



Western International



Introduction

Western's strategic plan, *Achieving Excellence on the World Stage*, clearly articulates the importance of Western's international activities. This international action plan supports the mission and vision of Western University as articulated in its new strategic plan.

Western, like other pre-eminent universities “teach respect for the best in human civilization which comes from all parts of the world” (Aung San Suu Kyi, 2012). Universities promote environments in which all members of the community are “not only eager to know, but also eager to share what they know widely to create a smart and caring world” (David Johnston, 2012). Universities, at their best, embolden an atmosphere where members of their communities work to improve the human condition “by sharing the knowledge they uncover and refine across disciplines and across borders” (Johnston, 2012). This is what the Honourable David Johnston, refers to as the “diplomacy of knowledge”. It is important to emphasize that the diplomacy of knowledge is not a one-way street; just as we share our knowledge across borders we must also learn from our international colleagues in true and mutually beneficial partnerships.

The “diplomacy of knowledge” forms the core of Western's **international vision**—that Western encourages and promotes global citizenship and awareness and enhances its international relevance as an institution of higher learning (see middle of Figure 1, below). To make these ideas real, they must resonate in most everything we do at Western. With that in mind, extensive consultation about this plan occurred across the campus and elsewhere with presentations to more than two-dozen faculty, staff, student, alumni, and community groups. Feedback from these consultations is incorporated throughout this plan.

Encouraging global awareness/citizenship and enhancing international relevance will require developing a community of scholars (Faculty, Staff, and Students) at Western who have high levels of cross-cultural competence and intercultural understanding and empathy. It will involve continuing to develop our international research collaborations and thinking about how we can better mobilize our knowledge internationally. The circles on the outside of the Figure 1 are important components of a plan that will make the central vision (global awareness and international relevance) a reality. Each is discussed below with corresponding objectives and action items.

Figure 1: Components of an International Plan



A. International Learning and Study Abroad

Objective 1. Increase the participation of **Western Students** in international experiences from 3% to 10%.

International learning and study abroad activities include formal exchange programs, studying abroad on a letter of permission (LOP), Alternative Spring Break, internships, embedded study abroad programs, field schools, research placements etc. To increase the participation of Western students in these programs we must simultaneously work to enhance both the demand for and supply of them, as well as ensure that appropriate risk, safety abroad, and pre-departure protocols are in place.

Actions:

- Promote Western as a destination of choice for international experiences in recruitment materials and presentations.
- Offer packages for undergraduate and graduate students to incorporate information about international experiences.
- Summer and Fall Academic Orientation programs to incorporate information about international experiences.
- Enhance promotion of international experiences within Faculties
- Reduce barriers for participation:
 - Create a comprehensive bursary package for all students who engage in a Western sanctioned international experience.
 - Ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage in an international experience without taking longer to finish a degree.
 - Ensure that appropriate safety abroad mechanisms are in place
 - Reduce bureaucracy related to credit transfer and applying for programs and awards.
- Double the number of exchange spaces in target countries with top tier universities (from approximately 200 to 400)
- Double the number of Alternative Spring Break programs available for students (from 8 to 16).
- Double the number of LOP (letters of permission) placements (from approximately 100 to 200)
- Develop a suite of comprehensive international summer program offerings
- Develop a comprehensive international internship program.
- Work with Deans to develop signature international experience programs in each Faculty.
- Develop and/or join selective national and international consortiums of universities to share international experience programs

Objective 2. *Provide more opportunities for **faculty, staff, and students** to enhance their international and cross-cultural learning at home and abroad.*

Actions, Faculty and Staff:

- Develop a workshop series on cross-cultural learning for staff and faculty.
- Develop an International Week at Western that will enable learning and communication of international activities across facilities.
- Encourage and promote participation of faculty and staff in Alternative Spring Break.
- Develop a “host family” network comprised of faculty, staff, and local alumni for international students.
- Develop strategic international partnerships to facilitate international exchanges for faculty and staff.
- Develop staff exchange/job shadowing program.
- Develop international learning certificate that is open to staff and faculty that includes language development opportunities.
- Develop processes and mechanism that serve to acknowledge international work of faculty, not only in the area of research, but also in teaching and service.

