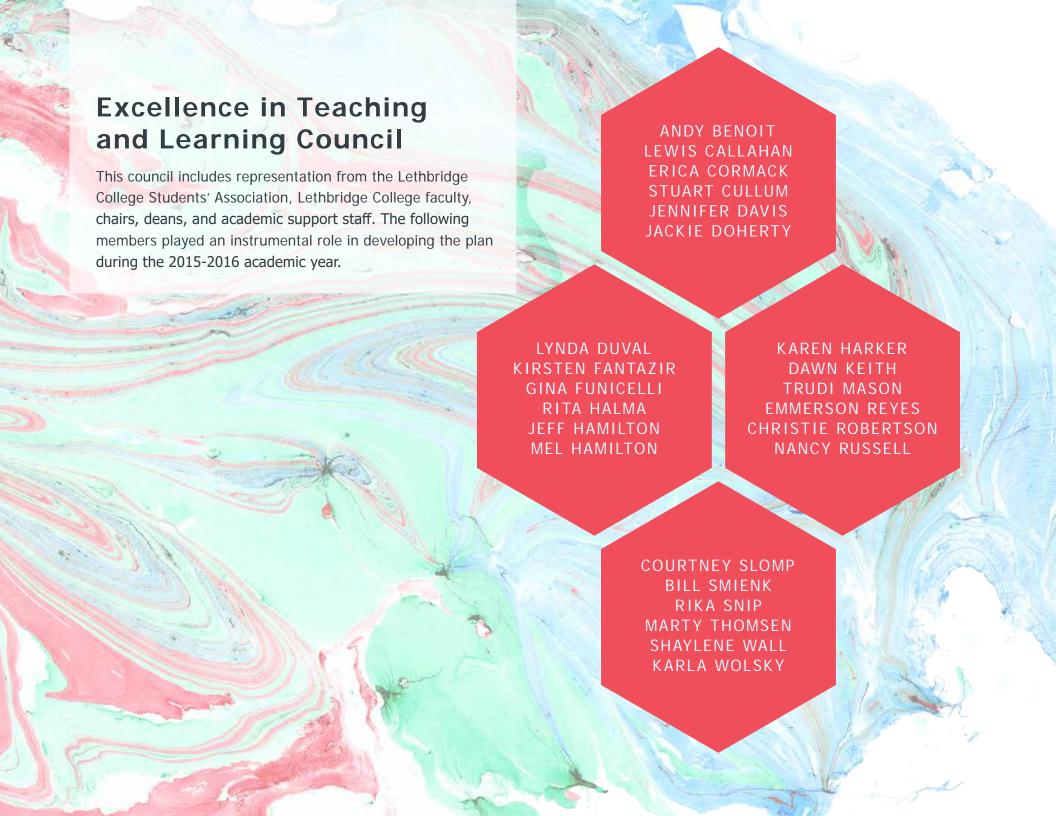


# ACADEMIC TRANSFORMATION THROUGH EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING & LEARNING

LETHBRIDGE COLLEGE ACADEMIC PLAN | 2017-2020





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# This academic plan, **Achieving Academic Transformation through Excellence in Teaching and Learning**, is focused on student success.

It is a framework designed to help all employees, including instructors, staff and administrators, focus on student success and student learning. Aligned with the Lethbridge College Comprehensive Institutional Plan (CIP), it is guided by the following overarching goal and guiding principles.

# **Overarching Goal**

"Create and facilitate high quality, flexible, experiential and relevant learning experiences that open pathways for students to employment, career advancement, further post-secondary education and lifelong learning."





### **Guiding Principles**

- > Quality: To ensure the highest standards of performance and innovation in all areas of the institution, including programs, services, applied research and scholarly activity
- > Collaboration: To develop strategic alliances with business, industry, government, agencies and other post-secondary institutions to enhance student learning, mobility and employment
- > Innovation: To challenge boundaries and to seek and seize opportunities for innovation in our core business of learning, knowledge creation and credentialling
- > Sustainability: To cultivate a college environment that is positive, collaborative and sustaining
- > Accessibility: To create and maintain flexible learning pathways that enable students to achieve their educational and career goals
- > Diversity: To provide educational opportunities for a diverse population of students, including Aboriginal and international students

# Process: How We Developed this Academic Plan

Work on this academic plan started in December 2015 when the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Council was formed. The council's initial task was to involve and engage instructors and staff in developing an academic plan through purposeful dialogue. This new academic plan replaces the work related to teaching and learning within the Academic Transformation Strategy that was done between 2013 and 2015. Membership of this ongoing council is primarily academic and consists of instructors and chairs (one from each centre), one dean, students from the Students' Association and staff.

