

January 31, 2024

Dear Madame Chair,

It has been, and continues to be, an immense privilege to serve as President and Vice-Chancellor of MacEwan University. I am impressed each day by the optimism and energy that our talented students, faculty, and staff bring to the MacEwan campus. They serve not only as a source of inspiration for me, but also a testament to the unique post-secondary experience that our institution offers. It's about the people who are all incredibly dedicated to ensuring a life-changing experience for our students.

MacEwan University sits today at an exciting intersection of relevance, quality, and potential. Our institution has 'come into its own' and is asserting leadership at a new level, in keeping with our character as a leading undergraduate university proudly situated in Edmonton's downtown.

Getting to this point has been a journey involving hard work and collaboration by many individuals across the MacEwan community. This includes talented Board governors, alumni, donors and friends in the community, whose support and commitment have been unwavering. I am humbled to be surrounded and supported by such individuals, and their dedication has been key to the results achieved during my first term as President.

I am enthusiastic about MacEwan's future. In that spirit, I write to seek appointment for a second term as President and Vice-Chancellor. As I reflect on my first term, there are several achievements that serve as a foundation for further work during a second term. These include our new vision *Teaching Greatness: Strategic Vision 2030*, a dashboard to measure and drive progress, provincial funding for a new School of Business building, Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC) audit status, and strategic investments in the talent, spaces, and programming to scale up to achieve our 2030 vision of 30,000 students. MacEwan has incredible momentum and I have more to contribute. In my second term, I would focus on getting the School of Business building built and open for operation in 2027, continue to execute all elements of the vision and play a leadership role in the development of affordable housing and community building. I would also welcome the opportunity to engage the community in imagining MacEwan's future beyond 2030.

The rest of my letter expands further on my first term (which I have another year and a half still to complete) and plans for a second term.

### **Teaching Greatness**

With the Government of Alberta undertaking a significant review of Alberta's post-secondary system, and MacEwan approaching its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the timing was right for our institution to develop a new strategic path for its future. Engaging a host of internal and external stakeholders, my office and members of the Executive team led a series of rich and insightful conversations about the nature, character, and potential of MacEwan University. We considered what makes MacEwan unique, through the lenses of faculty and staff, students, industry, and others. We explored what our MacEwan community values, and where we saw opportunities to add value.

The result was *Teaching Greatness: Strategic Vision 2030*.

At its heart, *Teaching Greatness* puts laser focus on being an exceptional undergraduate teaching university. It lays out a future where our institution leverages its breadth of credentials to offer unparalleled flexibility for students; develops well-rounded, inquisitive, and job-ready graduates; and works to help each unique learner connect their passion to their future path. In addition, *Teaching Greatness* lays down markers for MacEwan's strategic growth and for how it will support faculty in pursuing scholarly activities that enhance the community and strengthen the calibre of our teaching.

The Strategic Vision also honours our university's place in O-day'min, setting out commitments to beliefs that embrace Indigeneity and reconciliation, inclusive excellence, innovation, sustainability, and the expansion of positive and productive connections across our community.

Significantly, *Teaching Greatness* was enthusiastically approved by the General Faculties Council and the Board of Governors of MacEwan University and has been well received by internal and external stakeholders alike. At a time when other post-secondary institutions in North America have struggled to articulate their continued relevance, MacEwan is confident about its purpose, its unique value proposition, and the directions it wishes to pursue.

### **Living the Vision**

Importantly, *Teaching Greatness* is not a glossy brochure that sits on a shelf. Rather, it serves as a high-level blueprint that is actively used to frame choices made across the institution. Constituents across MacEwan have run with the Strategic Vision, eager to bring about the future state it describes.

To facilitate this implementation, more detailed plans that translate the directions of the Strategic Vision into tangible actions have been developed. These detailed planning efforts have been complemented by the creation of a dashboard that identifies specific measurables and associated targets that tie directly to the Strategic Vision.

This framework for progress and accountability is helping ensure the Strategic Vision is translated into tangible change and meaningful action. Decision-makers throughout our institution are undertaking proactive conversations and making deliberate choices about where and how to best deploy resources. Similarly, members of the academy are actively considering how their teaching and scholarly activity can contribute and align with the Strategic Vision.

