

# Fleming College Academic Plan 2015-18



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## Our Context

Fleming Forward: Fleming College's Strategic Plan 2015 – 2018 forms the overarching structure under which our college will operate for the next three years. It dovetails with Fleming's Strategic Mandate Agreement (2014-17), highlighting our strengths and areas for growth, development and attention. These include the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences, with a provincial, national and international scope of program offerings and applied research; the Kawartha Trades and Technology Centre as a regional hub for postsecondary programming, apprenticeship and in-service training; further development of our Healthcare and Community Service and Arts and Heritage programming; improving access, success and support for first generation, Aboriginal, international and special needs students; building on our strength in applied and work-integrated learning; and improving collaboration, pathways and student mobility. Underneath these structures fall a variety of plans, including the college's Business Plan, Internationalization Strategy, and this Academic Plan.

Our Academic Plan covers the same timeframe as the Strategic Plan, and provides the roadmap for the next three years, and what we plan to achieve. This is an integrated plan, involving not just the Academic Division, but also the support for academic objectives that comes from Student Services, Information Technology Services, Marketing, Advancement & Alumni Relations, and Facilities departments. The priorities in this Academic Plan serve a dual purpose: they are our baseline commitments to our students, and they highlight specific objectives that need work right now.

While our focus remains on providing quality educational experiences for our students and working hard to help them be successful at Fleming and beyond, these are challenging times for post-secondary education in Ontario and beyond:

The Ontario College Application System (OCAS) predicts an approximate 1% decline in direct-entry College applicants per year through 2017-2018 (Girardi and Ingram, 2015). This decline is not uniform across the province, and this decline represents a specific regional concern, resulting in increased competition and urgency for Fleming. Additionally, "per student revenue from operating grants and tuition fees for Ontario colleges continues to be the lowest among the provinces. Funding per student for Ontario colleges continues to be significantly below that which is provided for secondary schools and universities" (Colleges Ontario, 2015). These financial realities mean that we are facing an exciting opportunity: to step back and think about how we can do things differently. It is up to all of us as members of the Fleming community to reinvigorate our practices to remain current and best support the evolving needs of our students. Our Academic division will be a key component of the Meta Project, which is a college-wide project designed to meet our Strategic Plan priority of financial health and sustainability. We must evaluate our programs to ensure they are innovative, responsive to student and employer needs, and are financially viable. Those programs which do not meet these bars will need to be redesigned or discontinued.

There is no one definition of today's student: We have seen an increase in mature or indirect students, as well as part-time and distance students. Layered on this is an increase in students with disabilities, including mental health. And finally, at Fleming we have seen an increase in international students in the last several years. This brief synopsis does not begin to capture all of the diversity on campus, but it is apparent that the shifting landscape requires the college to be aware of and able to support a wide array of students.

We have had success in drawing students from outside our region, including internationally, by offering unique programs; we need to continue on this course but still pay attention to local needs. Our commitment to applied learning, including work-integrated learning, remains strong. We have been working with the College's Aboriginal Education Council to establish a framework and plan that will demonstrate Fleming's commitment to a holistic approach to education and services for Indigenous students. Finally, while we have made some progress in the integration of technology into our teaching and hybrid and online course design and delivery, we have much more work to do. It is within this context that our Academic Plan is situated.

By the end of this Academic Plan, we will have a robust and differentiated program mix (Strategic Mandate Agreement, 2014), featuring a variety of flexible and responsive delivery modes that meet the needs of our diverse student populations. For some, students' learning will look very different and include opportunities to learn collaboratively and globally using their own technology to curate and demonstrate the goals that they have reached throughout their personalized learning journey. We will be able to respond swiftly to changes in our students' needs and shifts in labour markets to ensure that we are best preparing our graduates to be successful in tomorrow's workforce. To that end, we have laid out a three-year plan, but it is one in which we will remain flexible: We will regularly assess and report to the college community on our progress toward our goals and, when we see a need to do so, we will refocus our direction. With this Academic Plan, we take the next step toward our future.

