

## The Senate of York University Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee

# University Academic Plan 2010-2015: Enhancing Academic Quality in a Globalized World

### Introduction: The University Academic Plan and Its Role

York's first University Academic Plan was approved by Senate in 1988. Since then, annual updates of the plan and, more recently, versions covering five year periods, have served to express the University's values, identify its strengths and aspirations, embody its commitments, prioritize its goals, and guide near-term planning. The UAP 2010-2015 has a special context in this regard. The Provostial White Paper, endorsed by Senate in 2010, provides a strategic foundation for this edition of the University Academic Plan. These documents do differ. Whereas the White Paper has a ten- to fifteen-year horizon, the UAP sets out academic goals over a shorter time frame. The UAP also brings aspects such as collegial governance into clearer view. Yet they are complementary and mutually reinforcing (past UAPs having been a key input into the White Paper). The rationale supporting endorsement of the White Paper presented to Senate in April described the relationship in these terms: "The White Paper is intended to provide a sense of the overall strategic direction and a framework for the next decade that will better position the University to develop consensus on the next *University Academic Plan* and to articulate the key academic priorities for York in the next five years." <sup>1</sup>

The UAP renewal cycle typically begins with input from the Faculties regarding their own planning exercises including individual and collective priorities, and their sense of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Their own long-term plans are critical in this regard. In turn, the UAP becomes a touchstone for unit and Faculty planners, in aligning their academic plans with institutional priorities. The Faculties report annually to the Provost and the Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee on the progress made in achieving goals (or the impediments faced).

The UAP is made widely available following its approval by Senate. Governing bodies throughout the University are provided with periodic reports on UAP progress. A community survey undertaken as part of the University Academic Plan renewal process uncovered a desire for greater prominence for the UAP, the distribution of a summary-form brochure, enhanced feedback mechanisms, and improved monitoring and reporting. Enhanced communication is a central part of implementation planning for this iteration of the UAP.

Although strategic and focused, the University Academic Plan is a "high level" document. This does not mean that the objectives it contains are not amenable to measurement. Just the opposite is true. Monitoring and reporting are predicated on planners at every level and at regular intervals providing clear, consistent, and compatible indicators of their success in achieving goals.

To assist with this process and enhance the alignment of the allocation of resources with academic priorities, the University adopted a new Integrated Resource Planning approach in 2007. Each Division, Faculty and Office has developed an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) that articulates the priorities that are relevant to them in the context of the various planning documents, as well as the objectives and

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<sup>1</sup> Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee, "Report to Senate," April 2010.

actions that will advance those priorities (generally within a three year horizon) and the benchmarks that will measure the progress made. The IRPs are updated annually.

## Getting to this University Academic Plan

This is an important moment in the history of York University. In 2009, we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and, with over 50,000 full and part-time students, we are the second largest university in Ontario and the third largest in Canada. The next five years will be a period of great challenge but also great opportunity for York. During this period, demand for a York University education is expected to increase, driven by a growing population in the Greater Toronto area (GTA), increased participation in post-secondary education in Ontario, and the arrival of the subway at York. This iteration of the University Academic Plan is therefore important, as it must chart a course that will allow York to capitalize on those opportunities and respond to the numerous challenges that we will undoubtedly face during a period of increasing change in post secondary education in Ontario, Canada and worldwide.

In developing this Plan, the Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee undertook a novel but highly successful process of consultation, one that permitted an unprecedented number of members of the community to participate and provide input. In the spring of 2010, Senate had unanimously endorsed the Provostial White Paper, *Building a More Engaged University*, which was itself the product of extensive consultation and collegial discussion, involving several open forums and numerous other opportunities to comment and participate over a 10-month period. APPRC did not want to simply replicate the White Paper process in development of the new UAP the Committee therefore prepared a consultation document that suggested a number of priorities or possible themes, and then issued a survey to the entire community seeking their input on priorities that should feature in the next UAP.

It was extremely heartening that nearly 3,400 members of the community, including students, faculty, staff and alumni, took the time to complete the survey. Responses to specific questions have proven invaluable. So, too, have the extensive comments offered in response to a series of open-ended questions.<sup>2</sup> This intensive, constructive participation speaks to the strong commitment of so many members of the community to the future success and flourishing of this great university.