The work was challenging. We started by identifying our strengths in teaching and learning that we could build upon and by reviewing the work we did related to Academic Transformation in the 2013 and 2014 advances—as was requested by the instructors who sit on the council—to determine what should be used in the new academic plan.



"The work was challenging."



The council also researched trends in post-secondary education and reviewed academic plans from other institutions and various other resources that are listed on our resources page. They discussed current teaching and learning initiatives, including learning spaces, digital learning and assessment. The council also reviewed and made connections to the other high-level components of the Academic Transformation Strategy, including Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM), Applied Research and Collaborative Partnerships.

This document went through numerous iterations, and the council and other staff used various opportunities to provide feedback between February and April. In May, the current draft, asking for one last major round of feedback, was emailed to all instructors, chairs and deans. Using all of the feedback that was gathered, the council finalized the academic plan.



### **Academic Transformation**

# Our Academic Transformation Strategy at Lethbridge College responds to shifts and changes happening in post-secondary

**education**, the economy and society in Alberta and beyond. This strategy is an important tool that solidifies and builds upon an already strong foundation in teaching and learning and enables us to contribute to student success by providing exemplary learning experiences. Excellence in Teaching and Learning Academic Plan is one of four components that work together as part of the Academic Transformation Strategy. The additional three components include Applied Research, Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) and International.

#### What does Academic Transformation mean?

Like many post-secondary institutions, Lethbridge College is reorienting itself to remain both relevant and sustainable in a shifting environment. Grounded in student success and learning, this reorientation is being shaped by demographic, economic, technological and pedagogical drivers. Within the context of excellence in teaching and learning, our focus for academic transformation is on creating innovative learning experiences that meet the diverse needs of learners, the economy and society.

In alignment with the Lethbridge College vision of "leading and transforming education in Alberta", we will continue to lead as we build on our strengths, strategically choose initiatives and demonstrate exemplary practices and innovations. We will gather evidence to inform continuous improvement, we will showcase these exemplary practices and innovations and we will become consultants to our visitors and community, providing inspiration and methodology that will help transform the system in Alberta and beyond. We can demonstrate and develop leadership at all levels throughout the organization and in all aspects of our core business of learning, credentialing and knowledge creation.

### How is the future different because of this strategy?

This strategy is our commitment to student success and learning and will ensure that we remain future-focused and relevant in the changing post-secondary education environment. It provides guidance and direction for setting goals, choosing priority initiatives, allocating resources and making related decisions. As we make decisions, we will ask this question:

How does this contribute to student success, student learning and excellence in teaching and learning?

## A Changing Landscape

"Students will continue coming to Lethbridge College over the next three to five years with a wide range of backgrounds, motivations, academic preparation, skills and abilities."

The driving motivation for most students to attend Lethbridge College will continue to be obtaining a job and starting a career, either by graduating with a credential from Lethbridge College or by building on their experience here and transferring to another post-secondary institution. Different types of students are emerging, including those who are convenience-driven and looking for flexibility in content, access, time, pace and place; and those who seek professional learning and growth opportunities.

Another significant driver shaping the landscape is the reality of a digital, globally-connected world that is changing how students think and learn. Consider the opportunities and impetus for Lethbridge College to provide both formal and informal learning experiences that include more flexible pathways, more choice in how and when students engage in their learning, and more focus on transferable 21st century skills in workforce preparation.





# **Building on Our Strengths**

### Continuing Passion for Student Success and Student Learning

Historically, our passion for student success has been one of our greatest strengths, so providing an exemplary student experience is also at the heart of our strategy going forward. Information relating to teaching and learning was gathered previously through consultative processes and resonated with passion for student success. This strength was reaffirmed in the work of the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Council in early 2016.

### Striving For Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Also resonating are our strengths in teaching and learning, which include our ongoing ability to create and facilitate high-quality, flexible, experiential and relevant learning experiences that open pathways for our students to employment, career advancement, further postsecondary education and lifelong learning. We will continue to focus on student success; on building and delivering exemplary curriculum that is responsive to shifting student, industry and post-secondary needs and preferences; and on working collaboratively with industry.







### A Commitment to Seek and Seize Innovative Opportunities

An additional strength identified by the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Council is our ability to choose, support, implement and learn from new initiatives. We have the aptitude, interest and energy to actively seek and seize opportunities for innovation and research. We are committed to exploring new possibilities, shifting where needed, pushing boundaries and challenging paradigms in our core business of learning, credentialing and knowledge creation. Examples include piloting and researching emerging pedagogies, models of learning and technologies. Our focus will be on intentionally learning from these initiatives, applying what we are learning to other initiatives and on continually improving.

