

# York University University Academic Plan 2015-2020

## A Discussion Paper Prepared for the Open Forum, December 10, 2015

This paper has been issued by the Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee in advance of an open forum devoted to discussion of the University Academic Plan 2015-2020.

### Outline

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### Forward

The Provostial White Paper sets out a framework for York University 2010 – 2020 to be recognized internationally as Canada's Engaged University enhancing learning and research through academic excellence, diversity, social relevance, and civic engagement. The concept of engagement in the document builds on York's long-established commitment to community engagement defined as collaboration between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional, national and global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity. But the consultations for the White Paper also highlighted engagement as a vehicle to strengthen relationships and connections. Engaged students are better able to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a knowledge society which is increasingly been seen as a hallmark of a quality university experience. As a large university with many students who commute daily, York faces a special challenge in creating opportunities for students to engage faculty and their peers in learning and co-curricular situations. A commitment to engagement has also been viewed as a means to enhance the quality of our scholarship, research and creative activities by focusing on the impact of our efforts for identifying problems and finding solutions to the pressing social issues facing the world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. Twelve benchmarks are out in the White Paper that informed the development of the priorities and strategies in the University Academic Plan 2010 – 2015 to advance York's aspirations including commitments to expand experiential education, access, and our research intensity, interdisciplinarity and comprehensiveness, student success, internationalization and community engagement.

Significant progress has been made over the past five years through a commitment to continual improvement and the types of transformational change needed to enhance quality and realize York's mission and vision. The University Academic Plan 2015 – 2020 is an opportunity to consolidate our efforts by focusing on the implementation of the priorities and strategies that have emerged from the previous five years giving careful attention to any challenges that have arisen. Fiscal pressures and the need for financial sustainability, the lack of understanding about the important role of liberal arts education in a knowledge-based society, and the pressure to differentiate universities remind us of the importance of protecting and building on York's strengths as we look forward to York in 2020. Our commitment to engagement is equally relevant to how we function as a community and to advancing York's values of collegiality, inclusiveness and diversity.

The UAP 2015 – 2020 is therefore not a wholly new plan but a continuation of the UAP 2010 – 2015 framed within the context of the White Paper but shaped from what we have learned over the past five years.

## **Mission and Vision**

### ***A Reminder of Planning Foundations***

#### ***York's Mission (as endorsed by Senate and the Board)***

The mission of York University is the pursuit, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge. We promise excellence in research and teaching in pure, applied and professional fields. We test the boundaries and structures of knowledge. We cultivate the critical intellect. York University is part of Toronto: we are dynamic, metropolitan and multi-cultural. York University is part of Canada: we encourage bilingual study, we value diversity. York University is open to the world: we explore global concerns. A community of faculty, students, staff, alumni and volunteers committed to academic freedom, social justice, accessible education, and collegial self-governance, York University makes innovation its tradition.

#### ***York's Vision (drawn from the Strategic Mandate Agreement)***

York University is engaged, progressive, comprehensive, and research intensive, internationally recognized for excellence in teaching and learning; scholarship, research and creative activities and their impact; student success; inclusivity and diversity.

## **Values**

We value above all else:

- excellence
- diversity
- progressive
- innovative thinking
- inclusivity
- collegiality
- interdisciplinarity
- the translation of academic scholarship, research and creative activities into civic, scientific, and cultural action
- the role of the university in advancing social justice and equity

## **Reflections on the White Paper**

### ***Progress to Date (benchmark highlights to be added)***

York has made considerable progress on a trajectory towards fully realizing its status as an engaged and comprehensive, research-intensive, internationally recognized University. This progress has been facilitated by a strong planning culture that has provided a framework for identifying opportunities, assessing progress, and addressing challenges, as well as a commitment to continual improvement.

