



# Dear Students... Long Term Plan

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Tuesday March 7th 2017

## Dear Students...

The University Students' Council (USC) is a student-led organization that first and foremost exists to advocate for and represent undergraduate students at Western University. However, in the 51 years that the USC has existed, it has grown to be more than just an advocacy organization. Through student leadership, it has become a complex organization that supports students, caters to student needs, and strives to improve the experience of undergraduate students at Western. This strategic plan will set a high-level vision for what the organization should strive to achieve in the next three years. "Dear Students..." is an idealistic document that outlines the USC's vision, mission, values and areas of focus, to help guide changing leaderships through high level consistency. This strategic plan will be coupled with tactical plans made every year to outline measurable goals and objectives and bring the USC closer in line with our strategic direction.

During this strategic planning process, we set out to accomplish three things: to get mass data from our students to inform the future direction of the USC, to understand students priorities, and to ensure that every facet of the USC was serving, and operating in accordance with student wants and needs. We were successfully able to achieve this mass feedback from students, the contents of which informed every step of the strategic planning process. We hope that this strategic plan will better communicate the purpose and direction of the USC to our students.

Whether you are actively involved with the USC or not, the USC should represent every undergraduate student at Western and strive to enhance their experience at Western. We acknowledge that our students have unique experiences and needs - they are learners, athletes, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, teachers, leaders and so much more. This strategic plan is for you. It is for you to hold us accountable to our promises, understand our priorities and follow the direction of the organization regardless of the change in leadership each year. This strategic plan aims to integrate student needs and priorities at the core of everything that that USC does for the next three years. We are incredibly proud of how much student feedback was incorporated into this strategic plan, and we hope that this plan will ensure consistency, accountability and transparency of the USC.

Thank you for your feedback in this process.

Eddy Avila  
University Students' Council President 2016-2017

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eddy Avila", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

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## Vision Statement

Students have the power to change the world.

## Mission Statement

To enhance the educational experience and quality of life for all undergraduates at Western University.

## Values

### *We are Democratic*

The USC is fundamentally a democratic institution. Students elect students to represent them on our campus and off of it. Students have the ultimate power in deciding what the USC does, and how we do it. It thrives and functions on students and student feedback in every manner possible. Our elected student leaders are all held accountable by our Council, a group of elected representatives from each constituency that are all proportionately represented on the USC. We will continue to engage as many students as possible through the democratic process and show the power of student voice on our campus.

### *We are Student Led*

Students are at the forefront of the organization. Student leaders fill all of the organizations change-making roles including the Chief Executive Officer, the Executive Body, and the Board of Directors. Students are responsible for creating the vision and direction for the organization. Part-time student employees similarly act in direct support to the USC Executive Body in the advocacy, programming, services, initiatives, engagement, and collaboration of the organization. It is the vision of the students that guides this organization, and we will continue to ensure that student leaders are the primary voice leading the USC forward.

### *We are Inclusive*

Our constituents are all incredibly diverse individuals with different perspectives, experiences, wants, and needs. We work to ensure that all diverse voices are included, represented, and considered in every decision that the USC makes. We are committed to serving, supporting, and enhancing the experiences of all students regardless of their gender, race, sexuality, religion, ability, or age. We understand that our community does not always provide equal opportunity to all students, and thus, the USC will strive to remove barriers standing in the way of equal opportunity and representation. We will celebrate uniqueness and individuality and ensure that no one on our campus will be limited in opportunity or experience due to their differences.

### *We are Accountable to our Students*

Elected student representatives and students-at-large are our guiding force and we remain accountable to them. Students have every avenue to critique, influence, and enforce decisions that help the USC fill its mandate and serve students to the best of our ability. Student leaders are elected to act in the best interest of their constituents and collectively, these elected representatives hold the USC Executive Council accountable. The USC will continue to increase transparency to our students-at-large and

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encourage collaboration with Constituency Councils to further engage students on what the USC is doing.

### *We Operate with Integrity*

The USC acts with integrity in every decision that is made by student leaders and employees of the USC. We are all united through the shared promise of acting in the best interest of our students. Everyone at the USC remains united in the common goal for the betterment of the student experience for all students. We operate under fairness and honesty and ensure that every decision is decided through viewing an ethical, representative and fair lens. Integrity is essential for maintaining the trust of our constituents and serving them to the best of our ability.

## Areas of Focus

### Student Support:

Student support is at the core of the betterment of the student experience. We cannot serve our mission to enhance the quality of life of students if we do not first ensure that all students feel welcomed, accepted, represented, and supported at this institution.

- The mental wellbeing and health of our students is instrumental in ensuring that our students are having the best student experience at Western. The USC will work to ensure that we providing enough avenues where students can practice holistic wellbeing, and advocating to ensure that student wellbeing is a priority at university life.
  - Our students need to feel safe and protected on their campus, and incidents of sexual violence continues to threaten this. The USC will put more resources into combating sexual violence on our campus through training and education, as well as work to improve the way we support survivors.
  - The USC will ensure that all levels of diverse student needs are being met so that each student can access equal opportunities at Western. We are committed to diversity and inclusion that combats racism and other social barriers that limit our students.
  - Students understand student needs best. Based on this principle, we will continue to support peer mentoring programs that give students the opportunity to learn, grow, and heal with students that can best understand their situation.
  - We will work collaboratively with the University Administration to improve the structures in place that provide challenges to student success and well-being.
  - The USC should remain receptive to student feedback to inform and dictate how students are supported at this University.
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### **Student Advocacy:**

First and foremost, the USC exists to represent students and advocate for students.