The message that emerged from the survey responses was clear and unequivocal: the York University community overwhelmingly believes that the top priority for the next five years must be a renewed focus on academic quality. This is hardly surprising or even new, since the previous UAP as well as the White Paper also identified achieving the highest academic quality as a key priority. Thus the focus on academic quality over the next planning period is by no means a change in direction but, rather, a resolve to deepen our commitment and dedication to a path we have already chosen.

“Academic quality is the essential foundation of the UAP.”

- Quote from UA P survey

Part of responding to the quality challenge involves defining what we mean by academic quality since, as the previous UAP observed, quality has a variety of different meanings. The body of this Plan attempts to identify some key elements that appear to enjoy widespread support in the community, that reflect ideas already endorsed by Senate in previous UAPs as well as the White Paper, and that respect York’s distinctive approaches and strengths. It also identifies a variety of other important themes and values that emerged from our consultations, and suggests how these can and should be translated into priorities for the next five years.

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<sup>2</sup> An analysis of the survey data can be accessed from the Senate Website.

Why is this UAP subtitled “Enhancing Quality in a *Globalized World*?” It is because researchers are linking with colleagues close to home and, to a growing extent, farther afield. It is because, increasingly, students come to York from abroad for all or part of their studies, or take part in exchanges around the world. Scholarship is tackling questions that are interdependent and of universal importance. In short, York’s highest ideals and aspirations will be more fully realized on the international stage.

## Our Values

As supported by the consultation process, it is essential in an academic plan to articulate the underlying values of the University that are shared by our members and that underpin our priorities. The University’s Mission Statement captures York’s character as a dynamic, innovative, and diverse academic community that both reflects and is embedded in the local community and is open to the world. It expresses institutional commitments to the advancement of knowledge across the full spectrum of disciplinary and interdisciplinary activities and to the promotion of excellence and critical exploration, as well as to academic freedom, social justice, accessible education, and collegial self-governance.

“It is important that concepts are approached in a way that is relevant to all concerned.”

- Quote from UAP survey

Unsurprisingly, many of these values are shared in common with other research-intensive universities worldwide. These include:

- a commitment to excellence in research, teaching and service to the public good
- an unswerving commitment to academic freedom and collegial self-governance
- a commitment to critical and free inquiry which requires the willingness to challenge but also to tolerate and respect ideas that may differ from our own
- a commitment to fostering the capacity of members of the community to contribute to building a democratic society and
- a commitment to contribute to a deeper understanding of the global issues that face our communities and to the development of solutions to those issues through research and analysis.

York also has a number of values that help to distinguish us from other universities. These include:

- recognition of the special opportunities and responsibilities that arise from the University’s setting in a uniquely dynamic, metropolitan and multi-cultural milieu including the value of partnerships and outreach to the broader community consistent with institutional autonomy and trust reposed by the public
- a commitment to social justice and equity which includes a profound desire to make post-secondary education accessible to the various individuals and communities we serve
- deep and thoroughgoing commitments to interdisciplinarity and to the pursuit of innovative initiatives and approaches
- a commitment to cultivate an engaged learning and research environment and
- a commitment to sustainability in both our academic programs and our practices as a community.

It bears mentioning that a commitment to equity at York University has been a hallmark of academic excellence and the fulfillment of the University’s mission. By equity we mean fair and respectful treatment of all persons, in relation to gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, creed, religion, sex, age, marital status, disability, and family status. Accordingly, in present academic structures, processes, programs and environments, attention should focus on eradicating systemic and structural discrimination, including barriers to access, and on promoting equity.

Equity is embedded in our planning processes and evaluation measures. It is our shared responsibility to create the conditions for all to achieve their potential and participate fully in the academic community. Instructional design, delivery and assessment recognition of student achievement research activity and supervision and mentoring should be directed toward this goal. All collegial decision making and forms of recognition ought also to honour our commitment to equity. This commitment is exhibited in our emphasis on community engagement both at York and in our outreach to the broader community as reflected in the President's Task Force on Community Engagement and the White Paper.

York has also distinguished itself as a leader in relation to sustainability in both its scholarly and applied dimensions. The 2010 Report of the President's Sustainability Task Force provided a broad vision statement for sustainability at York that serves as a definition of this concept as it applies in our particular context, as well as a guide for future actions: "Our vision of a sustainable university is one that enhances the ecological functioning of its campuses provides equitable access to opportunities for active engagement in life-long learning creates knowledgeable, active and responsible global citizens and does so within an integrated, long-term framework of full-cost economic and environmental accounting." It is our responsibility both as an academic institution and as community members to advance our commitments in this area and to respond to new sustainability challenges through a pan-university approach to the development of policies to enhance sustainability, the expansion of sustainable practices, and initiatives to increase the focus on sustainability in the curriculum and in outreach activities.

