

**AN ACADEMIC PLAN FOR CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
2011-2016**

CONSULTATION DRAFT

RELEASED FEBRUARY 2, 2011

INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT ACADEMIC PLAN

The goal of taking a place among Canada's leading universities, first articulated in the 2005 academic plan *Moving Ahead*, remains real and vivid for us today. It was reiterated and made even more precise in Concordia's recent strategic framework document, *Reaching Up, Reaching Out*, which set a deliberately ambitious objective for Concordia of being recognized as one of Canada's top five comprehensive universities within the next decade. Both these documents made strong suggestions about the general directions Concordia would need to go in order to realize its goals. This plan, when complete, will provide even more specific designs for building the Concordia we are hoping to become.

The draft plan proposes that we organize our actions so as to achieve five objectives. The plan also deliberately leaves space for the Concordia community to devise an original and unforeseen objective that did not arise in the process that led to this draft.

RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY are placed first, because they are fundamental to the creation of a rich intellectual environment in which faculty members and advanced students can reach their full potential. We will expand our already substantial and rapidly growing research and creative activity: doing so can give a huge boost to our institutional reputation as we focus increasingly on attracting greater numbers of high-quality graduate students with whom our faculty can work and whom they can mentor, and on taking a lead role in major collaborative research projects.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS are at the heart of Concordia's educational mission, and are treated second in the plan for this reason. We will ensure that our academic programs—which, more than any other factor, attract students to Concordia—retain their vitality and their intellectual currency, by putting in place the means to ensure that we energetically foster the creation of innovative and distinctive new programs, even as we monitor and maintain our existing, successful programs. We will give ourselves the tools and criteria we need to make good decisions about how to allocate to our programs the resources to succeed.

STUDENT SUCCESS occurs within the context of strong and original academic programs, and we will build on the outstanding record of attainment of Concordia's students and alumni so that we become known as a university whose top graduates are on a par with those of the very best universities anywhere. Recognizing that our mission has been and will continue to be one of opportunity, we will also equip ourselves with the tools to ensure that every student admitted to Concordia has a fair shot at academic success.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING is a natural outworking of Concordia's mission to be deeply and intimately connected to the "real world," and because experiential learning is so important in our students' success, the next objective deals with this aspect of our educational offerings. We will expand the range of opportunities we offer students to engage in learning experiences that take them out of the classroom and into the world. Whether these involve co-op programs, research opportunities, or professional development, we will commit ourselves to becoming recognized as a leader in this area.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT is essential to our ability to achieve these academic objectives. Because we cannot flourish without creating an administrative culture that is open, collegial, and effective, our final objectives demand that we hold ourselves to the highest ethical and operational standards. Because it is vital for faculty members to recognize and develop their own responsibility for providing leadership regardless of the position they hold, we will ensure that we provide greater opportunities for the cultivation of the necessary talents and skills, as we strive to foster the next generation of academic leaders who will ensure Concordia's success.

Together, the actions proposed in each of these key areas will move Concordia forward substantially toward our institutional goals, and will significantly improve the academic experience and our shared working environment at our University. In large and small ways, this academic plan is a clear affirmation of our commitment to become a leading institution of higher learning where the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge is at the core of all we do.

ACADEMIC PLAN CONSULTATION DRAFT

LIST OF OBJECTIVES

One: Expand Our Research Strength 1

Building on our strengths, we will broaden our commitment to research and creative activity by increasing support for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty, energetically promoting the success of our best scholars, and expanding our capacity to host major strategic projects.

Two: Promote Program Quality and Innovation..... 4

Recognizing that our academic programs, more than any other factor, attract students to Concordia, we will ensure that our programs meet the highest academic standards, and will vigorously promote program innovation.

THREE: Build Support for Student Success 7

Building on the demonstrated accomplishments of Concordia’s students, we will create new opportunities for student success and will become a recognized leader in effectively providing undergraduate students with the tools to succeed.

Four: Increase Experiential Learning and Community Engagement..... 11

Knowing that “real world learning” heightens student engagement, motivation, and success, we will provide more opportunities for our students to take part in experiential learning, community involvement, and professional development.

Five: Improve Academic Leadership and Administrative Support 13

Because sound and ethical academic leadership and administrative support are essential if we are to function effectively, we will promote the active participation of faculty in academic leadership development, and will improve transparency, coherence, and efficiency in academic administrative practice.

X..... 18

Objective X is a placeholder for an as-yet undetermined set of actions that might be identified by reviewers of this consultation draft

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

OBJECTIVE 1: EXPAND OUR RESEARCH STRENGTH

Building on our strengths, we will broaden our commitment to research and creative activity by increasing support for graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty, energetically promoting the success of our best scholars, and expanding our capacity to host major strategic projects.