### **Ongoing Collaboration with Industry**

Another strength that resonated in the work of the Excellence in Teaching and Learning Council is our ability to listen to and collaborate with industry to ensure their needs are met. Existing strengths in this area that we can build upon include program advisory committees, experiential work opportunities and practicums and existing applied research partnerships.





### Our Focus Areas for the Next Three Years

As we strive for excellence in teaching and learning for the next three years, six focus areas will advance us in our efforts to create an exemplary student experience that is high quality, flexible, experiential and relevant.

These focus areas have been identified based on several factors, including how they:

- > Contribute to student success and to creating exemplary learning experiences now and into the future
- > Positively impact student learning and instructional practice
- > Build on our strengths
- > Align with current institutional needs and priorities
- > Address/integrate future-focused trends in post-secondary education

The priority initiatives listed in each category inform an action plan with specific goals that will be updated each year for the next three years. This will provide the needed flexibility to be responsive to emerging initiatives and priorities.





# FOCUS: Emerging Practices & Innovations in Teaching & Learning

We will demonstrate a commitment to **future-focused, evidence-based** practice

by exploring, researching and evaluating emerging practices and innovations in teaching and learning, and when appropriate, integrate such practice into existing and new curriculum and programming. Evidence-based practice involves using research to guide educational decisions regarding teaching and learning approaches, strategies and interventions. The evidence gathered will assist instructors and administrators in making informed decisions, including what practices to adopt and which initiatives to support, given our capacity of time, effort and fiscal resources. Evidence-based practice leads to continuous improvement and increased student learning. It also includes completing evaluations to inform future decisions.

# **Priority Initiatives**

High impact practices: Research and integrate high impact practices into instruction and curriculum development. High impact practices include active and collaborative learning, experiential learning, integrated research experiences and culminating senior experiences (such as capstone courses or projects) (as identified by the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)).



# **FOCUS: Exemplary Learning Environments**

# We will explore how learning environments (physical and virtual) can be better designed

to increase student learning and enable innovative pedagogies. Learning environments integral to teaching and learning must be designed to enable a wide range of effective teaching practices, be conducive to student learning and provide a pleasing and comfortable environment. Drivers that shape this exploration include emerging technologies, the renovation of existing and creation of new spaces; new and evolving course design principles, insights from learning science, and the need for students to learn in spaces that promote developing employability skills, such as critical thinking and collaboration.

# **Priority Initiatives**

- > **Learning Spaces Guide:** Complete and start implementing a learning spaces guide that includes physical and virtual learning environments and provides principles for formal learning spaces (year 1) and for informal learning spaces (year 2).
- > **Instructional environments**: Identify and build on aspects of instructional environments that work well; prioritize and implement solutions to barriers and challenges identified by instructors based on impact on student learning and instructional practice.

# FOCUS: Scholarship, Scholarship of Teaching & Learning (SOTL) & Applied Research

# We will commit to building a culture of

**Scholarship** and embracing multi-faceted activities involving the creation, integration and dissemination of knowledge (see glossary for examples). This includes enabling instructors and staff to engage in scholarship, SoTL and applied research by increasing capacity and opportunities to develop related skills and knowledge. We will encourage and expand existing momentum that has been building in each of these three domains.

# **Priority Initiatives**

- > Capacity, skills and knowledge development:
  - Develop a scholarship and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Plan: Build capacity and develop knowledge and skills in scholarship and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
  - Develop an Applied Research Plan (complete): Build capacity and develop knowledge and skills in applied research
- Integration into student learning experiences: Integrate applied research and SoTL opportunities into student learning experiences
- > **Dissemination**: Provide opportunities for instructors and staff to disseminate their research-related stories and findings widely, both internally and externally

## **FOCUS: Academic Staff Professional Development**

# We will enhance excellence in teaching and learning by enabling cross organizational support for teaching and learn

**and learning** by enabling cross-organizational support for teaching and learning initiatives, building professional development pathways and shifting roles for all academic staff. Academic staff within this context includes instructors, staff from the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Innovation (Learning Services, Library and Educational Enhancement Team) and staff from the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation. By enhancing individual strengths and abilities, as well as organizational capabilities, academic staff professional development will improve practice.

One focus is on developing instructors' teaching practices. Many instructors have strong industry experience when they come to Lethbridge College. We will build on this strength and ensure they have the support they need to become exemplary instructors and maintain currency within their industry throughout their teaching careers.

