



CONCORDIA
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ALBERTA

ACADEMIC PLAN
2012 – 2018



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Throughout the Concordia community, there has been, and continues to be, general agreement on the values we share. These include high academic standards, a rich and personal campus environment, an emphasis on excellence in teaching and research, a welcoming and respectful environment, and a culture of service to our multiple communities. Many of these values have been collected in our Mission/Vision/Values Framework that has been approved by our Board of Governors. Yet as President, I felt we needed to develop a clear approach as to how these values would be incorporated into the educational enterprise of Concordia as a small university that seeks to provide a rich university experience for its students. I believe that this Academic Plan provides that clarity.

This Academic Plan is the product of two years of planning and broad consultation with Concordia's Academic community and represents a consolidation and distillation of these results. It is my hope that this plan will guide the way we design our programs and provide direction as to how we deliver each of our courses; that it will inspire us to find ways in which we incorporate our research; and that it will have a positive impact upon our teaching and learning goals. And finally, this Academic Plan, if it is to be more than an exercise in self-reflection, needs to be revisited annually. It is intended to be used as a roadmap for the next part of the Concordia journey for our faculty and students, and for the administration and staff that supports them. I encourage everyone to embrace the clear direction and vision it presents and let it guide us to reach all the goals of Concordia Tomorrow.





CONCORDIA TODAY

The development of its first Five-Year Academic Plan provides the opportunity for Concordia University College of Alberta to consider its past and current challenges and successes. It is especially valuable to recognize the significant changes that have occurred on the campus and for our students, faculty and staff since Concordia was founded in 1921. In particular, the scope and context of Concordia's evolution over the past decade have been exceptional. From the creation of new programs to the erection of new facilities, the students, faculty and staff at our university have all played critical roles in those developments and in our increasing success as a learning institution. The following summary provides a baseline against which our future outcomes will be measured when we later consider the progress made over the coming five years.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CONCORDIA

Concordia is an intimate university community in the busy urban center of Edmonton, Alberta's capital city. Our campus in the Highlands community

is ideally situated in a residential area overlooking the beautiful North Saskatchewan River valley, minutes from downtown by public or private transportation. It enjoys the best of both worlds: a peaceful natural locale and easy access to the amenities of a major city center.

Concordia College, as it was then named, was founded in 1921 by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to prepare young men for preaching and teaching ministries. By 1939, the college expanded to include the education of women and offered general courses of study and an accredited high school program. Recognizing an opportunity to provide an alternative first-year of post-secondary education for students, Concordia began to offer introductory university courses in affiliation with

the University of Alberta in 1967 and then senior university courses in 1975. In 1987, Concordia became a degree-granting institution, ending its affiliation with the University of Alberta by mutual

agreement in 1991. The name change to Concordia University College of Alberta in 1995 reflected our status as a private (now independent) university in the post-secondary landscape of the province. In 2005, Concordia offered its first Master's degree with the approval of the Government of Alberta, opening the institution for graduate education.

Today, Concordia is a proud member of the AUCC (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada). Our offerings include undergraduate degree, after-degree, and graduate degree programs in addition to diploma and certificate programs in a variety of disciplines. The faculty and staff of Concordia University College of Alberta are committed to high educational standards, to serving and supporting students and society, and to providing a welcoming learning community. We value the potential of every student and offer a student-focused education through the delivery of nationally and internationally recognized university programs.

In the 2012–13 academic year, Concordia University College of Alberta had

- **1,182 undergraduate students** in 29 programs
- **161 students in 2 after-degree** professional programs
- **73 graduate students** in 3 master's programs and 4 professional graduate certificates
- **47 international students**
- **114 open studies students** in credit courses
- **A Board of Governors** comprising 8 public members, 7 virtue-of-office members, 3 stakeholder members, and 10 heritage members (Lutheran Church Canada)
- **61 permanent faculty members**
- **248 sessional instructors**
- **83 permanent staff** members and 13 contracted staff
- **832 awarded scholarships** and bursaries
- **A scholarship endowment** valued at more than \$1.2 million

Concordia strives to provide interactive and innovative university classes offered within an engaged learning community of students, faculty, and staff. Its programs emphasize writing and scholarship; integration of technology with teaching; and practical hands-on learning through assignments and field, laboratory, and work experiences. As we strive to provide a strong foundation for life, we also design our degrees to prepare students well for the workplace, for further professional studies—including law and medicine—or for graduate school. According to national and provincial surveys, an overwhelming number of Concordia graduates are completely satisfied with their university experience. Concordia has clearly risen to the academic challenge of developing its students intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally as they prepare for their futures.

The diversity of our student population is one of Concordia's strengths; we have created a safe place for students of all faiths (or none) to learn and test ideas. Our intimate campus encourages diverse and accessible opportunities for students, including, among other activities, athletics, clubs, drama, student leadership, choir, and music. This supportive environment incorporates services for aboriginal students, for students returning to school after several years, and for students with physical or learning disabilities, so that all may participate in the university experience.





