

11/10/2012



BUDGET SUBMISSION ON  
WESTERN STUDENT PRIORITIES

Respectfully submitted to the President's Office of Western University  
Prepared by the University Students' Council

**Primer**

This report was created in accordance with the University Students' Council's mission statement "*To enhance the educational experience and quality of life for all undergraduates at Western University.*" As the organization that represents the interests and voices of all undergraduate students on Western's campuses we have identified four key priorities of our students.

The University Students' Council recognizes that the University is currently in their annual budget cycle and would like to submit the said priorities for consideration in the annual budget on behalf of all undergraduates at Western. Students are stakeholders in the University and it is the University Students' Council's desire to partner with the University to work towards enhancing the educational experience and quality of life for all students on this campus.

The University Students' Council will be looking to submit key priorities as identified by students on an annual basis to the President's Office for consideration in the budget process. The top priorities identified by the University Students' Council on behalf of students in accordance with Western's strategic plan have been enclosed in this report in order of importance to the student body.

The identified priorities include:

1. Creation of a Vice President Student Affairs Office (pg. 2)
2. Creation of Faculty Orientation Week Budgets (pg. 4)
3. Teaching Fellows (pg. 5)
4. Creation of Supporting Budget for Chaplain Services (pg. 6)



Adam Fearnall, President  
University Students' Council

### ***Creation of a Vice President Student Affairs Office***

Universities are increasingly expected to provide a holistic support system for students attending post-secondary institutions. As a result, many Universities in Canada and the United States have directed significant resources towards the enhancement of the out of classroom experience. An effective support system requires coordination to pull various units together under a common vision to efficiently serve student needs. There is currently a need for an office dedicated to working with students to develop student support and to work to integrate student priorities into institutional planning. The Office of the Vice President Student Affairs would serve to strengthen the senior administration's connection to students, student groups and organizations; enhance Western's responsiveness to student concerns; help to develop a strategic vision for student support; and begin to explore ways to involve students in decision making processes.

We are requesting \$600 000 to be allocated to the creation of a Vice Presidential portfolio "Western Student Affairs." The new unit would be headed by a fifth Vice-President. The office would have a Vice-President and 3 full-time staff with a budget to pilot new initiatives.

We are requesting this to be a **Support Units Priorities Fund (SUPF)** allocation and believe this initiative goes towards supporting the Universities' priorities to its students. It should be part of the next 4 year budget plan spanning the periods of 2015/2016 to 2018/2019.

The University Students' Council believes this proposal aligns with many of the principles Western has used to develop their strategic plan. Western has used these principles well for more than a decade and reaffirm that these are important to Western's continued success.

Below are the principles this new office aligns with:

- *Excellence:* We aspire in our teaching and research to academic excellence that is recognized nationally and internationally. We set high standards for the recruitment and performance of our faculty, staff and students.
- *Selectivity:* We will identify our academic and research strengths and build on them with selective allocation of resources.
- *Education for Leadership:* We are committed to a culture of achievement, which ensures that Western graduates are prepared to become leaders of their society. We seek to create an environment in which students are grounded in the values and responsibilities of the scholarly life.
- *Academic Freedom:* We will protect the right of all in our academic community to speak and write freely. We expect all who study, teach and do research at Western to uphold the highest ideals of scholarly responsibility.
- *Western's People:* We value and support all who work and study at Western and seek to create an environment in which they can aspire to excellence and succeed. The realization of our academic objectives depends on Western's people.

- *Diversity:* As part of our commitment to excellence, we seek to recognize and remove the obstacles faced by traditionally under-represented groups in order to facilitate their access to and advancement at Western. We respect and celebrate the diversity of people who make up our community.
- *Societal Responsibility:* Through our teaching, research and service to the community, we aspire to play a significant role in improving the quality of life and fostering economic development in London and this region, in the Province of Ontario, in Canada, and abroad.
- *Accountability:* We are accountable to our students and the general public for the quality of our teaching, research and service to the community and for the effective use of our resources.
- *Autonomy:* We will protect Western's autonomy so that the University, through the Senate and Board, can identify academic priorities and set directions in support of its mission.
- *Innovation:* we are committed to fostering an environment that encourages creativity and risk-taking on the part of faculty, staff, and students and that is responsive to new academic opportunities in areas of potential excellence.
- *Partnerships:* We seek cooperative relationships with other academic institutions, businesses, charitable organizations, and governments at home and abroad to enhance and support the educational and research opportunities available at Western, and to bring mutual benefit to the University and its partners.
- *Openness:* We are committed to an environment of fairness, broad participation, and openness in which information is widely shared and the processes for decision-making are understood and respected.