# **Priority Initiative**

Academic staff development: Develop an Academic Staff Professional Development Plan collaboratively with stakeholders that enables all academic staff to improve practice and to develop capacity, knowledge and skills necessary to achieve excellence in teaching and learning. This plan will build on existing strengths in existing PD initiatives, including the Instructor Certification Program (ICP) and Instructional Skills Workshops.



## **FOCUS: Systems & Processes**

We will ensure Lethbridge College systems and processes support and enable excellence in teaching and learning. As we focus on student success and on creating exemplary learning experiences for students now and into the future, we will dedicate resources (time, people and finances) to ensure timely identification and implementation of this critical aspect of innovation and change.

# **Priority Initiative**

Identify and implement systems that are required to support excellence in teaching and learning initiatives; examples include systems for supporting emerging models of teaching and learning (e.g., competency-based education) and emerging practices and innovations in teaching and learning (e.g., ePortfolios).



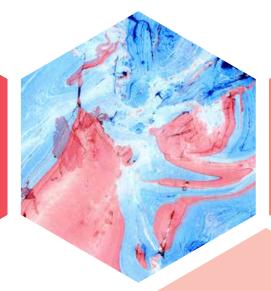


# Adapting Our Organization to Meet the Challenge

Excellence in teaching and learning is everyone's business at Lethbridge College. All employees, departments and centres contribute to excellence in teaching and learning. Four other strategic plans at Lethbridge College work in partnership with and contribute to the goal of academic transformation:

- > Applied Research Plan
- > Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) Plan
- > Student Relationship Model (includes several sub-plans: Health and Wellness, Indigenous, Recruitment, Retention, etc.)
- > International Education Initiatives Plan
- > Organizational Learning Plan

"Excellence
in teaching
and learning is
everyone's business
at Lethbridge
College."





### **APPENDIX A: Glossary**

### 21st Century Skills

Formerly known as 'college wide outcomes', 21st century skills are statements of abilities that all graduates of Lethbridge College share. These outcomes are broadly stated and develop formally and informally within the learning environment. All students who receive a credential from Lethbridge College achieve measurable learning in the following six areas:

Sustainability, innovative problem solving skills, communication, information/digital literacy kills, lifelong learning, self-direction, collaboration and leadership

#### **Academic staff**

Academic staff includes the Lethbridge College staff who have specific responsibilities for supporting academic initiatives. This includes instructors, staff from the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Innovation (Learning Services, Library, and Educational Enhancement Team) and the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation.

### **Applied research**

Research that is solution-oriented with outcomes that can be applied to meet community and industry needs. Solves real world challenges and has immediate practical applications which can be disseminated and added to a growing body of knowledge.

### **Blended learning**

Blended learning is the integration of face-to-face and online instruction, based on the most appropriate environment for specific learning outcomes. The defining characteristic of blended learning is the complement of some face-to-face instruction with other instructional delivery methods. (Lucas, n.d.).

#### **Evidence-based practice**

Evidence-based practice involves using research to guide educational decisions regarding teaching and learning approaches, strategies and interventions.

### Flexible learning

Accessing education in a way that is responsive in pace, place or mode of delivery and focuses on offering students choices about when, where and how they learn. Greater flexibility can help meet the needs of a diverse range of students and can include:

- > Using technology to provide online study
- Work-based learning and employer engagement
- > Part-time learning
- > Accelerated or decelerated programs
- > Blended learning (Higher Education Academy, 2015).

### **Professional development**

A planned process that helps all staff fulfill their professional responsibility to actively develop and maintain currency in their discipline, teaching or professional practice through reflection, professional readings, industry contacts, professional associations, further education and other forms of information exchanges.

### **Scholarship**

Campus Alberta Quality Council defines scholarship as a multi-faceted activity involving the creation, integration and dissemination of knowledge. It can take many forms:

- > Independent or collaborative research across the full spectrum (basic, applied, educational, policy, quantitative, qualitative, etc.)
- > Staying current and maintaining competency in the content and methodology in one's field and related fields
- > Inquiry and reflective practice
- > Innovation in pedagogy
- > Knowledge translation and reformulation for new applications
- > Composition, creative activity and performance
- > Publication
- > Presentation at scholarly conferences or expert groups
- > Applied scholarship through problem-solving practices, innovation and product development (tools, handbooks, manuals, software, etc.)

- > Technology development, patents, technology transfer and commercialization
- > Developing standards, guidelines and best practices

### Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The systematic study of teaching and learning with a focus on improving student learning. It is an evidencebased process that enables the use of various research methodologies with outcomes that can be applied to learning environments.

### **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)**

A set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments that work for everyone—not single, onesize-fits-all solutions but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2014).

### **APPENDIX B: Resources**

### **Excellence in Teaching and Learning**

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