While the USC has the power to change things within our organization that affect our students, a lot of student-facing issues are out of our direct control and need to be addressed through advocacy initiatives.

- We are committed to advocating on and off of our campus, and to all levels of government, on behalf of our ever-changing student body.
- Students and student-elected representatives are the most suited individuals to speak on behalf of student needs. Therefore, we will strive to be actively involved in the decision-making process of any change that will affect students.
- The USC will put an emphasis on improving the capacity for issue identification and research related to student concerns. This will allow us to become more effective and efficient in our long-term advocacy efforts.
- We will continue to increase the capacity for students to be involved in every aspect of advocacy including but not limited to issue identification, research, influencing and maintaining relationships with decision makers.
- We will increase our Council's understanding of advocacy to ensure that are fulfilling their mandate to their students, and that they have the tools to properly represent them.
- The USC will continue to ensure that advocacy remains a priority in every level of this organization by integrating an understanding of advocacy into all departments of the USC. We will increase staff support for advocacy so that it remains a priority for our student leaders and to the organization as a whole.

### **Student Development and Opportunity:**

During their time at Western, students develop through their experiences in the classroom. However, the USC believes that there should also be student opportunities to grow as leaders, thinkers, and creators outside of the classroom.

- The value of experiential learning cannot be understated and the USC will continue to do our part to increase the number of work integrated learning opportunities that we have for students.
  - Every element of the USC should be empowering student leadership at the forefront of its organizational, management, and visionary roles. With the help of our full-time staff members, the USC will continue to shift the models of our various operations and functions to ensure that students can be involved in every level of the USC.
  - We will continue to offer diverse opportunities for all students to engage our unique student body.
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- The USC will continue to increase the amount of student working and development hours, as well as the types of opportunities we offer, to reduce any barriers limiting student involvement.
  - We will continue to maintain USC Alumni relationships and expand our mentorship program so students can learn from other students, as well as Western and USC graduates.

### **Student Engagement and Collaboration:**

Students know how they like to be engaged with better than anyone. That is why putting students at the forefront of the visioning, creation, and strategy of all USC branding, public relations, and communication is essential to the success of the organization and the engagement of our student body.

- Our students deserve to understand what the USC does on their behalf and the number of opportunities available to them. We will continue to refine and shift our communications portfolio to ensure that priority is given to making sure that the student body understands the USC.
- We will prioritize student feedback and focus on data collection to ensure that our priorities and vision shifts with the students we are serving. Similarly, we will create a strategy outlining the most effective method of collecting relevant and consistent student feedback.
- We will continue to strive to maximize engagement with an understanding that students are the experts when it comes to their interests and wants.
- The USC will continue to strive for a collective vision and brand for all services, programming, and operations of the USC. In order to achieve this, there needs to be an emphasis on cross-department communication and information sharing.
- The USC will continue to ensure that all forms of communication are relevant and shift with the changing student body and technology.
- We will provide increased support for all communication, public relations, marketing, and branding efforts, to ensure that student engagement remains a priority.
- Student feedback and data should be incorporated into the USC Executive Council transition training to ensure that all student leadership understands the needs of their constituents and the importance of continued data collection.

### **Student Life:**

One of the largest areas of the USC is programming and services to enhance the lives better of Western students. An element of improving the student experience is ensuring that there are relevant services and programming that students can access.

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- We will continue to work towards creating diverse programming that offers all students a space to engage within the USC.
  - We will put students at the forefront of deciding what programming looks like by engaging with more students and offering more opportunities for them to choose from.
  - We will constantly review our service offerings and evaluate our findings to ensure that the best possible programming opportunities exist for students.
  - We will continue to work to create relevant programming and opportunities at an affordable price so that financial barriers do not limit a student's experience within the USC.
  - We will maintain a balance between entertainment based events as well as educational, cultural, and non-traditional events.
  - We will put an emphasis on funding and organizing programming and initiatives to support students through high-stress times and areas of vulnerability.

### How we define

#### *Student:*

The word "student" means any individual undergraduate enrolled at Western University or Affiliate University College, regardless of part-time or special status. Students are our constituents. They are the group that we remain in service to, accountable to, and responsible for. While the word "student" seems to homogenize our body of constituents, it is done with the understanding that while the word might be one dimensional, our students are not. To define such a group with one simple word is done to group together a diverse body whose best interest we act for, but it does not ignore the fact that all students at Western are different. They are unique and there is no one student type or one student experience.

#### *Quality of Life:*

When we say that our mission is to "enhance" the "quality of life" for students we cannot ignore that this promise is different for each student. While all some student's experiences are bettered from their USC through a Spoke bagel, a club involvement, and attending our events, we acknowledge that some students need a lot more. Firstly, students who are vulnerable or struggling on our campus require something far greater from their elected representatives. They require us to listen, to advocate, to provide for, and to support. The USC must continue to shift our focus from serving one student experience to improving the experiences of each and every student in a way that is befitting to them.

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