It is incumbent upon us to keep these values at the forefront. It is also imperative that we make clear the role of the university. In the words of the provincial legislation that established York, the "objects and purposes" of this institution are "the advancement of learning and the dissemination of knowledge and the intellectual, spiritual, social, moral and physical development of its members and the betterment of society."<sup>3</sup> As much as we are committed to upholding these values and giving them life, we are dedicated to communicating them well.

## **Contexts: The External Environment**

An essential part of any planning exercise involves scanning the external environment in order to identify both opportunities and challenges. The Provostial White Paper identifies a number of crucial factors that must inform planning decisions:

- globalization and internationalization, with their concomitants of increasing interactions of all kinds and new modes of thinking about the world, as well as opportunities for York to build upon its leadership in international partnerships for teaching, learning and research
- a milieu in which successful knowledge-based societies will turn to universities for inspiration, collaboration, and practical solutions to issues of immediate concern
- an information and communications technology (ICT) revolution, which has blurred boundaries of all kinds, quickened and shaped knowledge acquisition and dissemination, and altered the aptitudes and preferences of younger generations of scholars, and at the same time offers exciting new ways to engage with and serve them
- an economic and policy milieu in which budgets will be constrained and which will call upon all members of our community to make the best possible use of our resources in support of priorities
- postsecondary policy frameworks that may affect planning around program directions, research priorities, and enrolments

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3 York University Act, 1965, 4 a) and b).

- increased demand for post-secondary education, particularly within the York and Peel Regions, which will result in pressures on the university system of Ontario, but more importantly will offer opportunities for York to realize key academic objectives and researcher collaborations and
- heightened competition from other universities and colleges of applied arts and technology, together with enhanced opportunities for institutional collaborations.

Given our location at the heart of a rapidly growing and developing region and our outreach to external communities, York is uniquely positioned to capitalize upon and respond to the trends and opportunities associated with GTA growth. We also have established a strong base for partnerships, both locally as well as globally, in order to advance our own strategic development and to serve community needs.

In a broader sense, the world faces myriad social, economic, political, and environmental problems requiring imaginative and often interdisciplinary solutions. These phenomena require strategies that accentuate our capacity to sense, adapt, and respond while remaining true to our values and priorities. With its distinctive approach to the social, cultural and environmental aspects of issues, York is well positioned to take the lead in identifying innovative solutions. To take but one example, a dual degree combining Engineering and International Development was approved by Senate in 2010. Dealing effectively with local and far-flung problems will take just this kind of creative combination that York's interdisciplinarity has fostered and maintained. Much can be accomplished through our own efforts. Even more can be done by means of externally-oriented collaboration, partnerships, and community ventures leading to the acquisition, dissemination, and sharing of special skills and approaches.

Even as we reach out to external communities, we must also strengthen the foundation of our own York community by fostering connections that will facilitate the active engagement of faculty and staff in achieving the aims of the new UAP – through, for example, promoting opportunities for community members to bring forward new ideas and approaches, developing accessible and user-friendly communication technologies to enhance teaching, learning, research and administration, and collaborative design of implementation strategies that are widely understood to be feasible and effective.

## **Contexts: The Shape of York in 2010, and in 2015**

In little more than fifty years, York has grown from humble beginnings into a large, prestigious, and diverse institution of higher learning. Growth has not been without its costs and consequences but it has set the stage for a propitious moment in the University's history.

The Keele campus is located in an increasingly urban setting. It is situated at the bustling crossroads of a vast Greater Toronto Area transportation network. Glendon is located in mid-town and the University has a presence in the city's core. There is a high degree of involvement in, and commitment to, our local communities. At the same time, York is an international university with a global outlook. Research is conducted not just on our campuses but at a variety of other locations, from the York Region Innovation Centre in Markham, to the University's Costa Rican field research station. York is a destination for students from the GTA, Ontario, Canada, and around the world, and our Faculties offer an increasing array of joint degrees and exchange programs. As recent examples, the Schulich School of Business has an important satellite program for MBA students in India and the Faculty of Health is establishing a York Health Academic Network with external partners from York Region.