Research achievements are a cornerstone of university reputations and central to their ability to attract top faculty and students. Concordia has made great strides in recent years under its strategic research plans. The actions below represent means to consolidate our gains, specifically by revisiting how we encourage, support, and recognize excellence in this vital area. These actions will promote a higher level of research and creative activity and greater recognition for the quality of these activities.

TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, WE WILL:

RATIONALE FOR ACTIONS

1.1 *Bolster our commitment to attract top faculty and graduate students, particularly in current and emerging areas of strength in research and creative activity.*

1.1.1 Recruit and enroll more top graduate students and postdoctoral fellows by significantly increasing financial allocations for graduate student funding and by fast-tracking targeted applicants.

1.1.2 Create an annual pool of course remissions to be used to support faculty recruitment and encourage “nouveau chercheur” funding applications.

1.1.3 Make current and emerging demonstrated areas of strength our first priority in assigning research chair positions.

Investing in highly capable students and research collaborators promises to have an immediate impact. Closer integration of academic priorities with institutional budget planning will allow Faculties to increase support for doctoral students and will increase their numbers.

This action is already being implemented under the auspices of the Canada Research Chair (CRC) and Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Strategic Research Plan.

1.2 *Update the means used to recognize and reward achievements in research and creative activity.*

1.2.1 Revisit major internal award programs to assess the return on our investment, increase funding opportunities and broaden availability.

Concordia’s major initiatives to recognize and support the outstanding accomplishments of its faculty in research and creative activities (e.g., the Concordia University Research Chairs, Mobilizing Knowledge) have been effective in achieving the objectives of increasing our research capacity. It may nonetheless be opportune to revisit the steering effect of these programs in order to widen opportunities, especially to junior and mid-career faculty, and to increase the return from Concordia’s internal investments in research and creative achievement.

- 1.2.2 Create criteria and guidelines for formally recognizing academic community engagement, conceived as the use of academic knowledge and skills in the service of the community.
- 1.2.3 Develop and implement the means to recognize and reward other novel contributions in research and creative activity.
- 1.2.4 Formally recognize records of exceptional success in graduate student supervision.

Evaluating diverse forms of research and creative activity can be challenging. The development of suitable criteria, and the assurance that such research will be assessed and recognized, will encourage faculty to undertake innovative work.

1.3 *Improve our success rate in competitions for major funding and heighten external recognition of Concordia's areas of research excellence.*

- 1.3.1 Allocate new funding to encourage and support applications for major grant initiatives through teaching reductions, administrative assistance, and matching funds.
- 1.3.2 Establish an institutional awards and prizes committee to encourage, facilitate, and coordinate all Concordia submissions.
- 1.3.3 Actively seek opportunities to host more high-profile research events at Concordia.

This action will improve Concordia's ability to attract major strategic research funding. The Vice-President Research and Graduate Studies has already begun planning for the provision of matching funds. An allocation mechanism remains to be determined.

This action supplements efforts such as the Provost's Circle of Distinction and initiatives being led by the Vice-President, Research and Graduate Studies to increase the number of nominations of Concordia professors for major external awards. A central awards committee would liaise with Faculties and departments to identify research and recognition opportunities and in putting forward candidates for external recognition.

This action requires ongoing investment in the Aid to Research Related Events program and high levels of coordination with Hospitality Concordia, as took place with great effect during Congress 2010.

1.4 *Improve the Library's capacity to support the research and creative activity of faculty members and graduate students.*

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS ON THIS OBJECTIVE

Concordia already attracts many outstanding researchers and smart, intellectually ambitious graduate students, but the actions put forward here are intended to increase our capacity to make targeted investments in the face of competitive pressures from peer institutions. In terms of measures of research intensiveness, Concordia currently has a respectable overall profile in research and creative activity, but benchmarking done by Research InfoSource and others places Concordia in the middle of the pack among Canada's top 50 universities in terms of research funding, and among the lowest of the comprehensive universities in several respects.¹ While acknowledging the limitations of such benchmarking and the shorter duration of Concordia's institutional commitment to research excellence, Concordia can gauge its progress toward its research objectives by using such measures as the following:

- A. Improved attraction of top graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty.
- B. Higher reputational standing and profile for current and emerging areas of research strength.
- C. Greater qualitative satisfaction among faculty members and graduate students with research awards programs.
- D. Improved success rate in major grant competitions.
- E. Measurable increases in the number of external awards received.
- F. A reduction in the median duration of study of graduate students from three years to two years for master's students, and from 5 years to 4 years for Ph.D. students.
- G. Increased external research funding, from \$37 M in total and at \$43K per full-time faculty member, to a target to be set in consultation with the VPRGS.
- H. Significant improvement in our standing in Research InfoSource's bibliometric analysis, or a comparable benchmark, in comparison to other comprehensive universities.
- I. Increased number of applications for external awards from Concordia students and their success rate in external competitions.