Actions Students:

- Continue to encourage international curricula development for graduate and undergraduate programs and through technology enhanced learning.
- Continue developing and promoting dual-degree programs for graduate students.
- Continue developing and promoting dual-degree and joint-degree programs for undergraduate students.
- Develop an international learning certificate with appropriate learning outcomes that students will be able to earn through their degree programs.
 - Include international learning at home opportunities

B. International Students, Faculty, and Staff at Western

Western’s students, faculty, and staff come from all over the world.

Undergraduate Students:

In 2012-13, just over 9% of our incoming undergraduate class was comprised of international students and in 2013-14 it is estimated that this percentage will surpass 10%, reaching our previous target one year ahead of schedule. About 40 per cent of our undergraduate international student body is comprised of Chinese students and about one third of first year international students enter the Management and Organizational Studies (MOS) program.

Objective 3. *Increase and diversify the international **undergraduate** student body at Western.*

Actions:

- Gradually increase the number of incoming international students to 15%.
- Diversify application pool to help ensure adequate diversity of student body.
- Encourage applicants to apply to a wide range of programs at Western.

Graduate Students

Since 2000-01, Western experienced significant growth in overall graduate student enrolment and in international graduate student enrolment. In 2000-01 there were 2554 graduate students studying at Western and 291 (11 %) of them were international students. By 2011-12, we had 4770 graduate students studying at Western and 1036 (22%) of them were international students. The overall growth and the international student growth are both excellent accomplishments that befit a research-intensive university like Western.

In keeping with the overall priorities of internationalization at Western, efforts need to be made to ensure that the proportion of international graduate students does not fall below its current level. This does not mean that we should simply maintain or reduce our recruitment efforts of international graduate students. On the contrary, recent evidence suggests that international applications to graduate programs in the US may be on the decline. Although similar data are not available for Canada, we must be vigilant in monitoring our international applications and enhance efforts to strategically recruit exceptional international graduate students.

Objective 4. *Develop a comprehensive and strategic international graduate student recruitment plan that focuses on countries that provide scholarship support for graduate student mobility (e.g. Brazil) and on countries where we have strong research collaborations.*

Faculty

We estimate that 40% of our faculty have attained their highest degree from outside of Canada and that close to the same percentage of our faculty were born outside of Canada. Having faculty who were born and educated outside of Canada helps to foster an environment in which our aspirations for global citizenship can flourish.

Objective 5. *Support the work of the portfolio of the Office of the Vice-Provost (Academic Planning, Policy and Faculty) in the recruitment and integration of international faculty.*

Actions:

- Create opportunities to recognize the cultural diversity of faculty and foster appropriate networking opportunities.

Staff

Currently, no data are collected to assess the international composition of Western's staff. Yet, as we interact with one another on our campus, the depth of international experiences among the staff at Western are very evident. This diversity should be acknowledged and celebrated.

As Western increases its international presence we are increasingly called upon to host Ambassadors, High Commissioners, other dignitaries, and visitors from universities all over the world. Drawing on staff who speak the same language or have the same cultural background as our visitors would go a long way in welcoming our visitors.

Objective 6. Better recognize the diversity of staff on campus and celebrate and engage staff accordingly.

Actions:

- Develop a mechanism for collecting information about the cultural heritage and languages spoken by staff on campus.
- Develop a Western Staff Ambassador program whereby representatives would be available to meet with visitors of similar cultural or language backgrounds.

C. Western: A Welcoming, Supportive Community

Through the office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs and Students and through Housing Services, Western has provided a supportive environment for all students with an eye to ensuring their success. The Student Success Centre, the Student Development Centre, the Teaching and Learning Centre, and Housing provide invaluable services to support all students in the areas of mental wellness, academic assistance, career development, and community service learning. Increasingly, these areas have been adapting their services to accommodate the unique needs of Western's international graduate and undergraduate students (e.g. offering resume writing services in different languages; offering Teaching Assistant training for international graduate students; new programming in Housing to aid with the transition to Canada).

Through the office of the Vice-Provost (International) and Western International, the International and Exchange Student Centre (IESC) provides a wide array of services for the support of international graduate and undergraduate students and

post-docs. These services range from individual counselling, to immigration and study permit support, to English conversation circles and other cultural transition programming.

