommodate this growth, Concordia has expanded its footprint, facilities, systems and workforce. This kind of substantial growth is a trend reflected across Canada, with provincial governments focusing their postsecondary policies and financial models towards widening access to higher education.

We now face a context in which there's a demographic dip in university-age students in Quebec, increased competitiveness across Canada for out-of-province students, and looming shifts of supply and demand in international enrolments. Universities are also facing tremendous pressures to change and evolve from a variety of sources including increased public accountability, disruptive technologies, and students' and parents' expectations around the employability of graduates.

The plan for Concordia, for both academic and financial reasons, is one of moderate, controlled annual growth.

Guiding principles

The following principles help to ensure that our growth is driven by our shared commitments and strategic priorities, not by circumstances.

Put the student experience and student success first

This is the very *raison d'être* for our academic programs. Prioritizing student success means focusing not just on the fulfillment of academic requirements, but also students' holistic development and readiness to thrive after graduation.

Be intentional and strategic

Avoiding a 'growth where we can get it' approach to enrolments means getting clear for ourselves where we have the capacity, strategic interest, faculty expertise, and student demand to expand. This requires developing an integrated vision and plan, and targeting our recruitment efforts accordingly.

Align resources

Growing enrolments can mean an increased need for instructors, teaching assistants, support staff, space, equipment, student services, support for experiential learning, housing options, etc. Growth and resources need to go hand in hand.

Keep an eye on the money

Student enrolment is the financial lifeblood of the university, so financial sustainability is a fundamental tenet of enrolment planning and growth.

Recognize the strength of a federation

We are committed to a wide array of programs, not all of which will at all times cover their full expenses as over time there are natural variations in attraction power, costs, and government weightings. It is understood that programs are not sovereign states, but part of a federation that operates as a whole and benefits from the boundary-crossing synergies and collaborations.

Maximize our attractiveness

Generating demand for our programs requires us to continually improve, strategically position, and occasionally rethink our offerings. Compelling programs are our primary recruitment tools, and we greatly reduce our room to maneuver, and diminish our reputation, if we neglect them.

Seize the day

When big opportunities arise and the conditions are ripe, we need to be ready to launch new offerings. New programs in strategic areas are key to growth.

See from the student’s view

Seeing our program offerings from the student perspective encourages us think flexibly about scheduling, format, and teaching methods, opening up possibilities for new pathways, interdisciplinarity and opportunities for learning.

Mindsets

The world is changing fast and what worked for universities yesterday will not necessarily work tomorrow. Being prepared to thrive in a new environment requires us to be nimble and experimental, but as the fiscal environment remains tight, we will need to free funds within our own operations to reinvest into our future. We will do this by finding ways to:

<p>CHOOSE AND DIFFERENTIATE Nobody can be great at everything. What are we going to be truly great at? Are we prepared to make difficult choices? Differentiation will be key in the 21st century.</p>	<p>STREAMLINE AND TRANSFORM In the absence of new monies, Universities will need to reshape, streamline, reinvent and transform many aspects of their activities.</p>
<p>PARTNER AND DIVERSIFY Universities are no longer islands. The right partnerships in research, pedagogy and other activities will make the difference.</p>	<p>BRAND AND MARKET Canadian Universities lag behind their US counterparts in the way they present themselves. Are we ready for competition on the global market?</p>

High-level goals and objectives (5 to 10 year window)

Grow to 50,000 students (headcount)

Grow to 30,000 full-time equivalent students

Raise graduate student proportion to 20% (focusing on research-oriented students)

Raise the international student proportion to 20%

Raise the graduation rate (undergraduate) to 80%

Double the number of online courses

Double the number of experiential learning opportunities

Double the financial support for graduate students

Launch one new ambitious program per year

Launch one new ambitious research unit per year

Methods and Strategies for achieving smart growth

Review, update and streamline current curricula

Program offerings grow organically over time, and we now have in excess of 500 programs. Are all these programs optimal? Relevant? In demand? For academic and financial reasons, a review of programs will ensure continued success and growth.

Develop a full enrolment management strategy

Our recruitment strategy, locally, nationally and internationally, is quite robust and applications increase yearly. However, there is at this time no coordinated plan to shape the size and composition of our various programs over time. This is our next step in terms of recruitment and admissions.

Expand and refine our student success and retention strategy

The establishment of the Student Success Center was the beginning, not the end, of this strategy. The Center needs to be at the nexus of a comprehensive strategy that supports our students from recruitment to graduation and beyond

Test alternative, flexible course/programs formats and pathways

This is important for attracting particular student segments we're targeting. In addition to increased interdisciplinarity, might entail specialized pathways for, e.g., students with extended credit requirements and adult and returning learners, or it could involve formats like low-residency offerings, block format scheduling, combined BA/MA degrees, etc.