Projects slated for completion in the early phase of this UAP on the Keele and Glendon campuses will greatly improve the physical plant, accessibility, and the ability to connect with communities and by 2015 the university will have experienced significant transformation with:

- completion of current capital projects (including the new Life Sciences Building and Glendon's Centre of Excellence for French-language and Bilingual Postsecondary Education) and, subject to provincial government funding, additional new capital projects, permitting the pursuit of plans to diversify the University's make-up
- completion of an extension of the Yonge-University-Spadina line, strengthening connections to the city of Toronto and York and Peel Regions and their people
- York's hosting of Pan-American games events, bringing tens of thousands of competitors and spectators to campus to new venues
- development of the lands adjacent to the main campus, creating the density and character of a diversified urban precinct.

These changes are not without significance to academic planners. It is true, that construction will create short-term inconveniences. When completed, however, these developments will create exceptional opportunities to realize many long-held plans. They will enhance our visibility, identities and reputations. They will reinforce York's international profile. They will provide purpose-built infrastructure along with legacy facilities that can be utilized for research, teaching, learning, performance, and social interactions. They will connect us to local communities and to the world in new and exciting ways.

## **Principles and Assumptions Guiding Planning in the Next Five Years**

This plan for the next five years is grounded on a set of principles and assumptions which include the following:

- the key importance of maximizing graduate and undergraduate resources in support of academic activities in a time of financial constraint, together with the articulation of strategic priorities and processes to direct resources to those priorities
- expansion of the full-time faculty complement as reflected in the White Paper as a fundamental priority
- an emphasis on research cultures, and particularly the intensification of research and the advancement of partnerships, locally, regionally and internationally
- an institutional commitment to the critical importance of both research and teaching and to the inseparability of these two aspects of our mandate as part of our culture of excellence
- the commitment to demonstrably enhancing student experiences and student success for our undergraduate and graduate students
- evidence-based approaches to planning and implementation supported by means to monitor, measure and report on progress in order to fulfill our accountability responsibilities to the communities we serve as a public institution and
- an ongoing commitment to the diversification of academic activities in line with creating a more comprehensive university, including teaching and research in the areas of health, engineering, applied science, medicine, business and professional programs, while sustaining, affirming, and building upon the foundation provided by our distinctive strengths in the liberal arts, the fine arts, and the sciences as well as interdisciplinary programs and opportunities for students to combine disciplinary fields.

## **Overarching Themes of the UAP 2010-2015**

Three themes organize and animate this edition of the *University Academic Plan*: academic quality, student success, and engagement and outreach.

As mentioned in the Introduction, **academic quality** is the overriding imperative for York over the next five years. This entails an unwavering commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and the student experience, with sensitivity to the needs of society now and in the future. It remains the university's paramount objective, as confirmed in the White Paper. A key indicator and determinant of academic quality is York's ability to attract and retain the highest quality faculty, graduate and undergraduate students and staff. This requires attention to improvement of institutional reputations, selectivity in admissions, success in competitions for research funding, sustained funding for graduate students, and pedagogic innovation. A focus on quality calls on all members of the University to develop a capacity for rigorous self-criticism and to search constantly for new and higher levels of achievement.

Research quality is fundamentally driven through international standards for peer review process. In the contemporary context, high quality research often has a tangible connection to the search for solutions to pressing technical, social, economic, political and cultural issues. Research reputation and performance is built through measures that include externally-funded research, the dissemination of peer reviewed work, and the development of pan-university research collaborations, and connections and partnerships with research networks across and beyond the university sector. At the same time, it is incumbent upon us to promote the value and impact of research and creative activity across the range of disciplines we encompass, including those that may result in products intended for a larger audience, such as educational videos, policy briefs, training curricula, resource guides, and toolkits.

**Student success** is a related goal, one that includes raising the quality of graduate and undergraduate students who choose to study at York without diminishing access, their experience while here, as well as the outcomes of the experience afterwards. As noted in the White Paper, our undergraduate and graduate students must be provided with the knowledge and skills they need to thrive, both as citizens in a democratic society and workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global knowledge society. It is essential that we nurture, in all our students, the skills of research and analysis, communication, and critical inquiry that enable them to contribute meaningfully to debates in both the academic and public realms. A spirit of inquiry animates our teaching and research. Our students should be open to alternative ways of viewing a situation or problem, disciplined to follow intellectual methods to conclusions, capable of accepting criticism from others, tolerant of ambiguity, and respectful of others with different views. This will pave the way to innovative ways of thinking that will serve them well long after they have finished their formal studies.