As the number of international students on our campus grows, it is Western's responsibility to ensure that the services required for their success are in place and that international students are highly satisfied with their Western experience. Currently, domestic students have a five per cent higher first to second year retention rate than international students. And, domestic students have a 5% higher six year graduation rate than international students.

***Objective 7.** Provide continuity of support and services to international students from the day they apply to Western to the day they graduate, thereby ensuring that international students have similar retention and completion rates as domestic students and are satisfied with their Western experience.*

Actions:

- Identify academic programming needs that would help with international student success and develop programming accordingly.
- Identify language requirement needs so that Western's English Language Centre can work to develop more programming in support of ESL students.
- Participate in the International Student Barometer Survey to begin measuring international student satisfaction and to compare how Western fares compared to other universities in the world.

D. International Research and Knowledge Mobilization

Western has had a strong history of engaging in international research collaborations and knowledge mobilization. Since Western's founding in 1878, Western researchers have presented research at international conferences, published in international journals, and collaborated extensively with international colleagues. According to the Web of Science, 53% of Western's research publications between 2007 and 2012 were co-authored with international colleagues (11506/21717).

Beyond these more traditional forms of knowledge mobilization, Research Western established WORLDdiscoveries several years ago to facilitate technology transfer. Recently, WORLDdiscoveries Asia was launched in Nanjing, China and Hong Kong with the promise of commercializing Western discoveries in the Asian market. Furthermore, Research Western has been working extensively with international companies in generating support for research activities at Western (e.g. Fraunhofer).

Each of Research Western's five core priorities, "Going Global", "Mobilizing Knowledge", "Preparing Global-Ready Graduates", "Partnerships with Impact", and "Leadership through Interdisciplinary Research", has a global or international component (<http://www.uwo.ca/research/about/index.html>). And, each priority contributes to promoting global citizenship and international relevance.

Objective 8. *Support Research Western's international priorities thereby enhancing Western's reputation on the world stage.*

Actions:

- Ensure that the Visiting University Scholar Program can be utilized for strategic initiatives.
- Develop more opportunities for research-based international internships for graduate and undergraduate students.
- Encourage and support international mobility (faculty, grad student, post-docs) with targeted institutions and in key priority areas.
- Better promote Visiting Graduate Students opportunities

E. International Development

Over the years, Western has contributed significantly to international development activities engaging in a wide array of partnerships primarily with partners in several African countries. Over the past year alone Western researchers were awarded two multi-million dollar Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) grants for development work in Rwanda and in Malawi. Our researchers are actively applying for and receiving Grand Challenges grants. Indeed, as this report is being written, one of our longest standing international development projects, Western Heads East, is in the running for a Grand Challenges award.

Universities of Western's size and stature have a responsibility to engage in this important knowledge exchange work. Having said that, there has not been enough dialogue at Western about where our strategic priorities in the international development area should be, how Western will support these initiatives, and where the organizational and administrative responsibility for these projects should lie.

Objective 9. *Provide a framework through which international development activities can be acknowledged and supported.*

Actions:

- Systematically review Western's international development work, examine what other comparable universities do, and write a comprehensive and sustainable international development plan. This plan will include

recommendations for the Provost's consideration including: organizational structure of these activities, the identification of strategic geographic regions, resource allocation, and systems that could be put in place to acknowledge this work.

F. Alumni Engagement and Communications

Alumni Engagement:

Over the last few years a lot of work has been done on international alumni engagement. We have more than 14,000 international alumni living in 145 countries. Large pockets of our alumni live in the US, Hong Kong, China, the UK, Australia, and Singapore. Alumni associations with active executives have been set up in most of these key areas and more effort has been made by Western's senior administration to visit with alumni on planned trips to these countries. Beyond initiatives related to fundraising activities our alumni could be a valuable resource to us on the international stage.

Objective 10: *Double international alumni engagement and triple the number of international media hits.*

Actions:

- Work more closely with the newly established international alumni advisory board to advise on developing international linkages, partnerships etc.
- Work with alumni to create international internship, research, and job shadowing opportunities for students.
- Use our alumni contacts to facilitate development of strategic university partnerships and to strategically enhance recruitment efforts.
- Use our alumni to promote Western and to enhance our activities internationally.
- Develop a comprehensive international communication strategy that takes into account the decentralized nature of communications and marketing at Western.