**EXISTING ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
AND STUDENT SERVICES**

Concordia University College of Alberta offers undergraduate programs in Arts, Management and Science summarized in the table below. Students can earn a Bachelor of Arts (4-year) in one of six programs or a Bachelor of Arts (3-year) in one of ten programs. Bachelor of Science degrees, both four- and three-year options, are available in four programs with emphases in three specified areas for the four-year degree. The Bachelor of Management is a four-year degree program with emphases in five key areas. Undergraduate students

may also elect to study for a minor in twenty-six different fields. Concordia offers two baccalaureate after-degree programs, in Elementary Education and in Environmental Health. Its graduate offerings include three master's degrees and four professional graduate certificates. Concordia also offers church work programs as degrees, colloquy programs, and certificates.

TABLE 1 A listing of Concordia program offerings 2013–14

Bachelor of Arts (4yr)	English (Basic, Enhanced), Music, Psychology (Applied Emphasis), Religious Studies, Religious Studies (Applied Emphasis)
Bachelor of Arts (3yr)	Drama, English, French, History, Music, Philosophy, Political Economy, Psychology, Religious Studies, Sociology
Bachelor of Science (4yr)	Biology (General, Emphasis in Cell and Molecular Biology, Emphasis in Integrative Biology), Chemistry, Environmental Science (General, Emphasis in Environmental Assessment and Remediation), Mathematics
Bachelor of Science (3yr)	Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Science, Mathematics
Bachelor of Management (4yr)	Emphases in Accounting, Finance, Human Resource Management, Leadership, Marketing
Minors	Biochemistry, Biology, Business, Canadian Studies, Career Development, Chemistry, Drama, Economics, Education, English, Environmental Science, Forensic Studies, French, History, Information Technology and Computing Science, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Physical Education and Sport Studies, Physics, Political Science, Pre-Seminary, Psychology, Religious Studies, Religious Studies (Applied Emphasis), Sociology
After-Degree	Elementary Education, Environmental Health
Graduate Studies	Master of Arts in Biblical and Christian Studies, Master of Information Systems Assurance Management, Master of Information Systems Security Management, Graduate Diploma in Information Assurance, Graduate Diploma in Psychological Assessment, Graduate Certificate in Animal Assisted Therapy, Graduate Certificate in Psychological Assessment, Graduate Certificate in Public Health Leadership, Graduate Certificate in Public Health Strategic Communication, Graduate Certificate in Public Health for Vulnerable Populations

As we have grown, Concordia has added to the physical spaces on the campus to increase student study and social spaces, to provide new laboratories, and to increase office space for faculty and staff. These are essential needs for a modern campus, and Concordia is diligently working to enhance the physical environment of the university. The most recent new building is the Hole Academic Centre (2007) which added much needed student service spaces as well as classrooms, lecture halls, and administrative and faculty offices. In 2009-10, the federal government, through the Knowledge Infrastructure Program, provided 50% of the funding to support critical maintenance upgrades and renovations to campus spaces. Most notably, the Arnold Guebert Library, built in the 1950s and renovated in 1995, received roof and air-handling system replacements as well as new flooring, shelving, computer access, and seating for the student spaces. The Board of Governors' plan to increase the Concordia student body over the coming decade will require some

expansion of our physical structures, but within the context of a fully-consultative, strategic, and gradual implementation of new buildings and operations as funds become available.

Some of the greatest changes for Concordia in recent years have involved expanding services for students, expansions that have also permitted faculty and staff to work more effectively and efficiently.

Most notable have been enhancements to admissions, student accounts, registration, and classroom web-based systems that have modernized and facilitated access to information technology.

Enhanced services for students include the addition of academic strategists to support students with academic difficulties, the development of the Learning Commons Project to improve accessibility of student services, and the Behaviour Support and Intervention Team to assist those with potentially problematic behaviours.

CURRENT FACULTY SERVICE AND SCHOLARSHIP ACTIVITIES

Concordia's faculty are dedicated teachers who strive to maintain their credibility through their research and scholarship activities. In the 2011–2012 academic year, accomplishments of the 61 permanent faculty members included:

1 Publications

- a. 11 books or chapters authored or co-authored
- b. 5 books edited or co-edited
- c. 93 articles in refereed journals
- d. 30 articles in non-refereed publications
- e. 46 peer-reviewed publications with student authors

2 Presentations

- a. 47 conference presentations
- b. 40 public presentations
- c. 4 media appearances

3 Research Grants

- a. 5 reduction-in-teaching assignment awards
- b. \$44,891 internal research grants
- c. \$269,472 external research grants
(including multi-year grants)

Recently, Concordia was given the opportunity through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to develop and implement the Canadian Centre for Scholarship and the Christian Faith. The Centre provides a vibrant, new interdisciplinary meeting point for scholars conducting research that illuminates the relationship between Christian faith, academic learning, and the contemporary world. The first annual conference, "The Humanities and the Christian Faith," was held at Concordia in May, 2012. Presenters focused on how the humanities interact with, reflect, and inform the Christian faith. The second conference, "The Social Sciences and the Christian Faith," was held at Concordia in May, 2013.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Early in the tenure of Concordia's current president, professional consultants were invited to help us identify our key challenges, gaps and priority solutions. The consultants identified three central challenges for the future of Concordia that focused on the question of future capacity.