The Divisions and Faculties of the University highlight the specific initiatives that they undertake at a local level in support of these efforts in their Integrated Resource Plans. The University's benchmarking exercise during the final year of the UAP 2010 – 2015 culminated in a Senate-endorsed Institutional Integrated Resource Plan (IIRP) highlighting our successes and recommendations for furthering initiatives that might benefit from pan-university coordination and collaboration. The UAP 2015 – 2020 is an opportunity to build on those efforts by consolidating our plans and advancing the strategies that have emerged as having the most potential for York to fulfill its mission and realize its vision taking into consideration changing internal and external factors. The three overarching themes of the current UAP continue to animate our planning documents:

- Quality
- Innovation
- Engagement

### ***Distinct Strengths on Which to Build***

The Academic and Administrative Program Review (AAPR) in combination with annual updates on the Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs) of divisions and faculties affirm a number of distinct strengths on which York can continue to build as we move into the next five years of the White Paper. These strengths include:

- Pre-eminent programs in liberal arts and professional studies including internationally acclaimed programs in business, humanities, law, and social sciences
- Leading-edge bilingual college
- Intensifying research, scholarship and creative activities including newly expanded innovation initiatives
- Inventive experiential education, and technology enhanced learning
- Engagement including community engagement, building relationships with relevant communities of practice, collaborations with the external community in research, teaching, mentoring, experiential education and advising, connections with our alumni through events, social media, communications
- Expansive outreach and partnerships locally and internationally, with collaborative research that spans every continent and reaches from the ocean depths to outer space
- Advanced Strategic Enrolment Management including enhanced orientation through YUStart
- Culture of continuous improvement
- Local, national and international recognition through prestigious publications, awards, rankings, media

### ***Embracing Opportunities***

Building on our strengths, York is also poised to leverage a number of new opportunities during 2015 to 2020, including:

- Markham Centre campus, a generational opportunity to create a 21<sup>st</sup> century campus, an incubator for new ideas scalable to other York campuses – York's vision for a blurring of town and gown won out over 19 separate proposals for a new campus.
- Expanding and promoting Glendon's (and York's) contributions to bilingual education in central and southwestern Ontario by building on the College's strong liberal arts and expanding its focus into pre-professional, professional and science-focused offerings

- Multi-campus, multi-faceted
- Generating transformative research through collaboration, critical thinking, interdisciplinarity
- Expanding outreach and partnerships with local, national, global, virtual communities in academic, non-profit, private realms
- New research and curriculum including consolidating the Lassonde School of Engineering and becoming a leader in global health and expanding the Faculty of Health (continues to lay the groundwork for a medical school in the future)
- Life and learning in a sustainable setting, where the natural environment – including unique ecosystems – coexists with outstanding facilities of architectural significance
- Reflecting and creating social trends, providing leadership in digital frontiers such as the partnership between AMPD, Lassonde and Science
- Leveraging our diversity
- Welcoming new generations of students including international students, mature students, First Generation students, and enhancing our leadership in facilitating access and student mobility
- Transportation and location (with the subway becoming a public transit hub, proximity to airport, road networks) situating York at the heart of a dynamic region
- Leader in the practice of evidence based academic leadership – expansion of data analytics (including York data, student surveys and CPRs) to better inform decision-making in advancing our world-leading Faculties and programs

### ***How York Fulfils its Promises***

- Growing the full-time faculty complement, increasing contact between faculty members and students
- A commitment to collegiality and collaboration
- Outward facing practices
- Sponsoring trail-blazing discovery
- Increasing the number of highly committed students choosing York first at both the undergraduate and graduate level (sustaining one of the largest graduate student cohorts in North America)
- Creating a hub at the crossroads of the GTA
- Building on strengths while leveraging opportunities
- Making bigness beneficial – a “big tent” with big choices
- A history of and continued readiness for change – e.g., creating and transforming Faculties

## **Priorities**

### ***Innovative Academic Programs***

- Academic renewal of full-time faculty
- Strengthening program quality including rigorous quality assurance processes and standards, learning outcomes linked to assessment, articulating and promoting program distinctiveness
- Strengthening and revitalizing the liberal arts and liberal arts education throughout the curriculum
- Integrating research into the curriculum
- Continuing the goal of increasing comprehensiveness including on-going support for LSE, development of flagship professional programs, continuing to lay the groundwork for a medical school