### ***Creation of Faculty Orientation Week Budgets***

In the spring of each year, faculty soph teams, one per undergraduate faculty (excluding professional schools), have been selected by the prior year's "head soph". The primary purpose of faculty soph teams is to "connect" first year students to the academic resources available to students in the faculty and to organize a series of events on Orientation Week's Faculty Day designed to introduce students to the Dean, professors and various academic support staff of their particular faculty. These activities are organized by the newly selected faculty head soph.

A review of faculty day events and faculty team led to a number of key thoughts including:

- The bulk of faculty day activities are planned in isolation by soph teams and faculty councils. Faculty, Deans, and staff are rarely a significant part of the planning process.
- Faculty day programming does not always provide first year students with an opportunity to interact directly with faculty resources or professors.
- Deans have expressed an interest in increasing the amount of academic related programming for students during Orientation Week.

The University Students' Council considers it essential that first year students be given the opportunity to interact with faculty, a greater sense of community be created between students and faculty, and that the Orientation programs reflect the academic needs of students and their increasing diversity.

We are requesting between \$55, 000 - \$110, 000 be allocated from The Provost's portfolio for each Dean of every Faculty to run programming during the Faculty portion of Orientation week. Starting in 2013 each Dean of every Faculty would be allocated between \$5000-10000 to run faculty specific programming to the incoming class. Functions where students can meet their professors in the faculty over a meal, or faculty focused speakers are examples of possible programming.

We are requesting this to be an **Academic Priorities Fund (APF)** allocation and believe this initiative goes towards supporting the Universities' priorities to its students. We request a **one-time funding** project as a pilot package to assess to show the Provost the value it will create to students.

This initiative directly follows within the Universities' Strategic Plan – Engaging The Future:

"Enhancing the best student experience among Canada's leading research universities through a culture of self-discovery and student engagement that acknowledges the learning process within and beyond the classroom."

### ***Endowed Teachings Fellows***

Quality teaching is strongly valued by undergraduate students in our development as future thought leaders from Western. Teaching Fellows is a program where Western recognizes teaching experts in each faculty, and allows them to have the resources to develop quality teaching in the university setting. This program would allow the university to leverage the strengths of its professors for the benefit of all students. We are supporting the commitment that Western has taken in their recent Strategic Mandate Agreement submitted to the Provincial Government in October 2012. We value that Western worked with the University Students' Council in gaining input in their proposal.

Western listed their top four priorities to strengthen the Best Student Experience. One of them being:

Transforming our existing Faculty Associates program in the Teaching Support Centre by increasing the current number of Associates from 5 to a minimum of one per Faculty (11), doubling the time commitment of the associates, and designating the appointments as **Teaching Fellows**. The Teaching Fellows will initiate and coordinate Faculty-specific programming to respond to the teaching and learning needs of individual instructors, departments, schools and disciplines on **innovation in curriculum development**, technology assisted learning and access to courses locally and at a distance. The annual cost of the program transformation is estimated to be \$600,000 and requires an endowment of \$15 million. These, and a fund to support teaching innovation projects, are part of our fundraising campaign.

The University Students' Council is requesting this to continue be a priority for Western when developing its 2013/2014 budget and its next 4 year budget plan (2015/2016 – 2018/2019).

***Creation a Supporting Budget for Chaplain Services***

The University Students' council is requesting that Chaplain Services hire a student intern dedicated to multi-faith activity in order to enhance the programming scope and capacity of the office. There is an immense benefit to a focus on multi-faith programming and spiritual development that factor directly into the growth of students and the mental well-being as well.

We are requesting \$15 000 be allocated to the Chaplain as a **one-time allocation**. The Vice-Provost would then be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the initiative.

We are requesting this to be an **Academic Priorities Fund (APF)** allocation and believe this initiative goes towards supporting the Universities' priorities to its students. We ask if it could be at least a **one-time funding** project as a pilot package to assess to show the Provost the value it will create to students.

This initiative directly follows within the Universities' Strategic Plan – Engaging The Future:

“Enhancing the best student experience among Canada's leading research universities through a culture of self-discovery and student engagement that acknowledges the learning process within and beyond the classroom”