Specifically, Concordia is confronted with serious financial challenges due to declining enrolments, a low external public profile due to institutional identity issues, and a lack of clarity of the intended future size and shape of the institution.

Further, the consulting group identified two reflective considerations for Concordia as we prepare for the future. First, the organic evolution of the institution over 92 years has produced a structure that is not intentional, with the result that academic programming is less efficient than it could be.

Second, the university community is overly dependent on established norms and values making it difficult to effectively respond to challenges and change.

While these problems seem daunting, the consultants also identified eight key areas for priority actions in the institution. Concordia administration, faculty and staff members are actively engaged in positively addressing these priorities for the benefit of this university community:

- 1 Create a sense of urgency** in the university community about the need for rejuvenation.
- 2 Create a shared and concrete vision** for the institution.
- 3 Implement fully effective, integrated** student services to better support our student body.
- 4 Develop effective planning** processes for university progress.
- 5 Define clear leadership** accountability to support faculty and staff.
- 6 Develop effective marketing** strategies to enhance enrolments.
- 7 Define the central role of information** technology in learning and services for students.
- 8 Develop a culture of performance** planning and innovation for faculty development.

Of these priority actions, this academic plan plays an important role in addressing the priorities of a shared and concrete vision and of leadership accountability. The academic plan will also support the effectiveness of a planning process and the development of a culture of performance planning and innovation, as well as the effective integration of information technology in learning.



Concordia University College of Alberta has reason to be confident in its ability to address future opportunities in post-secondary education. Although it has faced other financial challenges over the past decade, Concordia has made careful use of existing funds and still been able to expand offerings and spaces. Our spending efficiencies help to secure our success in serving current students as well as those of the next generation. We are facing our challenges directly and through constructive actions are aiming for, and achieving, positive results.



CONCORDIA TOMORROW

An Academic Plan involves the entire university. All faculties, departments, and individuals must see themselves reflected in the Academic Plan and recognize ways in which they can contribute to the realization of the University's academic goals. While, like every post-secondary institution, Concordia desires quality academic programming, high student engagement, teaching excellence and scholastic achievements, it has also reflected on what is presently offered, on what needs to be revitalized, developed or deleted, and on its distinctiveness in the academic marketplace.

Concordia's development of the Academic Plan began with the Concordia Tomorrow process, recognizing our university's need to deal with the changes in to its size, programming, and community outreach. By updating the vision, mission and values statements we have better described the preferred future for Concordia and our graduates.

MISSION

Concordia University College of Alberta is a community of learning grounded in scholarship, freedom, and the Christian faith, preparing students to be independent thinkers, ethical leaders, reflective servants in their occupations, and citizens for the common good.

VISION

Concordia University College of Alberta will be recognized nationally and internationally for its graduates' knowledge, skill, integrity, and wisdom.

VALUES

- 1 Concordia is seeking an institutional reputation** and profile both locally and nationally as an excellent smaller Christian university true to its mission and vision, and a good choice for all students seeking to enrol in its programs.
- 2 Concordia maintains its mission** as a Christian university serving the public.
- 3 Concordia seeks to respond** to the expanding expectations of a diverse population of students, faculty, and staff with various worldviews and experiences, varied generational attitudes, various accommodation requirements, and with a growing sense of the necessity of equal treatment in Canada's pluralistic society.
- 4 Concordia seeks out faculty** who support Concordia's mission.

- 5 Concordia seeks to recruit**, retain, and train administrators and staff who contribute to its mission, and also to put in place appropriate human resource planning to support the ongoing mission in spite of the constant challenges of competition for scarce human resources.
- 6 Concordia seeks collaborative opportunities** with community partners and other educational institutions which make sense and allow it to enhance its mission, without placing undue hardships on our institution brought about by such arrangements.

The mission, vision and values were supported by a set of eight directional statements which detailed the goals that the academic plan must address. These statements continuously serve to support decision-making and strategic planning at the university.