¹ See Appendix X (not yet included).

OBJECTIVE 2: PROMOTE PROGRAM QUALITY AND INNOVATION

Recognizing that our academic programs, more than any other factor, attract students to Concordia, we will ensure that our programs meet the highest academic standards, and will vigorously promote program innovation.

Concordia prides itself on its innovative and distinctive programs and on its disciplinary permeability. Although a deep disciplinary course of study may still be the most appropriate choice for many students, the actions below aim to make the University's commitment to innovation and interdisciplinarity more explicit, and to provide clearer criteria for defining program success.

TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, WE WILL:

RATIONALE FOR ACTIONS

2.1 *Clearly define our criteria for academic program excellence.*

- 2.1.1 Implement streamlined processes for program creation and review that will ensure support for emerging signature areas and frequent, consistent feedback on existing programs.
- 2.1.2 Develop and implement generally acceptable principles, criteria, and procedures to identify programs for growth, maintenance (stable or steady-state enrolment), or phasing out, and develop program transcripts that report on these criteria.
- 2.1.3 Incorporate results from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS) into the program review processes.
- 2.1.4 Create pathways for students, alumni, staff and external stakeholders to provide input during program reviews.
- 2.1.5 Ensure that the recommendations resulting from program reviews are systematically followed up.

Such processes are to some extent mandated by compliance with external requirements and are under review by the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, in collaboration with the Senate Academic Programs Committee among other bodies.

Likely criteria include a program's ability to register the students they admit, move them through the programs in timely ways, and graduate them with the targeted skills and abilities (see actions 3.4.2 and 3.4.3, below).

Concordia first participated in NSSE in 2006 and in CGPSS in 2008. Both surveys provide vital, institution-level information on student engagement at Concordia, and with adequate response rates, they can be an essential component of the program review process.

Through surveys, focus groups, or informal gatherings, Concordia programs can more systematically gather this information.

Not all recommendations may be appropriate or feasible, but those that are should be implemented and their success monitored.

<p>2.2 <i>Encourage the use of innovative teaching and learning strategies in academic programs by full-time and part-time faculty members.</i></p>	<p>Innovation in universities is often associated with professors' research and creative activity, but it is equally important in our classrooms and in online learning venues. Thoughtful experimentation with innovative teaching and learning strategies can be actively encouraged, and the potential broader value of successful experiments communicated in order to spur wider adoption.</p>
<p>2.2.1 Reconstitute the Centre for Teaching and Learning Services into a Teaching Institute, with broad faculty participation and academic leadership.</p>	<p>A revised mandate might emphasize a more central role for the CTLS in diffusing innovative teaching and learning practices that have proved effective.</p>
<p>2.2.2 Seek out faculty candidates with demonstrated capacities and affinities for innovative teaching and curriculum and program design.</p>	<p>This is an important aspect of hiring criteria that helps to build a program's teaching culture.</p>
<p>2.2.3 Include in workload guidelines the possibility for full-time tenured faculty to engage in teaching-intensive career periods with no loss of prestige or career progression.</p>	<p>Teaching-intensive periods would provide interested faculty members with sanctioned time to devote themselves to teaching development.</p>
<p>2.2.4 Create Teaching Chairs or Fellowships, with recognition similar to that for Research Chairs.</p>	<p>Such Chairs or Fellows might be constituted as part of the restructuring of the research incentive and recognition program carried out under action 1.2.</p>
<p>2.2.5 Develop stronger faculty mentoring practices and augment electronic resources to foster informal peer exchanges on teaching.</p>	<p>This action could usefully form part of the mandate for the Teaching Institute.</p>
<p>2.3 <i>Pursue the opportunities for interdisciplinary program development most likely to advance Concordia's strategic academic objectives.</i></p>	<p>Some of the necessary structures already exist at Concordia, and will be used as the basis for such development.</p>
<p>2.3.1 Actively encourage interdisciplinary program experimentation and course offerings at the graduate level using existing structures and programs such as the Special Individualized Programs (SIP) in emerging and niche areas of excellence.</p>	
<p>2.3.2 Actively encourage interdisciplinary program experimentation and course offerings at the undergraduate level, through the targeted use of slot courses, blended learning, and online learning channels.</p>	
<p>2.3.3 Clarify the workload and service requirements and expectations associated with interdisciplinary programs.</p>	<p>By better defining expectations around and coordinating supervisory support for students, this action promises to remove important barriers to interdisciplinary collaboration by faculty members.</p>