**Engagement and outreach** exemplifies York's reputation as a socially responsive university committed to accessible education and social justice. An even deeper commitment to engagement will provide opportunities to enhance core activities and distinguish York from other post-secondary institutions. Engagement is expressed in pedagogical approaches, such as experiential education, that bridge between theoretical and applied scholarship, in collaboration with partners locally and internationally on mutually beneficial research and creative projects, and community-building that strengthens democratic values and civic responsibility on our campuses while reaching beyond them.

For York over the next five years, a key imperative is a redoubling of efforts to internationalize the university. This will be accomplished by increasing the presence of graduate and undergraduate international students and faculty members on the University's campuses, and by increasing the opportunities for members of the community to gain global experience. This imperative arises from the ever increasing pace of globalization worldwide, and the fact that a global perspective will be a precondition to success, and a core competency for active participation in a knowledge-based society in the years and decades ahead.

## Priority Areas in an Integrated Plan

These principles, assumptions and themes lead us to identify the following priority areas for the next five years at York. It is noteworthy that, invited to prioritize areas of endeavour for attention in the new UAP, survey respondents of all kinds identified teaching and learning as the highest priority (with the related area of the student experience also receiving substantial support). Research was also deemed to be a significant priority, often, as is consistent with our values, aligned with teaching and learning.

### Research Intensification

York is a comprehensive, research intensive University committed to an inclusive understanding of scholarship that encompasses discovery, integration, collaboration, application, and dissemination. We take it as axiomatic that active researchers are active teachers, and we insist on the inseparability of research and pedagogy at all levels as part of this culture. Quality instructors are those who reflect on the practice of teaching and who are able to apply research to the achievement of student learning. Quality researchers are scholars who can create and develop new knowledge in a supported and supportive environment of the highest quality and the most innovative faculty and students, graduate, and undergraduate alike. York is committed to exposing students to a rich research culture and providing opportunities for them to participate in research as part of their studies. It is only by appreciating the synergies between teaching and research that we are able to ensure that we attain the highest quality in both. Research success is also crucial to the achievement of other planning goals related to reputations, identities, and diversification. As the survey demonstrated, the University community remains supportive of pursuing an ambitious research agenda, which is facilitated by greater funding and administrative support for research, expanded opportunities for student involvement in research, and continued enhancement of research cultures. Fittingly, Faculties are incorporating research into their overall strategic plans, a phenomenon that is of vital importance and is fully supported by University and Senate planners.

Over the next five years, our commitment to academic quality, student success, and engagement and outreach in relation to research will be demonstrated by:

- intensifying and widening the research culture at all levels of the University and investing in more research infrastructure
- building research capacity by leveraging our research strengths across the university and through strategic collaboration with external partners worldwide
- developing an evidence-based culture of evaluating and comparing York's research successes against international best practices and disciplinary norms
- intensifying research through integrated, strategic Faculty planning
- generating more opportunities for graduate students to fully participate in research
- providing expanded post-doctoral opportunities at York
- communicating and celebrating our research success and thereby building York's reputation
- providing the support needed for the Libraries to fulfill their mandates in support of teaching, learning and research in the context of evolving technology and with the goal of information literacy and
- providing a culture of support for research across the university, in the relevant non-academic administrative units.

### Enhancing Teaching and Learning

As discussed in the White Paper, over the next planning cycle we must devote significant attention to enhancing the learning environment on our campuses. The overarching goal is to prepare our students



to succeed in life, both as citizens of a democratic community and as contributors to the knowledge society. Expressing our commitment to accessible education and social justice means strengthening democratic values and civic responsibility as a subject of inquiry, as a practice wherein more students engage with the institution, their education, and our community partners, and as a goal of attracting the best students with the highest academic quality from high school and beyond. It will require increased attention to breadth and depth of knowledge as well as diversity of knowledge, creativity, research skills, and the analytical and critical acumen required for solid and innovative scholarship. Such attention is a priority so that when our students graduate they have the necessary skills and competencies for success in life. As in the case of research, our aspirations entail intensifying and widening the research culture at all levels, leveraging teaching strengths throughout the University, and developing evidence-based evaluation that permits comparisons with international practices and disciplinary norms.