DIRECTIONAL STATEMENTS

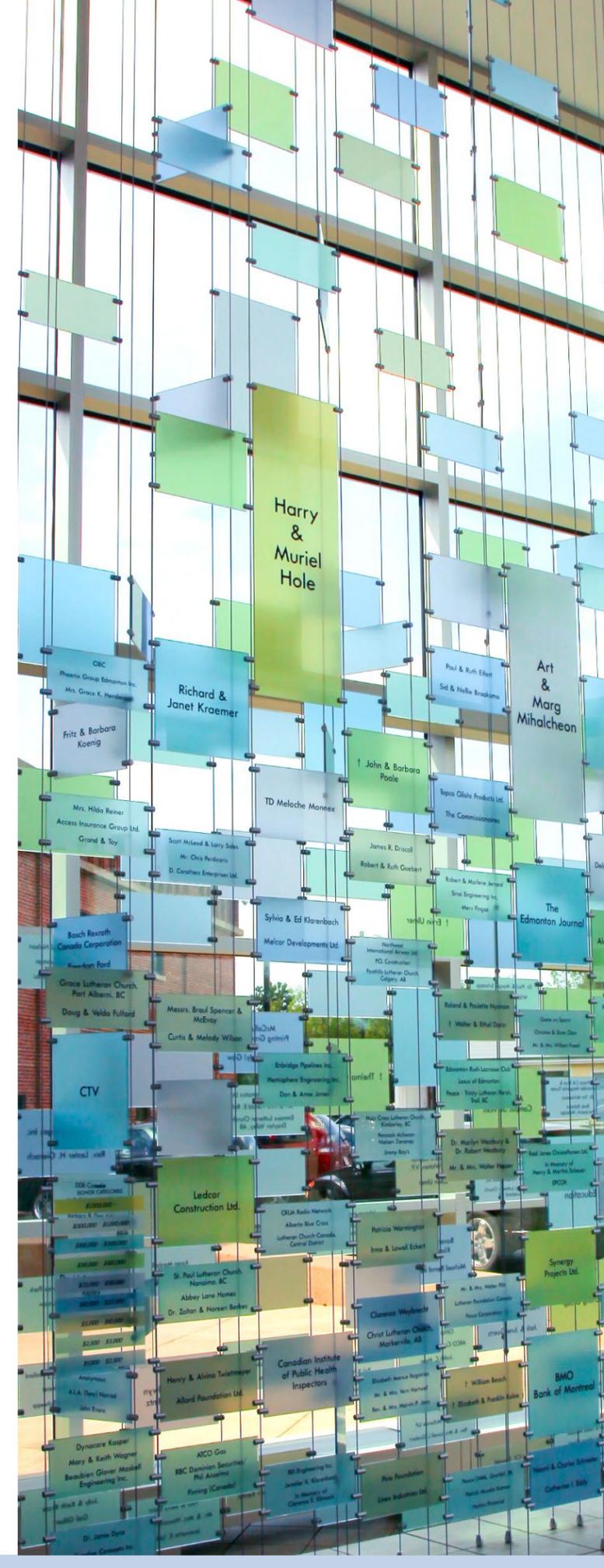
- 1 Concordia will be student-centered.** Concordia will establish regularly scheduled procedures to ascertain student needs, to meet those needs, and to review how well it met them.
- 2 Concordia will be of sufficient size** to prosper. To reach an economy of scale, Concordia will aim to increase student enrolment to 3000 FLE by formulating a growth policy for new majors, programs, and degrees in all areas, as indicated by assessed student need and demand.
- 3 Concordia's future programs will enhance** its vitality by building on its current strengths.
- 4 Concordia will continue to develop** niche areas in its undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs. Concordia will distinguish itself through the development and implementation of superior program designs and program delivery.
- 5 Concordia will seek out and initiate** collaborations in areas where clear mutual benefit can be demonstrated. Such collaborations will be primarily within Alberta and may include shared academic programs and research with other institutions, shared projects with industry, and shared infrastructure.
- 6 Research at Concordia**, besides being an important measure of the quality of our university, will inform and complement ongoing excellence in teaching. Concordia will encourage and support research by all faculty and academic staff as well as by individual and groups of students when appropriate.

- 7 Concordia will honour its Lutheran heritage** and value the diversity of its faculty, staff, and student population. It will provide a foundation of faith and intellectual integrity that supports a scholarly community based on acceptance and respect.
- 8 Concordia will establish, maintain, and review** administrative and policy structures that satisfy the criteria of the "Concordia Tomorrow" plan.

With a renewed vision for Concordia, the President undertook to draft and share a consultation paper, "Concordia Tomorrow: Toward an Academic Plan" (August 2011), in which he outlined the need for change through the identification of key stressors for the institution and proposed twelve concepts for consideration. He then asked each academic unit to meet and respond to the document that fall, initiating the deliberations for academic planning.

NEXT STEPS TOWARD AN ACADEMIC PLAN

The Academic Planning Task Force consisting of representatives from academic units across the University was convened in June 2012 with the mandate of developing this Academic Plan by summer of 2013. In fall 2012, a program manager was introduced into the program to focus on achieving this goal. During November and December 2012, a series of small-group consultations were held with each faculty unit to identify key priorities for Concordia's academic plan and to begin articulating strategies to achieve these priorities. The priorities and key strategies from the faculty-wide consultations were presented to Faculty Council and the Board in January 2013. During January and February of 2013, the small-group consultations continued with the service groups on campus including Student Life, Marketing and Recruiting, Internationalization, Admissions and Registrar, Career Development and the Library. What follows are the outcomes of those consultations.





PRIORITIES FOR A FUTURE CONCORDIA

In order to achieve the institution's overarching goals and support its directional statements, Concordia's faculty categorized its key academic goals into five broad priorities:

- 1 **creating** a distinctive environment
- 2 **delivering** quality academic programs
- 3 **engaging** students
- 4 **attracting** and developing faculty and staff
- 5 **creating societal connections** through scholarship

The emphasis on distinctiveness is a discrete priority, as Concordia has suffered from a lack of awareness in the general Edmonton community. Not only is the creation of a distinctive environment a goal for the marketing departments, but it must also be a goal for the academic programs and faculty, in order to offer students a desirable choice within the post-secondary educational market of the Edmonton area. Two further priorities focus on Concordia's intention to provide a student-centered approach to all activities through both the academic offerings and the other services and opportunities on campus. The latter two priorities focus on developing and supporting the faculty and staff so that they can better serve our students. Concordia will strive to develop a rich academic environment that enables students, faculty, and supporting staff to experience intellectual and professional growth.