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS ON THIS OBJECTIVE

The actions under this objective are intended to facilitate program excellence and spur innovation. By the end of the plan's lifespan, we will be able to demonstrate measurably greater faculty satisfaction with student enrolment and student quality, and greater faculty satisfaction with the teaching component of workload, all while maintaining our commitment to accessibility through action 3.1.4. The following targets as benchmarks of success over the life of the academic plan:

- A. Our five-year undergraduate graduation rates will rise from 72% to 75%;
- B. Our benchmark score as a percentage of the overall NSSE benchmark score in Student Faculty Interaction will rise;
- C. Our first to second year retention rate will increase from 88% to 92%;
- D. Measure program innovation, for example by tracking the proportion of Concordia programs offered in relatively few universities.

OBJECTIVE 3: BUILD SUPPORT FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Building on the demonstrated accomplishments of Concordia’s students, we will create new opportunities for student success and will become a recognized leader in effectively providing undergraduate students with the tools to succeed.

Concordia already has many outstanding students at all levels and in all programs, many of whom achieve great success. Like many other universities today, however, we also face the challenge of educating a diversely prepared cohort of students. Unless the bar is set high, with appropriate supports in place, students cannot learn what it means to achieve beyond their expectations. Concordia’s commitment to being an institution of opportunity must therefore be paired with an equal commitment to clearly articulating our criteria for success, ensuring that the pathways to that success are clearly defined, and celebrating the achievements of students who meet the challenge. The actions below aim to meet the extraordinary challenge of meshing Concordia’s dual mandates of accessibility and excellence.

TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, WE WILL:

RATIONALE FOR ACTIONS

- 3.1 *Identify and reward Concordia’s outstanding student achievers, and exert ourselves to develop more of them.*
 - 3.1.1 Encourage donors to fund merit-based awards for new and continuing students of high academic promise and achievement.
 - 3.1.2 Develop in-program awards for high-achieving students and students who show extraordinary progress.
 - 3.1.3 Systematically identify candidates for high-profile external awards, encourage them to apply, and provide support to help them develop and present their applications.
 - 3.1.4 Use every opportunity to publicize the academic and co-curricular achievements of Concordia’s top students.

Celebrating the achievements of students who make extraordinary year-to-year progress is seen as a means to reinforce program aims around targeted skills and abilities. Small cash prizes would accompany the awards, with the selection being made according to department criteria.

- 3.2 *Promote student initiative and encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning and development.*
 - 3.2.1 Define and publicize the ethical standards and expectations of academic integrity to which the Concordia community holds itself.

While all members of the university community share responsibility for facilitating learning, students must be given the tools to take ownership of their learning process in order to reap the full rewards of a university education. Students would benefit from clear, reinforced messages from the University about this important aspect of higher education.

However implemented, this action should be aligned with initiatives currently being undertaken in the area of academic integrity.

<p>3.2.2 Align university funding available for student projects with community initiative funding, so as to encourage greater student involvement in projects likely to have a positive impact on the Concordia community and its relationship with the local community.</p>	<p>Current student project funding sources include the Concordia Council on Student Life (CCSL) grants and the Concordia University Small Grants Program (CUSGP). Art Matters is one example of a student initiative supported by the University that has grown into a community endeavour of high impact. We will use currently available funds to encourage students to work together to develop projects with similar impacts.</p>
<p>3.3 <i>Take early, decisive steps to ensure that students have the skills and abilities needed to succeed in their courses and programs.</i></p>	<p>Admissions standards are the primary tool used to perform this function, but the indicators they rely on (e.g., CRC scores, high school grades) are not consistently useful as gauges of ability. This is why many programs use placement tests (e.g., in writing) to ascertain the capacities of their entering students. In addition, a large number of Concordia programs operate under an ‘open enrolment’ policy, guaranteeing that any student meeting only the University’s minimal general admissions requirements is assured of a place at Concordia.</p>
<p>3.3.1 Increase the use of TA-supported skill development for new undergraduates.</p>	<p>In addition to the investment in graduate student support described in action 1.1.1, this initiative would be targeted at funding a moderately large number of additional TAs who would assist in building the program-specific foundational skills in writing, research methods, creative practices, etc.</p>
<p>3.3.2 Implement dual-stage, simultaneous admissions in order to expedite admissions and direct students to the most appropriate program offering.</p>	<p>Currently, students are evaluated for admission to their desired programs sequentially, and notified once accepted to the first choice to which they are admissible. Alternatively, applicants would be notified of University admission, and again following assessment of the full range of their options for study at Concordia—their admissibility to any or all of their desired programs, or preparatory avenues available to them through the School of Extended Learning—should they not be admissible to the programs to which they applied.</p>
<p>3.3.3 Develop both discipline-specific and common preparatory pathways for students requiring pre-program preparation.</p>	<p>In keeping with Concordia’s mission of accessibility, these mechanisms are not intended to deter students, but instead to ensure that they are program-ready. The use of admissions criteria in open enrolment programs may prove to be effective, but, other tools (e.g., placement testing) may be required to identify underprepared students and ensure that they receive the support they require to be successful in their programs of choice.</p>
<p>3.3.4 Test various means (e.g., placement testing, admissions standards in open enrolment programs) for streaming underprepared students into developmental courses.</p>	<p>The School of Extended Learning has a central role to play in delivering such courses. To ensure good fit with the requirements of academic programs, the SEL/Faculty program collaboration will be a close one. The Libraries also have an important role in developing essential information literacy skills among underprepared students.</p>
<p>3.3.5 Develop coherent curricular pathways for students who have additional course credit requirements.</p>	<p>Such pathways help to ensure that any additional credits assigned to students (e.g., under the Extended Credit or Mature Entry programs) are used fruitfully to develop the skills and build the knowledge necessary for success in a program, and to support broad-based, liberal arts education. A clear connection between supplemental (or, in the case of underprepared students, developmental) coursework and a desired program is a strong predictor of perseverance and graduation.</p>