Launch version 2.0 of eConcordia

The original eConcordia was a visionary endeavour that put Concordia ahead of the game in digital learning. It is time to reinvest in our online learning capacity, in

terms of infrastructure (learning management system), support from course design specialists, and course offerings. We must also move from an ad hoc course-based approach to online learning development to a program-based strategy that meets the learning needs of different student segments.

Optimize our space usage

Though online courses will increase, we will continue to need appropriate physical spaces for our courses, labs, and studios. And we need more of our spaces to suit the kinds of active learning that we want to engage our students in. Our space utilization rates signal that we have the capacity to absorb increased enrolments if we change the ways we manage this space.

Expand and market revenue-generating non-credit programs

In the spirit of diversification and mission expansion, Concordia is today well positioned to multiply its activities in continuing education (CCE), online education and training (K1), and executive education (JMEC). New leadership and reinvestments have begun in all three areas, and it is expected that activities and revenues will increase over time, possibly by as much as a factor of 10.

Expand our branding into a fully developed marketing strategy

Our market analytics need to be refined, and this data will help to shape our branding and marketing both at the program level and at the institutional level.

Build on our sustainability policy to flesh out a sustainability strategy

In the modern world, under pressures of climate change, overpopulation, social inequalities and other global threats, a university of our size and impact cannot operate without a fully fleshed out sustainability strategy.

Potential avenues for growth from new program offerings

The list below identifies program areas, in no particular order, that are in the process of being explored and prioritized by Faculties, or that have been proposed or discussed as possible growth areas over a 5 to 10 year horizon. They are in various degrees of discussion, approval and development. As we add new programs to our current offerings, alignment with the Double our Research strategy will be key to success.

Chemical and materials engineering

Our fast-growing Engineering and Computer Science Faculty has identified this key field as a major growth area. This is an ambitious endeavor that will require substantial investment.

Architecture and design

Concordia has many key elements already in place (e.g. design, building engineering, urban planning etc.) to take a niche position in this field, for example around a

carefully selected focus on urban design, resilient and sustainable buildings and cities, etc.

Health

Half of the research funding in Canada goes to the health sector, and we receive only a sliver of this pie. Building on PERFORM and strong existing programs in related areas, we might consider launching programs in areas where we have research strengths such as biomedical engineering, biomedical science, public health, aging, food security, nanotechnology and others.

Business

In addition to revitalizing the MBA, JMSB, building on its strong brand, is well positioned to consider program possibilities in areas like sports marketing, creative enterprises, global insurances, international trade, aviation and others.

Sustainability

This is a big and crucial theme for Concordia with lots of grassroots activity and an increasingly visible presence in Montreal and nationally (as seen in the recent Sommet Montréal de l'innovation). But program offerings are meagre and research efforts relatively uncoordinated. There is a great opportunity here to pursue some unique specializations.

Game studies/design (focused on 3D/VR games and movies)

Building on expertise in computer science and in TAG, and expanding a growing relationship with Ubisoft and other industry partners, game studies and design could expand into a significant program fully in line with our image and strengths in the arts, technologies and creative industries.

Big data/analytics

This growing field touches a wide array of fields in computing, engineering, sciences, health, and business. We have expertise that could be regrouped and expanded, and we are also already part of a working group with Ryerson, Dalhousie and others on the skills gap in this field in Canada.

Information security

This is a growth field worldwide, and we already have considerable expertise in the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science. Classic cybersecurity is evolving and branching out and we need to evolve with it into the internet of things and physical IT security.

First peoples

So many individual pieces are already in place in this area, including a major, several research endeavors and a support system for students. With the right leadership and resources this could become a vibrant and very visible area for research, scholarship, and community outreach.

Law and Society

It would be worthwhile to seriously evaluate the possibility of adding another prestigious professional Faculty such as law. This could be a transformative step in terms of Concordia's impact and image. While all of the program possibilities identified here are long-term projects, a Law Faculty would be on the far end of our current planning horizon.

Conclusion

Even when taking into account the decreasing local demographics and increased international competition, Concordia is in a good position to sustain moderate growth over the next decade. Key aspects of this success involve reviewing both the 'what' and the 'how' of our curriculum, introducing ambitious new programs, further increasing student success, and distinguishing ourselves with differentiated branding and marketing.