### Our Research

Part of redesigning how we design and provide educational experiences at Fleming College will involve having important, but sometimes difficult, conversations about what we are doing, how we are doing, and most importantly, how our students and graduates are doing. These conversations will be grounded in research that is evaluated. While our faculty and staff have a vast and varied set of skills, we will both "look out" to the broader context as well as "look in" to our own expertise in order to find the best solutions to our challenges. We will continue to access different perspectives, and demonstrate that we are a learning community at Fleming College, grounding our work in evidence-based best practices with an innovative vision for the future.

As previously mentioned, each of our priorities, as outlined in this Academic Plan, has research behind it. That research is referenced in the narratives that bookend each priority, and suggestions for further reading are also included.

## Our Process

Over the course of almost a year, our Academic Planning team engaged members of the Fleming College community, including students, faculty, support staff, administrators, Program Advisory Committees, internal college Committees, and external stakeholder groups, in conversations about where we are, and where we would like Fleming to be in three years. From these conversations, a number of priorities emerged. Some of these priorities are very timely; they will likely not be priorities by the end of this Academic Plan, but are things that need to be addressed right now in order to best serve our students and our communities. The Academic Planning team conducted research into the current context of post-secondary education, providing evidence to ground the goals and subsequent strategies that were identified.

## Our Champions

Throughout the consultation and feedback processes, champions surfaced for each of our six priorities. These champions will lead the implementation of the three-year plan for their areas, in collaboration with all stakeholders. Their responsibilities will also include reporting back to the college community on the progress toward each of the goals as we move through the timeline of our Academic Plan. Fleming College's Academic Council will receive monthly reports on the progress of each priority of our Academic Plan. The members of this Council will also participate in and lead the working groups that will be formed as part of our three-year plan. In addition, our twice-a-semester Academic Newsletter will feature highlights from the progress of our Academic Plan priorities and include regular updates from each area as well.

The strategies identified in our three-year plan are closely connected to the plans formulated by each of our Academic Schools; they are also reflected in the college's Business Plan, ensuring that the financial resources required to be successful in meeting our goals are available when needed.

## Our Faculty

Our faculty members are a large part of what separates a Fleming College education from anywhere else. At Fleming we offer learning environments characterized by high standards, close faculty-student interactions, and personalized support. This results in graduates who are prepared for tomorrow's workplace, armed with more than skills.

As members of our college community, our faculty members have played an important role in formulating our current Academic Plan priorities; their continued participation and input are essential to the success of this plan. Faculty members are encouraged to get involved in the initiatives and working groups that are relevant to the areas in which they teach, and the student groups that they serve. Over the next three years, there will also be additional exciting opportunities for faculty to engage in professional development, communities of practice, and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Maintaining the expertise and teaching practice of our faculty members is tantamount to ensuring the quality of the experiences we provide for our students.

What makes a Fleming graduate unique is connected to what makes a Fleming faculty member unique: The secret to our success lies within our people, and in this regard we are on solid ground. We have committed, energetic, and creative people with depth and breadth of knowledge and perspective who want to contribute to the success of future generations. Together, we will go further.

## Our Graduates

Fleming graduates will be able to articulate and demonstrate the skills and attributes that they have achieved while at Fleming. They will have set goals for their own personal and professional success, supported by close relationships with Fleming faculty and staff along their journey.

Through their outstanding learning experiences, our students will

LEARN skills and more, including

- personal and professional ethics
- the power of a creative, professional digital presence
- concepts of sustainability

BELONG to engaging, supported collaborative learning communities, and explore

- a range of cultural experiences and indigenous perspectives
- opportunities to engage with, and contribute to, Fleming communities
- a variety of academic pathways

BECOME reflective, ethical professionals who are

- lifelong learners and future contributors to their chosen fields
- critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers
- positive global citizens



## Our Commitment

Over the next three years, we will design all aspects of the student learning experience, within and beyond the classroom, to support students in pursuing their personal and professional goals and achieving success as flexible, lifelong learners.