These activities have been consequential. For example, in respect of our strategic direction on "Perpetual Motion" (expanding enrollment), our institution is already ahead of where we expected to be. Our strategic direction to "Smash the Calendar" has been embraced by the academy, accelerating efforts to offer students greater flexibility in how they package programs and increasing the number of senior courses offered in spring/summer. While there are inevitable pain points and barriers to navigate in making some shifts, the MacEwan community is demonstrating a determination to achieve the objectives set out in *Teaching Greatness*. With the benefit of further tactical planning, target setting, measurement and continuous improvement, there is every reason to believe we shall do so.

## Taking our Place

The COVID-19 pandemic represented one of the most significant challenges faced during my first term as President and Vice-Chancellor. Like the rest of the world, MacEwan University was confronted with the need to make major changes to its operations in very short order. I am proud of how our Executive team and senior leaders across the institution responded swiftly, helping to minimize learning disruptions for students. Our faculty, staff and students were exemplary in adapting to frequently evolving conditions.

I am also proud of our commitment at the outset to learn from the experience. This enabled our institution to identify opportunities to make lasting improvements; we have adjusted approaches that were less successful, while striving to incorporate those that worked well. One key learning was the opportunity to formally integrate hybrid delivery into our educational programming, which we have started to pursue. This will enable MacEwan to optimize use of its physical space while enabling flexibility for higher numbers of learners, consistent with the goals of *Teaching Greatness*.

Another key learning was the importance of place. We discovered how crucial it is for individuals to be on campus – not only for teaching and learning, but for networking, teamwork, creativity, camaraderie, mental health, and overall human development. Our campus is more than an assemblage of classrooms. It is an essential gathering place that helps enrich minds, bodies and souls in ways that can't be achieved through a computer screen. It also helps power the beating heart of Edmonton's core. In many ways, the experiences of COVID-19 helped emphasize the importance of taking, and celebrating, our place in O-day'min.

## Governing for the Future

Among the President and Vice-Chancellor's responsibilities are roles in the governance of MacEwan University, both as Chair of the General Faculties Council (GFC) and as a member of the Board of Governors. The bicameral nature of our institution's governance means that the President and Vice-Chancellor serves as an important conduit between GFC and the Board.

While embracing our new Strategic Vision, and the desire to stand as an exceptional undergraduate teaching university, our governance has correspondingly evolved. By providing more strategic and enriched information, my Executive team has helped support the Board of Governors in undertaking generative discussions on matters such as cybersecurity, institutional partnerships, artificial intelligence, and housing. This forward-looking governance has helped lay a stronger foundation for MacEwan's continued growth in line with the Strategic Vision.

Similarly, GFC has demonstrated superb leadership in respect to academic matters. Many of the tactical plans related to *Teaching Greatness* fall within the governance purview of GFC, as they relate to teaching, scholarly work, and academic programming. Remarkable strides have been made by GFC in providing the architecture and guidance necessary for implementation.

I am proud to say that MacEwan University benefits today from a GFC-Board relationship that can be described as collaborative and complementary. Having undertaken strides to tighten up policy processes and clarify responsibilities, the bicameral governance of our institution is delivering leadership that will help propel MacEwan markedly forward.

At the same time, our executive leadership has worked hard to support the governance bodies and, in accordance with their guidance, provide excellent administrative stewardship. MacEwan's fiscal position is on stable footing and our financial forecasting has grown in accuracy and robustness. Consequently, we have been able to achieve a balance that offers budget sustainability while making highly strategic investments that will enable MacEwan to scale up and realize the ambitions of *Teaching Greatness*. These include investments in recruiting significant new faculty and staff; student supports, including for mental health and scholarships, awards and bursaries; and, systems to support growth and manage risks.

### **MacEwan Leadership**

Almost fifteen years have passed since the provincial government granted MacEwan status as a university. We've gone through the major stages of identity formation, coming to terms with our uniqueness in how we approach our mandate and how we engage the wider world.

This is well illustrated by the increased leadership our institution is asserting related to the development of post-secondary education in Canada. During my past term as President and Vice-Chancellor, it has been a privilege to represent MacEwan on these fronts.