3.3.6 Bolster student advising services by providing first-year students with greater access to Faculty- or department-based advisors.

Such early investments are repaid in better preparedness for subsequent program courses. Some departments already have academic advisors focused specifically on assistance for first-year students; others do not. A full inventory will show where the need is greatest.

3.4 *Develop consistent practices for building students' fundamental academic abilities and ascertaining students' progress toward program objectives.*

While recognizing the specificity of our Faculties, units, and programs, the University can develop and consistently apply best practices for demonstrating that appropriate curricular structures are in place and that students are consistently achieving according to program criteria. Many models of these practices already exist in Concordia departments and elsewhere. Support for academic programs undertaking this work could be provided by resource teams assembled from the Centre for Teaching and Learning Services (CLTS), the Libraries, Enrolment and Student Services, the School of Extended Learning, the Dean of Students, etc.

3.4.1 Conduct an inventory of current practice in academic units, and extend the best practices to other units in order to build on our successes.

Some programs have already made explicit their expectations for the development of students' skills and abilities, including appropriate oral and written communication requirements.

3.4.2 Ensure that all programs take responsibility for teaching the full range of skills that students should possess, including appropriate oral and written communication skills.

Programs that have not made their expectations explicit are asked to do so, and to identify program, elective, and (perhaps) co-curricular requirements to ensure that students achieve these expectations. This action would be undertaken in line with the new program review structure called for under objective 2, above.

3.4.3 Test the use of assessments based on common criteria within programs to ensure that identified desirable skills are mastered at key program milestones.

3.4.4 Develop the role of librarians for delivery of in-program competencies around research capacities and information literacy.

Many librarians already deliver core disciplinary competencies in workshops or classes, but these could be oriented more explicitly to the curricular requirements and milestones identified in action 3.4.2.

3.4.5 Implement a single shared course evaluation instrument focused on student achievement of instructor-identified learning objectives.

Student course evaluations provide a valuable opportunity to ascertain, on a course-by-course basis, whether students believe they are developing the targeted skills and abilities. The Assessment of Teaching Working Group has proposed a candidate common course evaluation form.

3.4.6 Inform students more effectively about expectations, progress, and achievement.

The Office of Enrolment and Student Services has recently acquired, through funding provided by a targeted provincial grant, a degree audit system which will provide students with self-service access to their records and an ability to create what-if scenarios that will allow them to more fully monitor their progress and identify the support they need.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS ON THIS OBJECTIVE

The actions under this objective are focused on improving student progress in learning and skill development, and they should result in higher faculty satisfaction with student performance. The following measures will guide judgments about the effectiveness of the actions listed above, as we monitor student success from year to year over the life of the academic plan.

- A. [An indicator of greater student success resulting from the actions proposed above—sample scores from a (standardized) writing test? CLA scores?]
- B. Maintain our current score for Level of Academic Challenge in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) among first year students;
- C. Increase our NSSE score for Active and Collaborative Learning;
- D. Increase positive employer evaluation of our students in our periodic reputational surveys.

OBJECTIVE 4: INCREASE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Knowing that “real world learning” heightens student engagement, motivation, and success, we will provide more opportunities for our students to take part in experiential learning, community involvement, and professional development.