DESCRIBING THE FIVE KEY PRIORITIES

1 **Creating a Distinctive Environment**

Concordia offers undergraduate, after-degree, and graduate education that gives students the foundation for a better life, including workplace-ready skills and attitudes. We provide supportive student-faculty interactions and create a welcoming learning community as the means of preparing our students for this better life, and for entry into the workplace, professional careers, and graduate education. Faculty and staff are very clear on what our institution has to offer: this is the Concordia advantage, our distinctive nature that we will work to enhance and share.

- **University Feeling and Citizenship:** Our distinctiveness is based on a holistic view of person and world; our students learn that they are of value and have something to contribute to the world.
- **Student Success:** We have a sense that our students are successful upon graduation and we need to document and share this information better.
- **Spirit and Community:** Our campus is diverse. The small scale of Concordia allows individual connections between students and faculty or staff, creating a community of learning that can extend beyond graduation.
- **Breadth, Communication and Marketable Soft Skills:** We emphasize the learning of soft skills – collaboration, communication and critique – bringing the heart and the head together. We need to share this with employers to support student transitions to the work world.

- **Interactive and Participatory Learning:** We are distinctive in offering a unique combination of the breadth of liberal education and the strategic learning of our professional programs. Students can discover, contribute, and express as they think and learn.

2 **Delivering Superior Academic Programs**

Concordia will build on its strengths in teaching and curriculum development to deliver academic programs that will enhance its vitality. Our programming will be well designed and delivered to provide students with the means to contribute to society and sustain their appetites for knowledge and truth. Concordia is already well recognized through national surveys for the high quality of its teaching. We will further work to demonstrate that our programs also link to professions and careers with the goal of extending our reputation for serving the needs of students. In these ways Concordia will strengthen the quality and attractiveness of its undergraduate programs, while responding to opportunities to meet societal needs through growth in graduate programming. As a means to this end, Concordia will better integrate its undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs.

3 Engaging Students

Concordia's partnership with students will create an experience that includes a strong balance of academics, community activity, and personal support. Students are central to our mission and vision. We are predominantly a commuter campus community and must respect and be realistic about the time commitments of students. Through the next five years, the university will deepen student engagement by moving in three key directions:

- **Community and Spirit:** Building on its Christian foundation, Concordia will be a diverse community where people of all faiths and worldviews are encouraged to explore, share, question and develop in a safe environment that is respectful of all traditions.
- **Advising and Supporting:** Our staff and faculty will create the means by which students are fully engaged and aware of their degree progress and career-building options during their time at our university.
- **Sharing and Including:** The incorporation of international students into the institution necessarily requires special efforts to create an inclusive and sharing community in order to enhance the university experience for all students.

4 Attracting and Developing Quality Faculty and Staff

Concordia will be distinguished by the faculty and staff we attract and retain through our dedication to lifelong learning, respect for work-life balance, opportunity for diverse experiences, and recognition of their efforts and accomplishments. Faculty and staff development opportunities will be created with institutional support in time and resources. Our best senior professors will undertake to mentor new faculty to ensure Concordia's continuing reputation of teaching excellence. Staff will be respected for the role they play in ensuring an outstanding student experience at our university. Concordia will encourage innovative teaching projects, including the extension to technological pedagogies, and it will recognize and celebrate excellence in the institution and beyond.

5 Creating Societal Connections through Scholarship

Concordia will create and support community connections through our scholarship, research and creative activities. Our faculty and staff are encouraged to engage in community activities through participation in educational workshops, multi-stakeholder committees, or any venue where our professional expertise can add value. Collaborations will help us garner external recognition, enhance our reputation, and generate community pride in our university. We will pursue scholarly activities of interest to the community and invite the community in to learn and participate with us in these activities.

To better-realize these scholarly opportunities we will use our small scale to create and support cross-disciplinary scholarship between our faculty experts, support efforts of individual faculty as well as group contributions, and work to expand the engagement of undergraduate students through research opportunities in the program structures. Our connections to external communities will be enhanced locally, nationally, and internationally. These community and scholastic partnerships can also greatly enrich Concordia's academic programs and opportunities for our graduates.



It will be essential to monitor the university's reputation during the implementation of this academic plan. The promotion and communication of successes of the faculty and programs as well as those of our students and alumni will demonstrate our impact on the greater community and establish our position in the academic framework for this region.

STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE THE ACADEMIC PRIORITIES

With these five academic priorities clearly in mind, the consultation process explored ideas for their achievement. Some strategies are institution-wide while others will require each faculty, department or program to apply them in the most effective manner. Our ability to implement strategies will necessarily depend upon available financial and human resources. Many proposed strategies cross over several of the priorities, necessitating emphasis on those strategies that provide the greatest return, while others will be supported through long-term initiatives. Hence, Concordia will have the flexibility over the next five years to change directions if it makes sense to do so. These strategies provide a set of directed initiatives congruent with the five academic priorities and Concordia's overall goals.

Articulating our Faith Foundation

From Concordia's beginnings as a small Lutheran college, we have built a university community where students, faculty and staff are encouraged to examine the world, empowered to seek their own understanding, and equipped to grow from experiences creating a solid foundation for life. Our present campus reflects the breadth and diversity of our Edmonton community. Students, staff and faculty come to us from across the tapestry of cultures, religions, and backgrounds that compose any sizable Canadian city. This openness is one of the strengths of Concordia University College of Alberta today. Our faith foundation enables us to provide an educational environment that encourages sharing, discussion, and debate in a manner that is accepting, respectful, and thought-provoking. However, articulating the positive nature of Concordia's most distinguishing feature has been challenging within the post-secondary marketplace. Efforts will be made to frame programs, activities, and outreach to demonstrate and emphasize our unique opportunity for the communities, cultures and faiths across Edmonton.

Strategy #1 *Concordia will articulate the nature of its faith foundation in such a way that it is appealing to those who share, as well as to those who do not share, that specific foundation.*

Creating an Effective Academic Structure

This is a critical time to consider revising Concordia's academic structures. The current academic structure at Concordia has developed gradually over time and has served well for many decades. However, as new programs have been added, it has become unnecessarily complicated. When new programs are considered, there is no obvious mechanism for introduction or integration as part of cross-disciplinary opportunities. Some programs are isolated without clear administrative leadership for students and faculty. Our graduate and professional programs, which currently account for one third of our graduating students, are segregated in such a way that transition of students between the undergraduate programs and these advanced educational opportunities is more limited than it should be. Many individuals are managing multiple administrative roles. The effective implementation of other aspects of this plan depends upon the initial step of clarifying and improving the academic structure to create an environment where all programs and faculty are well supported administratively.

Strategy #2 *The faculty and administration will undertake to implement an effective academic structure such that programs are well supported administratively and there are clear pathways for departmental reporting and faculty development.*

Reforming the Concordia Core Curriculum

Concordia has long prided itself on the delivery of a liberal education as a solid foundation for life. Over time, the core of our academic programs has been adjusted and has grown. Yet there has been no comprehensive review or reconsideration of the core requirements for our BA and BSc programs since they were introduced more than two decades ago. In a recent student survey, the core curriculum was identified as being onerous and outdated without a clear link to any future career planning. The present core requirements warrant reconsideration by the faculty. In addition, the requirements for many concentrations and majors have developed organically rather than strategically, resulting in an overbearing course load for students such that that inhibits the completion of their degrees in a timely manner while the institution is forced to deliver courses to very small class numbers. This is not sustainable in the long-term and requires immediate attention beginning with a critical evaluation of the core curriculum.

Strategy #3 *Faculty will identify an updated "Concordia Core" curriculum that fulfills the requirements of the Campus Alberta Quality Council approvals, demonstrates clear learning objectives, and provides all students with the necessary skills for any degree program they desire to pursue.*

One potential mechanism to support a core of student abilities was investigated by a project team in 2012. The Academic Portfolio Task Force identified five key abilities that any graduate of our university should possess: thinking, discovering, expressing, contributing and learning. The intention was to include measures of these abilities as learning objectives in each program and course. The efforts of this task force need to be integrated into the outcomes of a new core curriculum.

Strategy #4 *The Academic Portfolio Task Force will continue to develop ways of integrating the five key abilities we desire for all our graduates (thinking, discovering, expressing, contributing, and learning) into the learning objectives of the core curriculum and related programs.*

Incorporating Flexibility in Program Requirements

The integration of a “Concordia Core” into the curriculum of the degree programs should provide other academic benefits for students. The transferability between programs and, indeed, between faculties should prove to be more seamless and result in a minimum of lost time to the student’s progress. A student wishing to extend a three-year degree into a four-year degree should simply require a further academic year, rather than adding extra semesters to achieve his or her goal. The development of program mechanisms to ensure these efficiencies will require flexibility and greater options for students in the design of their program, making the degree structure simpler for students to follow and complete in a timely manner. Students will then have the opportunity to create a course of study that will fulfill their own defined learning goals.

At the same time, by decreasing the number of courses specifically required by programs, Concordia will benefit from the ability to rotate course offerings and offer a greater variety of courses. This will also support the financial goals of the institution by decreasing the number of very small classes that must be run to accommodate program needs.

Strategy #5 *Faculty departments will work to ensure flexibility in degree programs, minors, and courses to support student transitions and career goals as well as interdisciplinary studies.*

The articulation of learning outcomes for each program can provide clarity to the students and instructors on the purpose of the specific components of the program. Each faculty and department should specify the learning outcomes of their programs and how these outcomes will be achieved through the course offerings and other experiences. Students can then exhibit these learning outcomes (described in Strategy #3) in their academic portfolios, clearly demonstrating to potential employers those skills that they bring to the workplace. In addition, clearly defined learning outcomes can support faculty and sessional instructors as they are developing course curricula.