This is the heart of our Academic Plan. We have identified 6 priorities to help get us there; each has specific strategies. Detailed plans for each strategy will be developed to keep us on track.

## Our Priorities



## Learning Design

Reimagine and design learning opportunities to fully engage our students using accessible, outcomes-based approaches, applied learning, and authentic assessment.

In this Academic Plan, we will build on the excellent work occurring at Fleming College by assessing our practices to ensure that we will meet the Academic and/or College goals.

Over the next three years, we will

- Use best practices to develop new and revised programs of study that include interdisciplinary and work-integrated learning opportunities;
- Implement a college-wide course-design framework to assist faculty with learning design and the integration of educational technology;
- Increase flexible and efficient delivery options that meet the needs of students through collaboration with college services and facilities;
- Promote and implement applied learning frameworks to ensure quality and consistency across the college; and
- Provide evidence of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities using authentic assessment strategies and tools.

We will base our strategies in best practices, supported by relevant research and improvements in integration between the Academic division and college services and facilities. Our Learning Design and Support Team and Academic Technology Committee will support our faculty in applying the tools, templates, and strategies involved in the course-design framework.

Our course-design framework will include considerations of flexible delivery options, accessibility for all students, interdisciplinary learning opportunities, work-integrated learning opportunities, and introducing all students to the principles of sustainability.

By the end of three years, our graduates will:

- Have engaged in applied or work integrated learning as part of their program; and
- Can demonstrate the power of a creative, professional digital presence, using e-portfolios to demonstrate and articulate the skills and attributes they have achieved while at Fleming.

## Teaching Excellence

Promote and recognize innovation and excellence in teaching by supporting and engaging faculty in industry practices, discipline research and educational technology.

Our faculty members are committed, energetic, and creative people who want to contribute to the future of education. We will support them in their growth as dual professionals: teachers and subject-matter experts, to achieve teaching excellence. As lifelong learners, we will model our expectations for our students and graduates.

Over the next three years, we will

- Implement a comprehensive Faculty Development program that reflects the teacher's role as mentor, learning designer, and subject-matter expert;
- Build learning communities to engage new and experienced faculty in professional/inter-professional collaboration; and
- Support the integration of educational technology into evolving practices in teaching and learning.

Fleming faculty will model the behaviours we want our students to exhibit. They will be risk-takers, members of interdisciplinary communities of practice, and use portfolios to demonstrate and be acknowledged for their commitment to lifelong learning. Faculty members will continue to integrate appropriate technologies into their learning and teaching practice. They will be supported in implementing and then assessing new strategies and technologies. By the end of three years, Fleming College will have established a variety of learning communities that are connected to our goals.

## Student Success

Develop and implement an integrated student success strategy to support our students from recruitment through to graduation.

Student success can be measured in a variety of ways, but there is a strong relationship between student and institutional success. Setting high expectations for students, providing support and feedback to reach those expectations, and involving students in learning communities can positively influence their potential to succeed (Tinto, 2013).

Over the next three years, we will

- Through the development and implementation of an integrated student success strategy, ensure all college services provide integrated supports for our students from recruitment through to graduation.

To begin,

- Formalize a sustainable advising model that supports student success, and retention from point of application and admission to graduation;
- Enhance our career success initiatives to include more collaboration in and out of the classroom;
- Provide initiatives that support indigenous student success, complement experiential learning outcomes, and are aligned with Indigenous Perspectives programming; and
- Develop and implement programs and services to effectively attract, support and integrate international students.

We can no longer hope for the best for the future; we must take charge, make tough decisions, and determine our future. The enrolment issues facing post-secondary education in Ontario and beyond make these challenging times for the college system and for Fleming. As a result, there is increased emphasis at present on attracting and supporting students from areas of growth.

In order to attract and retain full-time and part-time students, we need to differentiate and personalize the ways in which we interact with our students. This goal can only be achieved through the true integration of all areas of the college (recruitment, student services, academic schools and departments).

## Quality Assurance

Implement effective, evidence-based practices in the development and enhancement of innovative programs and services.