For example, my role as Chair of the Alberta Post-Secondary Network (APSN), which brings together the 26 presidents of Alberta's post-secondary institutions, has been rewarding and productive. By pursuing enhanced collaboration, we have better coordinated our advocacy efforts to bring a unified case to the Government of Alberta regarding the importance of post-secondary funding and the strategic opportunities it presents for the province.

We have also taken new steps to engage the private sector, through a Talent Development Task Force in partnership with the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. The fruits of this Task Force promise to improve understanding between post-secondary institutions and the private sector, better enabling us to help meet the demands of Alberta's economy while also fulfilling our missions as centres of knowledge development and dissemination. This will be especially helpful for MacEwan, given our commitment to developing well-rounded graduates, our substantial and growing touchpoints with the business community, and our commitment to expansion of work-integrated learning across all eligible MacEwan programs.

My service with Universities Canada has helped carve out wider national recognition of MacEwan. Advancing our perspective as a downtown undergraduate university has helped ensure the unique needs and priorities of institutions such as MacEwan are on the table when Universities Canada undertakes advocacy at the federal level. I have also made use of opportunities to share my knowledge and perspectives with pan-Canadian peers and colleagues on topics such as governance, financial sustainability, reconciliation, and community-building, drawing on the experiences, challenges, and successes we have had at MacEwan.

In many ways, our institution is serving as an example for other post-secondary leaders about what is possible from a relevant, modern, urban, and strategic university.

During my time as Chair of the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (during 2019-2022), we were successful in leveraging our collective buying power to achieve transformative agreements with

academic publishers. This helped advance our objectives for more open information access and knowledge dissemination.

In representing MacEwan University through these and other capacities, I have found success leading in ways that reflect our institution's culture and ambition. One might describe this style as pragmatic, rational, thoughtful, and down-to-earth. It involves balancing the necessary with the compassionate, aiming for optimum consensus and collaboration along the way. It places priority on creating conditions in which people can, to the fullest extent possible, succeed in their roles and endeavours. And it values the creation of meaningful connections and relationships with others on campus and in the community.

### **School of Business**

One of the most notable examples of success in fostering community connections has been MacEwan University's new School of Business building. My role in the external advocacy for this project gave me an eye-opening perspective on how MacEwan's relationships in the community are integral for our current and future success.

With the support of a strong and committed campaign cabinet, co-chaired by John Day and Robert Seidel, we continue to engage many internal and external audiences through our compelling "MacEwan Means Business" campaign. I am thankful for the opportunities to have met with many prominent community members and supporters, who have made generous gifts in support of the new School of Business building. I am also proud of our advocacy with key decision-makers, which helped realize a commitment from the Alberta government of \$125 million in capital support – notably, the only post-secondary capital investment in Budget 2023.

When completed, the School of Business building will further power our place in O-day'min, opening our campus to the north and providing opportunities to learn and grow together as a university community.

As we welcome 7,500 additional students to our campus, the facility will provide 376,000 new square feet of learning space, with innovative features such as a trading simulator lab and a new supply chain program. It will further energize MacEwan's ongoing success in educating and launching generations of entrepreneurs, risk takers, ceiling breakers and community builders.

### **Looking Ahead**

Forecasts indicate that the number of post-secondary learners in Alberta is expected to climb, and our institution has articulated a desire to maintain its share of provincial post-secondary education learners. We know the unique experience we offer – including exceptional undergraduate teaching and our commitment to develop well-rounded, job-ready graduates – is attractive to an increasing number of learners. Simply put, MacEwan University will be in much greater demand for many years ahead.

MacEwan already serves as a major destination in Edmonton's core. Between faculty, staff, and students, approximately 20,000 individuals convene on our campus each day during fall and winter terms. This represents approximately one-quarter of the total population downtown during these

times. Whether we like it or not, this makes MacEwan a consequential centre of gravity in the heart of Alberta's capital.

Being a downtown hub, and a gateway to the communities around us and to the north, comes with responsibilities. As we consider our forward growth and evolution, we must be mindful of the impacts our roles and responsibilities have on our greater community.

If done well, MacEwan's evolution can play a dynamic and impactful role in downtown renewal, just as it expects to play in Alberta's economic revival. Our critical mass of energy and activity offers opportunities to realize synergies in spurring business development, addressing social challenges and socio-economic disparities, and facilitating the creation of new lively and highly liveable areas.