Strategy #6 *Faculty departments will articulate the learning outcomes for each program, provide mechanisms to achieve these outcomes in each course for the benefit of students and instructors, and link these outcomes to potential career paths arising from the program.*

Developing Career-Relevant Academic Programs and Streams

As a university, Concordia must explicitly acknowledge the career goals of students. We strive to provide a broad, liberal education that can support students throughout their lives; as well, we recognize that students, parents, and society expect universities to provide a means toward employment, careers and professions. The course offerings we already provide can be readily packaged to support career choices. These career-stream options do not require any governmental approval or added cost to the institution or the students and will effectively complement the more flexible degree programs. Students may choose the career stream that fulfills their specific personal goals or elect to pursue a great variety of course offerings. The streams can target areas where Concordia demonstrates career leadership in the academic market, helping us to build our distinct identity and allow for niche marketing.

Strategy #7 *Faculty will demonstrate Concordia’s career leadership by organizing existing offerings into effective career streams to support student choices for entering professional programs, professional careers, graduate schools, and other career plans.*

Many of our programs most recognized for their success have a common thread: each offers a form of practical experience as part of the credits for the degree. The learning from these experiences has been applauded by students as they move into the work world. The success of practical experiences in our programs should be shared with other departments with the goal of increasing the career-relevance of our academic programs. In some programs and also in a cross-disciplinary manner, the addition of student-faculty research initiatives can substantially enhance the undergraduate experience, enabling students to make decisions about the pursuit of a graduate career. Regardless of the mechanism selected, faculties need to seriously consider the inclusion of practical and relevant experiences that students can use to support their transitions into their careers.

Strategy #8 *Faculties will explore and implement methods that allow students to experience practical work in their discipline, whether as practicum work, student-faculty research initiatives, or other relevant activities.*

While the traditional approach of a university degree is attractive to many, other learners will be well served by certificates or diplomas. Whether at the undergraduate, professional or graduate level, alternative educational choices that initiate, supplement, or change a student's focus on education would be a valuable addition to

Concordia's programming. As an institution that offers three-year baccalaureate degrees, this university has a unique opportunity to guide and support student transition into professional schools and programs following the completion of a three-year undergraduate credential. With the support of the career streams, students will see clear paths to future opportunities and the value of Concordia's advantage.

Strategy #9 *Encourage Concordia's three-year degrees by ensuring that programs support students in transitions to professional schools. Further consider the development of certificates and diplomas to provide alternative education choices to a wider variety of students and enhance their opportunities for work and career.*

The strategies for career-relevant programming require consistent, effective, and available academic advising for students throughout their university progress. From the first-year students who are deciding on a discipline of study, to those who are selecting the most appropriate courses for their goals and on to those who are completing their learning in a capstone research project that highlights their attained skills, all students deserve the support and advice of the faculty members at the university. With the growth of post-graduate offerings, faculty interaction in student research necessarily enhances the academic advising at that level.

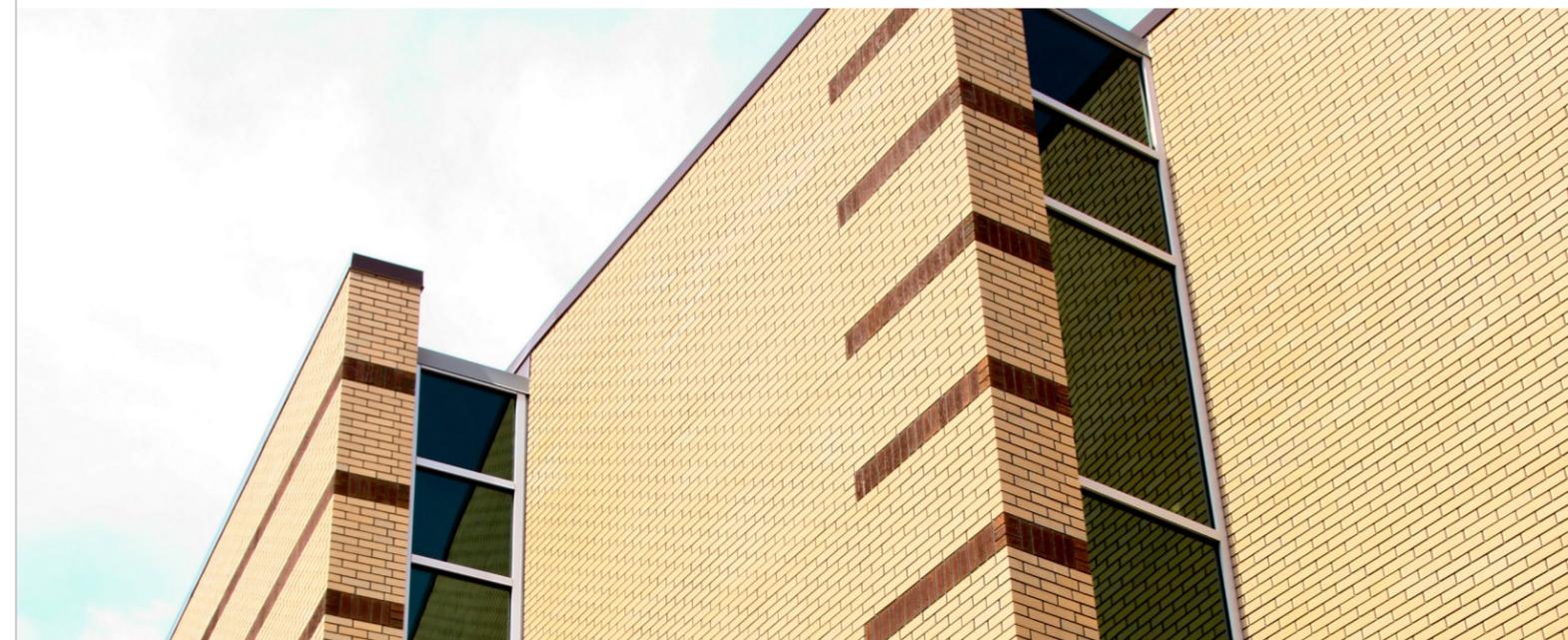
Strategy #10 *Enhance academic advising and support of students from their first year through to graduation and beyond to post-graduate education.*