Over the next five years, our commitment to academic quality, student success, and engagement and outreach in relation to teaching and learning will be demonstrated by:

- expanding experiential learning opportunities available to students at all levels (including co-op, internships, community-based learning, problem-based learning, etc.)
- supporting innovative and flexible curriculum delivery through online and hybrid courses, as well as other elements of technology enhanced learning
- recognizing and supporting innovation in teaching and learning, and providing support and recognition for instructors – full-time faculty members, contract faculty members, and teaching assistants
- affirming and expanding of our leadership in curriculum delivery modes, including day, evening, weekend and online learning for graduate and undergraduate, full-time and part-time, traditional and non-traditional students, as keys to enhancing the student experience and supporting our commitment to access to post-secondary education
- recruiting top-flight secondary school graduates and non-traditional students with high academic potential
- increasing opportunities for students to have international experiences as part of their academic programs and
- fostering lifelong learning through expansion and enhanced coordination of continuing and professional education programming.

### **Enriching the Student Experience**

York has made significant strides in defining and enhancing the graduate and undergraduate student experience, but must work assiduously to apply lessons learned in the past, while continuing to seek new and better ways to enrich students' experiences in classes and other settings (including co-curricular and extra-curricular, social and physical experience, as well as the supports provided to them). Our survey pointed to the need for enhanced student services. Space for studying, sharing, and socializing are also indicators of a higher quality experience. Academic experiences are paramount. Among the most common themes to emerge in this vein were greater student-faculty contact, lower class sizes, higher quality instruction, transitional support, and academic advising.

Over the next five years, our commitment to quality, student success, and engagement and outreach in relation to the student experience for both undergraduate and graduate students will be demonstrated by:

- enhancing the quality and level of preparation of the incoming class
- enhancing the first year experience by fostering students' transition to the university and their engagement with each other and with faculty, with their studies, and with their community

- improving advising for students at every stage of their studies
- creating communities (both in person and virtual) within and beyond the University
- enhancing opportunities for students' involvement in research projects, particularly at the graduate level
- increasing the time spent by students in small group settings with full-time faculty members, including retaining the format of small graduate seminar classes
- coordinating student service functions carried out by different elements of the University
- supporting student communities
- expanding and improving space for student activities.

### **Building Community and Extending our Global Reach**

Community engagement broadly conceived recognizes the world outside the walls of the academy as a source of both education and research partnership, rather than merely an object of study. York has a long, rich tradition of engaging in multiple, meaningful ways with its communities. Survey responses reminded us of the local, national, and international dimensions of engagement, and of the non-geographical applications of the concept. Internationalization is a crucial element of our integrated planning for the next several years. It reflects a reality that teaching, learning and research are not spatially anchored or bounded by traditional modes. It represents to us a compelling opportunity to expand our horizons and extend our mission. Significantly, it symbolizes and redeems our valuation of the broadest possible exchange of ideas and the widest array of means by which to learn, share, and apply.

Over the next five years, our commitment to community engagement activities and outreach will be demonstrated by:

- working in and with communities, including research collaborations, community-based programs, and other forms of interactions
- aiding faculty development and recognition for community engagement and outreach activities
- extending and developing enhanced coordinating structures for continuing and professional education in order to better serve a broad range of students
- supporting lifelong learning initiatives
- building on York's leadership in collaborating with other institutions to better serve our students, and continuing to make those relationships express quality imperatives and other articulated objectives
- fostering internationalization as expressed in the student population, the curriculum and exchange programs and developing a more strategic approach to internationalization and
- enhancing the recruitment of and support for international students.

### **Strengthening Interdisciplinarity and Comprehensiveness**

A defining and distinguishing feature of York is the interdisciplinary approach across the spectrum of academic activities. Longstanding traditions have taken on new vitality in the form of collaborative projects such as the 3D Film Innovation Consortium that draw on the Fine Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences. Enduring commitments to interdisciplinarity are evidenced throughout the curriculum, and the survey pointed to a deep attachment to interdisciplinarity at York. Support is also strong for program development and strategic enrolment planning that at once builds on current strengths and continues efforts to achieve a more comprehensive University.