Continuous improvement and the desire to innovate, grow and excel are fundamental core values at Fleming. Our Strategic Plan challenges all faculty and staff to focus unrelentingly on quality in the pursuit of outstanding student learning and experiences. The college system as a whole is approaching a 50-year milestone and like many other colleges across the province, Fleming has a proud history of providing life-changing experiences for its students. To ensure that this tradition continues, and to keep pace with other higher education jurisdictions across the globe, all Ontario Colleges will pursue institutional-level accreditation beginning in 2015.

Over the next three years, we will

- Achieve College Accreditation by gathering evidence throughout the college to demonstrate that the six accreditation standards and requirements have been met;
- Ensure graduate competencies, applied learning and work integrated learning opportunities align with the needs of employers and meet recognized standards through consultation with relevant industry and community partners.
- Use the integrated program planning tools, KPI data and metrics, and space planning processes to support ongoing revitalization and renewal of the college program mix.
- Continue common and core program development with differentiation as a key principle, and expand our leadership role in specialized program areas: Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences, Trades and Technology, Arts and Heritage, and Healthcare and Community Services.

While we can be proud of the successful results from the 2008 and 2013 Program Quality Assurance Audits (PQAPA), the College must now demonstrate even more evidence of quality student learning and experiences across all facets of the institution. (Ontario College Quality Assurance Service, 2015) Our focus will be to continue to evolve a culture of quality in all that we do at Fleming College, from the design of new programs, through innovative delivery methods, through the regular review of programs and the provision of services to our students.

## Pathways

Provide clear and accessible pathways, giving our students opportunities to move between programs and institutions.

Ontario's colleges and universities are facing a decreasing population of students entering post-secondary education directly from high school. In order to be competitive among Ontario's many PSE institutions, providing a variety of pathways for students to help them achieve their personal and professional goals is vital to Fleming's long-term success. To that end, we will continue to formalize the options available to our students.

Over the next three years, we will

- Develop and implement a student mobility framework that will result in a strategic approach to enhance student pathways into, within, and from the college; and
- Improve support for students transferring internally and externally.

Research has shown that the number of students continuing their education by transferring between colleges and universities has increased over the last decade, and could further increase through centralized coordination, greater student awareness of existing support services, and an increase in services available. (Kerr, McCloy, and Liu, 2010)

Fleming graduates will be

- supported by an advising system that helps them to choose the appropriate program or pathway to meet their own goals;
- supported in an easy transition to another program at our college, and get credit for the work they have already done here;
- able to identify the various options they will have to transfer to other institutions in Ontario, and around the world.

## Applied Research

Leverage selected applied research activities and resources to complement programs, enhance learning, and provide value to sponsors, partners, and clients.

Historically, research has been the work of universities, but Ontario's public colleges are increasingly well-positioned for a variety of unique interactions with the public and private sectors and are well-suited to complement universities and other institutions as important contributors in Canada's innovation system. (Conference Board of Canada, 2010)

Fleming College, in particular, has an exceptional track record in applied research through our Centre for Alternative Wastewater Treatment (CAWT). The CAWT has collaborative research partnerships with universities, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector; and engages in opportunities to enhance student learning through the integration of applied research activities in student curricula. Moving forward, we will capitalize on the expertise of the CAWT and the Office of Applied Research to expand applied research and innovation activities to targeted schools within the Academic Division.

Over the next three years, we will

- Develop applied research frameworks to reflect the unique priorities of each school, relative to research area, faculty interest and expertise, opportunities for students, and for engagement of partners;
- Identify various levels and types funding opportunities appropriate to the research priorities identified in the frameworks;
- Provide the necessary support and training for faculty and students to prepare high-quality proposals;
- Continue to expand and promote the world-class research activities in the CAWT including the development of a new business plan for the CAWT;
- Consistently promote opportunities for external funding for applied research projects to faculty, staff, and students in each school; and
- Apply for grant funding for at least three small- to medium-sized projects and at least one large project in areas of program strength and growth other than those occurring in the CAWT.

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