Enhancing a Culture of Research and Scholarship

Concordia faculty have largely been active in individualized research projects. These have been successful in connecting our faculty within their disciplines and have supported faculty development. However, the approach has not always supported the institution's need for more public awareness and enhanced reputation as a learning organization. In some cases, working in isolation has made it difficult for individuals to sustain their research in the longer term. Governments and society have been encouraging larger-scale, multi-disciplinary projects that have potential to increase cooperation and collaboration among faculty with varying skills and between organizations. The development of an academic structure that supports cross-disciplinary projects would help generate such projects.

Large scale projects would require a certain critical mass of participation and project leaders for long-term success. They would allow for "drop-in" participation, providing flexibility in terms of faculty time and interests. Graduate and senior project students might also be able to participate in the existing research areas for a year or even just a semester. The external community will also see an opportunity for access to expertise in areas of need, providing a forum for local outreach and recognition.

Strategy #11 *Support larger-scale, cross-disciplinary research initiatives, especially those that meet the research needs of the local community, creating societal connections for our faculty and students.*



Engaging students is more than having extra-curricular activities on campus; indeed, the academic community has an opportunity to engage students in the world of learning, research and professionalism. Promotion of the scholarly work of the campus community shares ideas, provides career options, and demonstrates that instructors do more than lecture and grade. Whether this includes opportunities for debates about faith, social science discussions, or science demonstrations, encouraging students to engage in the broader university community can be enhanced. This can also include community participation in our research, sharing learning opportunities with the community, and opening our doors for cultural and artistic showcases, among other prospects.

Strategy #12 *Promote and share the service, scholarly, and professional activities of the university with our students and community in a more conscious and deliberate manner.*

Integrating International Activities

Concordia has identified internationalization as one strategy to extend the institution's reach academically and support the university financially. The appointment of a Vice-President International is a public step to demonstrate the commitment to this goal. Integrating the internationalization plans into the academic structure, programs, and outcomes of the university is a vital step that needs to occur in the short-term. Internationalization should be seen to be a mainstream component of the academic outcomes of Concordia, including teaching, research and collaborations, as well as service to other communities. The benefits to Concordia students and faculty are multiple: opportunities for teaching abroad, student experiences overseas, engagement of global scholars-in-residence, and development of research and scholarly activities.

Strategy #13 *Integrate internationalization activities into the academic outcomes of the university, including opportunities in the areas of teaching, research collaboration, and service to global communities.*

Developing Faculty and Staff

Concordia has been acknowledged as an institution with a faculty who are passionate about teaching. As professional academics, we are also committed to the need for research and scholarly activities as well as service to the institution in the form of committee work, special projects and administrative tenures. We can do a better job, however, of supporting new faculty members and sessional instructors as they begin their careers in this university. Senior academics need to ensure that those coming into the university can achieve and maintain an appropriate work-life balance. In addition, fairness across the institution with regards to teaching loads, research opportunity, and service load requires a conscious approach to sharing the required tasks.

Strategy #14 *Conscientiously develop opportunities for the mentoring and development of faculty and sessional instructors. Recognize the need for work-life balance in the academic community, and provide mechanisms to support faculty and staff in creating balance.*

In fact, the health of the institution depends on the health of each department, and the health of each department depends on all the others. Exchange, secondment, internship and mentoring can support the development of faculty to ensure an enhanced and vibrant pool of individuals available to support the institution's needs. While the implementation of a new degree program can take years through the governmental processes, the university can focus on collaborations and relationships, both locally and internationally, that support and increase student numbers by achieving greater recognition of Concordia and its faculty.

Strategy #15 *Inter-departmental and inter-institutional opportunities will be used to enhance the professional development of the faculty and encourage the development of relationships that will support an increase in student enrolment through enhanced recognition of Concordia and its faculty.*