For students, reinforcement of important concepts and skills through practical work experience mentored by external professionals increases the educational value of their studies, and it provides them with opportunities to develop and practice the social and professional skills that they will need following graduation.

<i>TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, WE WILL:</i>	<i>RATIONALE FOR ACTIONS</i>
<p>4.1 <i>Increase opportunities throughout the University for students to engage in local, national, and international internship and community placements.</i></p> <p>4.1.1 Strengthen existing structures including the Institute for Co-operative Education, the Centre for Career Development, and Career and Placement Services.</p> <p>4.1.2 Encourage more students to take advantage of volunteer opportunities through the LIVE Centre and other means.</p>	<p>This action will provide students with a range of applied learning opportunities appropriate to their program of studies and their personal interests and needs.</p> <p>Programs will be able to identify and evaluate the opportunities they would like to see their students have and to specify how they would like to see their students participate in such opportunities. Current practice will be respected, but the detailed planning will be centrally facilitated.</p>
<p>4.2 <i>Create formal professional development opportunities in teaching and research for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.</i></p>	<p>Using resources from the MELS <i>insertion professionnelle</i> fund, a series of workshops is being created to ensure that graduate students and postdoctoral fellows can develop their skills not only under the mentorship of their supervisors, but also through interactions with other students and professionals.</p>
<p>4.3 <i>Expand opportunities for our students to exercise ethics, citizenship, and global awareness in their coursework, their research, and their co-curricular activities.</i></p> <p>4.3.1 Create a designated seed fund to support projects that focus on improving aspects of the Concordia community.</p> <p>4.3.2 Build student integrity, responsibility, professional ethics, and social responsibility into program curricula wherever applicable.</p> <p>4.3.3 Link co-curricular activities to the specific skills and abilities that programs seek to develop in students.</p>	<p>The provision of these types of learning environments plays an increasingly important role in students’ choice of institution and program.</p> <p>In conjunction with action 2.1.1, certain internal research support funds could be earmarked for projects that bring students and faculty together to investigate problems faced by the Concordia community, whether issues of facilities, learning spaces, communications, or other community-identified problems for which internal expertise is available and adequate.</p> <p>Problem-based learning opportunities present one path to integrating these concepts into curricula, and SEL and CTLS have developed expertise and infrastructure that will be useful in this integration. This action is an integral component curriculum mapping (3.4.2) and program review (2.1).</p> <p>Like action 4.3.1, this action is a vital part of curriculum mapping (3.4.2) and program review (2.1).</p>

4.3.4 Implement initiatives such the International Degree Profile to enable students to gain an “International Profile” transcript notation.

There is clear demand for graduates with global credentials. This action is related to action 2.2, with a greater focus on professional development. Wide implementation is contingent on the success of the existing pilot program.

4.4 *Facilitate connections between faculty research expertise and the needs of community partners.*

This action is included under this objective in recognition of the fact that faculty initiatives create opportunities for student involvement.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS ON THIS OBJECTIVE

The expectation is that the implementation of these actions will give Concordia a competitive edge in attracting students, and will significantly increase the value to the students of their Concordia diplomas. The following targets will serve as benchmarks of success over the life of the academic plan:

- A. Measurably increase the registration rate of first-choice admitted students;
- B. Increase opportunities for internships and community-based placements across the university, with opportunities identified in each program or department as appropriate;
- C. Completion of a campus-wide effort to identify co-curricular opportunities that support program objectives;
- D. Implementation of the International Degree Profile and an increase in each year of the plan in the number of Concordia students who go on international exchanges.
- E. Increased faculty participation in community-based projects (measurement is not straightforward, and stipulating an increase in absolute numbers may be inappropriate).
- F. Increase our local positive media coverage for student-led community initiatives.

OBJECTIVE 5: IMPROVE ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP

Because sound and ethical academic leadership and administrative support are essential if we are to function effectively, we will promote the active participation of faculty in academic leadership development, and will improve transparency, coherence, and efficiency in academic administrative practice.

Though diverse, the actions under this objective will ensure that we continuously align our administrative support with our stated objectives and the University's codes of ethics, that we develop the tools and structures we need to run our administrative affairs efficiently, and that we make appropriate investments in our faculty, librarians, and administrative and technical staff to cultivate their leadership talents. Because many administrative operations span high-level boundaries within Concordia, it is also vital for us to collaborate effectively with the central administrative operations of the University.

TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, WE WILL:

RATIONALE FOR ACTIONS

Develop improved leadership and management skills in our academic administrators

5.1 *Develop the next generation of academic leaders by increasing formal and informal opportunities for leadership training and development.*

5.1.1 Bolster training resources for current and prospective department chairs, and for other faculty members and librarians considering taking on academic leadership roles.