Accessible housing serves as an example. Having ample stock of affordable housing is not only crucial for accommodating growth in student enrolment, but for enabling economic growth generally. If people cannot access housing in a community, they will take their ideas, skills, and labour to other places where they can. This reality serves as a driver for MacEwan leadership. We can leverage our relationships to pursue an assortment of partnerships that increase affordable housing stock, thereby facilitating the accommodation needs of our students while advancing the interests of Edmontonians—a significant part of our role in community building.

The new School of Business building serves as another example of how planned expansion can serve as a catalyst for other developments and innovative efforts. As MacEwan makes plans to achieve a target of 30,000 students by 2030, I am eager to see this happen in coordination with our surrounding community, to position us further "in the mix" rather than as an isolated citadel.

I am also eager to explore – again, in partnership with business, governments, and the wider community – how MacEwan's growth can best be undertaken from a programmatic perspective. The directions of *Teaching Greatness* commit us to expand our enrollment carefully and strategically, rather than undertaking growth for growth's sake. This means pursuing academic programming in ways that ensure we remain relevant and continue to produce well-rounded graduates who can actively enhance quality of life in Edmonton, Alberta, and Canada.

Continued integration of work-integrated learning is key in these efforts. By expanding the availability of work-integrated learning, MacEwan will further cement its place in providing our society and economy with bright, curious, career-ready graduates. MacEwan can maximize its impact on this front, by optimizing alignment between the talent pipeline and the work-integrated learning opportunities that we curate for our students.

Importantly, as we grow and expand, we must remain true to our core tenet of delivering exceptional undergraduate learning. Yet this still leaves room for considerable innovation, given the remarkable spectrum of scholastic activity and deep teaching expertise across our academy.

I am excited by the opportunity to explore how we might elevate or energize programs we already offer, supported by our desire to "Smash the Calendar" and offer learners flexibility in how they package various credentials. For instance, imagine how MacEwan might support economic reconciliation by leveraging our teaching talent in science and arts to develop graduates who are

prepared to work on issues at the intersections of resource development, environmental management, and Indigenous engagement.

And though it is clear MacEwan is not a graduate school, we have space to consider how post-baccalaureate programs might feature amid the range of credentials we offer. Given the shifting needs of our society and economy, it is not a stretch to imagine MacEwan adding value by offering post-baccalaureate learning in areas such as health, public policy, and entrepreneurship.

Our success in achieving audit status with the Campus Alberta Quality Council gives us a new degree of agility in ensuring MacEwan programs remain relevant and high-quality, while being innovative. I am eager for us to leverage our audit status in ways that support *Teaching Greatness*.

Of critical importance to our commitment for growth and exceptional teaching are MacEwan's relationships – in both their extensiveness and their quality. I take seriously the responsibility as President to be not only a strategic leader but also a champion of our people and our institution. I value the relationships I have built with students, faculty, staff and alumni and the associations that represent them, the alumni council, Student Association of MacEwan University, Grant MacEwan University Faculty Association and MacEwan Staff Association.

The most valued and cherished post-secondary institutions are those which recognize and live up to their potential as mainstays of their communities and societies. From my perspective, MacEwan University serves not only as a contributor to the labour market and the economy. We are a leader of thought and ideas, always eager to help others explore how to make things possible. We are a facilitator of a more inclusive, more just, and more prosperous future.

Living up to this potential means being a partner, a collaborator, a participant. I am keen to further develop and enrich relationships between all parts of MacEwan University and the broader community. This includes key stakeholders, alumni, and supporters, but extends to those who haven't always naturally come to mind. Such new relationships offer new possibilities that we might not have imagined.

I am bullish about our institution's future and excited at seeing aspects of our Strategic Vision come to life. Where we were once humble, we now challenge ourselves to be bold and unapologetically MacEwan University. We are courageous and confident about who we are and where we are headed. We have momentum.

Maintaining and making the most of that momentum will, if afforded the privilege, serve as my overarching touchstone during a second term as President and Vice-Chancellor.

Sincerely,



Dr. Annette Trimbee  
President and Vice-Chancellor