- Renewing our commitment to interdisciplinarity – working between spaces and connecting with people in those spaces – including unique program combinations and the imbrication of liberal and professional studies
- *Completing* and *implementing* program action plans based on data from AAPR, IIRP, CPRs, student surveys and other relevant sources that build on successes, streamline and harmonize degree programs AND that address challenges including declining enrolment, duplication and degree complexity

In the next 5 years, we will: [benchmarks to be included]

### ***Increased Achievement in Scholarship, Research and Creative Activities***

- Facilitating transformative scholarship, creative activities and research initiatives aimed at research intensification
- Strengthening research networks locally and globally
- Expanding innovation hub and related activities
- Improving equipment and research spaces
- Supporting scholarship that requires little external funding but produces significant results while pursuing well-funded large-scale and collaborative opportunities
- Facilitating open access to York research

In the next 5 years, we will: [benchmarks to be included]

### ***Enhanced Teaching and Student Learning***

- Advancing pedagogical innovation through signature pedagogies including high quality technology-enhanced learning
- Linking teaching and research including research opportunities for students
- Increasing student interactions through experiential education opportunities, problem-based inquiry and related strategies,
- Increasing internationalization including expanding internationalization in the curriculum, international enrolments, exchanges (students, faculty, summer programs)
- Enhancing student mobility including a commitment to flexible course scheduling and improved credit transfer
- Strengthening academic supports including ESL, library services

In the next 5 years, we will: [benchmarks to be included]

### ***Increased Student Success***

- Building on SEM to attract and retain best students including customized persona strategies, early intervention and improved retention
- Advancing student services including enhancing a coordinated student success approach, student advising, mentoring, ESL, library supports, financial supports, skills and/or professional development skills at both the undergraduate and graduate levels - rethinking our processes from a student standpoint
- Implementing our mental health and well-being strategy for students (as well as for faculty and staff)

In the next 5 years, we will: [benchmarks to be included]

### ***Enhanced Campus Experience***

- On-going attention to campus security and safety
- Enhanced physical infrastructure and campus spaces, capital investment aligned with academic priorities
- Leveraging new facilities and amenities – subway stations and bus terminals, second student centre, Lions' stadium, amenities and infrastructure
- Creating a cultural hub, in and for the GTA
- Enhancing ecological sustainability, symmetry between built and natural environments

In the next 5 years, we will: [benchmarks to be included]

### ***Enhanced Engagement with the Community***

- Finalizing *Internationalization Plan* outlining priorities and initiatives including strategic academic partnerships both locally and globally
- Continuing expansion of strategic partnerships aligned with our priorities of research achievement, enhanced student learning, and increased student success
- Supporting community-based research and learning including opportunities for students
- Extending continuing studies and professional education

In the next 5 years, we will: [benchmarks to be included]

## **Enabling the Plan**

There are several key enablers essential to the success of the University Academic Plan and White Paper. These include:

- Integrated Resource Planning framework including program and service action plans
- Enhancing collegial governance
- Achieving financial sustainability, together with reliable and forward-looking budget information for planners, maximizing resources and investments aligned with academic priorities
- High quality and effective administrative services to support academic priorities, expanding shared services approach, empowering staff and local planners, career development
- Positioning ourselves for success, continual improvement in responsible advocacy for York, effective communications to enhance reputation, improved websites
- Review of academic unit structures to support the achievement of objectives including enhanced support for graduate education
- On-going engagement of the community in all facets of university life
- Increasing accountability and transparency
- Enhancing data analytics for evidence-based decision making, increasing access to information
- Defining metrics and strengthening evaluation, benchmarking progress internally and externally
- Measures to increase transparency and facilitate more strategic UAP than previous iterations
- Building, sharing and taking advantage of repositories of best practices
- Seamless, consistent and complementary planning modalities including long-term enrolment and complement plans