5.1.2 Develop the means for academic administrators and department chairs to set attainable goals and to gather constructive feedback on their work, so as to assist them in improving their service to the university.

The Vice-Provost, Academic Relations, has begun university-wide chair training, and efforts can be made to expand this training. A comprehensive review of the responsibilities of department chairs is one important step in determining needs in this area. Another possibility is to conduct such workshops expressly for faculty members who are returning from sabbatical leaves or who have just received tenure, and who thus may be open to thinking about new roles.

Examples of good tools exist, and might be considered for use.

5.2 *Ensure that current and prospective academic administrators have access to the administrative training, professional development, and staff support that they need in order to be successful in an administrative role.*

5.2.1 Develop and conduct seminars for program directors, department chairs and other faculty members and librarians to provide the basic knowledge of the various administrative skills needed to manage effectively, including financial and human resource management.

5.2.2 Provide targeted professional development opportunities for academic and technical staff, particularly those who support department chairs and ensure the efficient functioning of academic programs and departments.

Include opportunities for follow-up through mentoring and online networks to assist administrators in sharing strategies for problem solving.

Develop and publicize principles and criteria to govern collaborative and consultative planning and decision-making

5.3 *Develop and implement clear principles and criteria to ensure resource allocations to Faculties and programs are aligned with strategic priorities.*

5.3.1 Implement and annually refresh the three-year Faculty Hiring Plan.

This plan ensures that we make appointments in areas of strategic importance to the university, in response to requests from units submitted on the basis of commonly understood criteria, including adequate administrative and technical support.

5.3.2 Articulate clear criteria and procedures for making incremental resource allocations to programs and key academic service areas.

Resource reviews will include considerations of staffing levels and infrastructure capacities for programs with planned growth in student enrolment, specialized learning resource needs, re-sourcing for “service” course commitments, and Library acquisitions budgets.

5.4 *Implement coordinated and transparent approaches to assigning faculty workloads.*

Ensuring fairness and transparency in assigning workloads is an enduring administrative challenge. Concordia has begun developing general principles for workload assignment and Faculties are creating guidelines that reflect the specificity of academic work in their disciplinary settings.

5.4.1 Adopt university-wide principles on faculty workload assignments.

5.4.2 Where absent, develop criteria and guidelines, specific to disciplines and academic units, for recognizing faculty contributions in teaching, research, and service.

5.4.3 Where not yet in place, encourage academic units to develop clear statements of their expectations for career success in tenure and promotion decisions.

Encourage collaborative action on all matters spanning administrative boundaries, not only within our own operations but throughout Concordia.

<p>5.5 <i>Continue the recently developed collaborative approach to institutional budget development, in collaboration with Financial Services, to ensure that the academic budget is maintained at a level sufficient to meet our needs within the overall institutional budget context.</i></p>	<p>Large organizations face clear challenges in setting up effective consultative and planning processes, and priorities that are established in one area of the organization may have significant unplanned and therefore unexpected impacts on others. Concordia would benefit from concerted efforts to improve its capacities in this area.</p>
<p>5.6 <i>More actively manage student enrolments in collaboration with Enrolment and Student Services.</i></p>	<p>Enrolment practices are a key facet of program excellence. Concordia has worked to develop enrolment projection models since 2007, but needs to take additional steps toward active enrolment planning and management, which involve more targeted forms of recruitment, admissions, and enrolment.</p>
<p>5.6.1 Maintain overall student complement at the current level, while committing ourselves to annual increases of 2% in funded full-time equivalent students, to be achieved by increasing the proportion of Ph.D., research master's, other terminal master's degree students, and other students in areas where growth is desirable.</p>	<p>The current level of student enrolment is 27,200 full-time equivalent students ("raw FTE"). Recent enrolment growth and the increasing number of courses being offered on campus are straining Concordia's capacity. Online offerings and blended learning can alleviate some of these pressures. Initiatives described in Objective 1 should allow Concordia to increase the number of graduate students it admits, which will provide funding increases without increasing student numbers.</p>
<p>5.6.2 Actively involve faculty members in undergraduate student enrolment and recruitment efforts, where their expert knowledge provides an appropriate complement to our professional recruitment staff.</p>	<p>Faculty members are well placed to identify the types of students they want to attract and to describe to them the benefits of study here, so their active involvement in enrolment planning, recruitment planning, communications, and site visits should be facilitated and encouraged.</p>
<p>5.7 <i>Make better use of information technology to reduce time spent on administrative tasks and increase time available for priority academic activities, in collaboration with Instructional and Information Technology Services (IITS).</i></p>	<p>One important goal of this project is to reduce significantly the unnecessary data entry and document production, duplication and printing associated with faculty personnel processes. Preliminary work on this project is already underway.</p>
<p>5.7.1 Implement a Faculty Resource Information System (FRIS) to automate and improve workflows related to academic personnel processes.</p>	<p>Ensuring that Concordia's web site has consistent, up-to-date information consumes a great deal of administrative time and effort. A content management system, already being piloted by University Communication Services (UCS), will ensure that information entered once can be used for a variety of purposes, including updating department, program, or faculty web pages, or repurposed for online CVs and applications.</p>
<p>5.7.2 Implement a user-friendly content management system to make up-to-date award and achievement information available across the university's web in order to attract top applicants and to feature our faculty members and students.</p>	<p>Currently, collecting and reporting on Concordia's research activities is a heavily manual activity that detracts from the function of supporting research and creative activity. This implementation will allow Concordia to respond more aggressively to opportunities and to better serve the faculty members engaged in these activities.</p>
<p>5.7.3 Implement a Research Information System that automates and improves processes and administration related to research funding and that enables identification of networking opportunities in research and creative activity.</p>	<p>Currently, collecting and reporting on Concordia's research activities is a heavily manual activity that detracts from the function of supporting research and creative activity. This implementation will allow Concordia to respond more aggressively to opportunities and to better serve the faculty members engaged in these activities.</p>