A more comprehensive university will open further opportunities for curriculum synergies. It will also

meet demonstrated societal demand, add to the University's knowledge base, and multiply capacities to advance York's mission. At the same time, York's renown in Liberal Arts and Fine Arts must and will continue to flourish. Our flagship professional programs in business and law must and will thrive. Student and societal demand, coupled with self-defined values, will seed growth in health, the sciences, and applied studies. The groundwork has been laid for the eventual creation of a distinctive medical school at York. Engineering has featured in academic plans since the University's founding, and expansion will be pursued when the necessary, dedicated funding is secured. As always, many of the new and modified programs created within the life of the plan will have a unique cast to them, one which insists on the education of well-rounded graduates whose studies put a premium on exposure to diverse ways of learning. Over the next five years, our commitment to quality, student success, and engagement and outreach in relation to enrolment planning, program and campus development will be demonstrated by:

- managing enrolments to ensure that overall and Faculty-specific targets are met while focusing attention on high quality
- preserving and building on core strengths
- making the ongoing adjustments necessitated by changes in student preparation and experiences
- monitoring system and government developments carefully and adjusting targets upwards *if* there are sufficient resources, financial, human and physical, for doing so and if we conclude that such increases are consistent with academic objectives
- supporting the development of a more comprehensive university through diversification of enrolments
- paving the way to an expanded Engineering program (and areas such as health, business, applied, and professional programs) consistent with York's traditional emphasis on disciplinary richness, collaboration and transformation
- improving seamless education through transfer credit and bridging programs for students applying to York from college, internationally educated students seeking Canadian credentials, and mature students
- improving support for students in need of additional support, and students for whom English and French are second languages and
- improving accessibility and supports for students with disabilities.

### **Promoting Effective Governance**

Academic planning and the success of the UAP require processes that are collegial, sophisticated and reliable. They must also be supple, and capable of responding quickly to external phenomena in a timely and appropriate manner.

Over the next five years, our commitment to quality, student success, and engagement and outreach in relation to governance will be demonstrated by:

- a reinvigoration of the commitment to and participation in collegial governance
- improved processes in support of academic planning that streamline without undermining collegial governance
- effective, responsive academic administration
- more sophisticated means of assessing ongoing and proposed academic activities
- continuing attention to academic programs and unit structures so as to achieve a structural array that is appropriate to York's overall mission and to the objectives set out in this plan

- coordination of graduate/undergraduate planning around curriculum, enrolments, and deployment of resources and
- strategic planning modalities that promote and permit “tough choice” decisions that are fact-based and otherwise informed
- transparency in decision-making where appropriate

## Conclusion: Executing the Plan

As noted in the Introduction, this version of the UAP is premised on a desire to build upon and intensify York’s existing values and commitments. The previous UAP, with its emphasis on academic quality and research intensification, has successfully guided the development of the York community over the past five years. This new plan, with a focus on the three key themes of academic quality, graduate and undergraduate student success and engagement, and outreach, represents a comprehensive strategy that will enable York to capitalize on its unique positioning and opportunities over the next five years.

“Seek regular community feedback on progress, success, emergent issues and obstacles, and take action to respond, facilitate and/or adjust the UAP as necessary. It needs to be treated as a living document to remain current and relevant.”

- Quote from UAP survey

As a Senate-approved document, this UAP provides an articulation of York’s shared values and aspirations, points to academic priorities and directions for the next five years, and provides a framework and reference point for the more detailed planning that must follow across the university. Implementation of this plan will be supported by:

- resource planning and investments that support quality, graduate and undergraduate student success, and engagement and outreach
- increased cooperation within the University, and with other institutions of higher learning on terms that further York’s objectives and preserve the University’s autonomy
- establishment of benchmarks for measurement of progress and the gathering and assessment of evidence of progress (or impediments) and hub
- full, regular, and transparent reporting on progress and opportunities for feedback

The Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee, with the cooperation and assistance of the Provost, will play a key oversight role, monitoring progress and reporting to Senate and the broader community on our advances, achievements and challenges, as we move ahead. Planning will be holistic, and implementation will be focused and coherent.

It will be of critical importance as we move forward to maintain and build on the momentum of positive community involvement that has been evident in the White Paper and UAP processes. As part of UAP implementation, APPRC and the Provost will consider how best to foster ongoing community engagement in planning and direction-setting.

In any event, and with the support of an engaged community of faculty, students, staff, alumni, and supporters, at the end of the five years covered by this plan, we fully expect York to be

- a University of even higher quality across the entire spectrum of academic activities
- a more international University in outlook, reach, reputation, and impact
- a more comprehensive University in its makeup and missions
- a University known around the world for innovation in all forms of scholarship
- a University that connects, unites, extends, and above all enhances experiences

In sum, York will enhance academic quality in a globalized world.