5.8 *Tightly intertwine external communications with academic priorities, in collaboration with University Communications Services.*

- 5.8.1 Base our institutional messages and images firmly on the distinctive value of Concordia's signature programs and areas of research strength.
- 5.8.2 Ensure that the vitality of Concordia's academic mission features centrally in all communications concerned with our academic operations.
- 5.8.3 Provide content for features or mini-lectures on topics ranging from research achievements to knowledge mobilization to innovative teaching strategies.

University Communications Services, the Office of Research, and Faculty communications officers work hard and effectively to tell the stories of our researchers and teachers and to improve Concordia's reputation. Since many communications are in some way linked to student and faculty recruitment, the work of UCS is greatly aided by clear messages about institutional and Faculty priorities.

This distinctive value should come to the fore through the curriculum and outcome mapping exercises called for in action 3.4.2. Its articulation and communication is central to our ability to speak to students and the public about Concordia's uniqueness.

Concordia's academic mission, with its strong focus on excellence, has great resonance in the external community. Featuring it in our communications will ensure we maintain our focus on what is important to us.

MEASURING OUR PROGRESS ON THIS OBJECTIVE

Some actions under this objective lend themselves to quantitative measurement. Other impact measurements will be primarily qualitative, visible through qualitative evaluation methods, including survey research and focus groups. The following indicators are likely to provide important gauges for progress on actions under this objective:

- A. Maintain enrolments at about 27,200 funded full-time equivalent students per year;
- B. Continue to increase weighted full-time equivalent students by an average of 2% per annum by bringing in more top graduate students and undergraduate students in targeted areas that encourage growth in signature areas of strength and by increasing retention of current students where appropriate;
- C. Measure the time and resources saved due to administrative process improvements.
- D. Develop a stronger sense of equity in workload distributions.
- E. Increase faculty and staff satisfaction with administrative processes by revising and streamlining them as necessary.
- F. Create readier access to accurate, up-to-date information for departmental planning and decision making.
- G. Improve the understanding of the importance of professional support among faculty and academic staff members.

- H. Increase the percentage of mentions of faculty teaching and research excellence as a total of our media impressions from [52% to 67%].
- I. Measure the impact of targeted communications by looking at application and registrations rates from the targets once we have begun systematically marketing the unique features of our programs

OBJECTIVE X

Articulate novel objectives and actions that do not fit under the other objectives contained in the academic plan, and that promise to have wide impact on Concordia's academic mission, are rooted the University's institutional distinctiveness, and involve collaborative efforts among Concordia's departments, disciplines, and academic support units.

The purpose of including an undefined objective in the consultation draft of the academic plan is to elicit visionary and potentially transformative ideas unconstrained by our current practices and culture. While novelty is likely to be a defining characteristic of proposals arising under this heading, such proposals may also involve a major expansion of something we already do in a relatively small or isolated way, or the elimination of certain activities to create resources that could be more effectively used elsewhere. Actions requiring smaller financial outlays are more likely to see implementation, but significant funding requirements should not preclude suggestions for this objective.

As an example of one type of potential action, the use of "block plan" curriculum arrangement, akin to that being employed at Quest University in British Columbia could be explored (http://www.questu.ca/academics/the_block_plan.php).

The Academic Plan Steering Committee looks forward to receiving from the Concordia community suggestions of other promising actions that might fit under Objective X.