

State of the University 2022
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(Presentation recording may vary from original script)

Introduction

Thank you, Craig and welcome everyone. And thank you to Cynthia for your prayer.

It is so gratifying to be able to do this in person.

As we saw with our Block Party last week, there's an incredible richness in being able to connect in real life. One that you just can't duplicate across a screen.

Indeed, across campus you can sense the renewed energy in people as they attend classes, meet with colleagues and even just get together to enjoy the wonderful fall weather we've been having.

It's been a long couple of years getting to this point. Yet we persevered.

The entire MacEwan community worked diligently to keep each other safe while still delivering quality learning opportunities for our students.

Through it, we demonstrated that we're flexible, agile and resilient.

Now we're certainly not going to pretend it's all over.... And we're going to be responsive, as we have been, to any protocols announced by health authorities.

But we are in a new phase.

Call it a recovery phase. One where we return to something that looks a bit more like "pre-COVID"... regroup and adjust.... And look forward, boldly and optimistically.

We're in a good position to do that... Because despite the upheaval of the past two years, we didn't stand still at MacEwan.

Instead, our community came together and had some big conversations about who we are, what we offer, and where we want to go.

There was spirited discussion. There was a sense of possibility. There was a yearning to identify, express and invest in the best of ourselves... so that when we reached the other side of COVID-19, we'd be ready.

And the product of those efforts was our new Strategic Vision... which received widespread support from our Board, our GFC and our university community.

It is aptly named, "Teaching Greatness." Because it doubles-down on what makes us stand out: our emphasis is on being an **exceptional undergraduate teaching university**.

Our strategic vision is going to help guide our choices for the rest of this decade.

In fact, it's already doing so.

And the vision is already serving as a key touchstone as we engage with governments, the business community, alumni and supporters, and our student community... about plans, policies and ambitions.

People can be skeptical about vision statements... And understandably so, because sometimes they end up being feel-good exercises that don't really go anywhere.

Teaching Greatness isn't intended to look pretty sitting on a bookshelf. It's our high-level guide and we're referring to it daily.

We have set out a defined approach for its implementation... With three major phases:

- "Recovery"... That's where we are now. Given how incredibly ambitious and agile the MacEwan community is, I don't think we're going to be in this phase very long.
- Then there's "Growth." I'm going to speak more about that today.
- And finally, "Acceleration," which kind of speaks for itself.

To keep us on track and on pace through these phases, we're developing a dashboard and markers of success. We expect those to be further defined and approved by Spring 2023... with GFC engagement And then seeking board approval.

But in the meantime, we are moving forward.

Because we know MacEwan is the right place for the times.

DIRECTION ONE: TEACHING GREATNESS

Perhaps nothing is more emblematic of this than our commitment to teaching greatness.

It's in our DNA. It's at the centre of everything we do... and every decision we make.

It's what energizes us each day... Not only expanding our knowledge... but passing that knowledge on to the next generation of thinkers and builders and leaders.

Each day, MacEwan faculty are defining what it means to deliver exceptional undergraduate learning. This is a dimension where our aspiration is to lead the sector.

And we are starting from strength.

Ninety-two percent of our alumni speak positively about the quality of instruction they received. That's a testament to our uniqueness... our talent... and our determination to put student instruction front and centre.

We're building on that.

We're undertaking an ambitious hiring plan, to increase the number of tenure track faculty over the next several years. We are hiring as many as 50 new faculty to start in July of 2023.

We understand the importance of tenured faculty in delivering quality learning.

In fact, a significant proportion of first-year classes at MacEwan are taught by tenure track, long term faculty members.

We're also pursuing our goal of doubling student financial aid over the next five years.

We're doing this on two tracks: broad-based efforts to expand scholarships, bursaries and awards across all faculties... And targeted efforts to support specific underserved student populations.

A big part of this is our Students First campaign, which has some wonderful momentum.

Some of you propelled that momentum by participating in "Dunk the Monk" at the block party... where our Provost endured countless rounds of saturation to help raise money for financial aid.

Even more of you have made generous contributions to the overall campaign. Internal donor participation has soared from 2.5 to 13 per cent.

A huge thank you to our facilities team who achieved 74 per cent participation during the campaign.

It is fantastic to see that close to 12 per cent of our students received financial aid from MacEwan, at an average of about \$3,000 each.

All of this illustrates our fervent commitment to student learning and quality education.

It's a commitment in which we take enormous pride, so it's gratifying when you see people taking notice.

Specifically, the Campus Alberta Quality Council, which has signaled that MacEwan University is moving to audit status. This means we'll benefit from an expedited review when creating new degree programs.

It's a major marker of our quality. With strong academic policies and academic governance, we've demonstrated our prowess as an undergraduate university.

We've entered a new era. And we're ready to take our next big steps in being an exceptional undergraduate teaching university.

DIRECTION TWO: SMASH THE CALENDAR

Smash the Calendar. In practically every room where I've talked about the Strategic Vision, this part of it never fails to get people's attention. You can sense them getting excited about raising their hammers and doing what they can to help "smash the calendar."

This is all about delivering our courses and programs in new ways. We want MacEwan to be a place where students can enter, exit, ladder up, and explore, as flexibly and seamlessly as possible.

We have a real opportunity to put together innovative, multi-disciplinary post-secondary journeys for our students that meet their interests and position them for success.

And we're already seizing that opportunity.

In partnership with business and industry, MacEwan is expanding the micro-credentials we offer.

Growing micro-credentials, means growing our partnerships.

And there's more beyond this and still more to come. Anybody who's gone grocery shopping during the past two years will be particularly pleased to see "Intelligent Supply Chains" on that list.

This speaks to an important consideration as we smash the calendar. We're not doing it haphazardly. We're doing it with the needs of students, employers, the economy and society in mind. And we're going to do it while maintaining quality.

That includes accelerated progression. We want to explore opportunities to enable students to finish four-year degrees in three years, yet we must still empower them with the requisite skills and training.

For instance, we're exploring ways of graduating students sooner from our Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Getting this right will be critical – not only for the professional success of our graduates, but also for health and safety of patients in their care.

And as we continue examining our policies and procedures to remove barriers and increase flexibility, we're also continuing work to enable hybrid learning. With the benefit of lessons learned during the height of the pandemic, GFC has come to a shared understanding about different teaching modalities.

We know there is an appetite among today's students for a structured blend of in-person and virtual delivery. Our challenge is to meet this appetite using the best possible pedagogy.

With guidance from the Centre for Teaching and Learning we have been looking at ways to expand hybrid pedagogy, including investment to upgrade classrooms.

These moves are going to help us increase flexibility and extend our reach to more learners, while ensuring we maintain high quality in our undergraduate instruction.

DIRECTION THREE: GRAND AS A GRIFFIN

Now that's a lot about "how" we deliver courses and programs.

Let's talk more about "what" we're delivering.

We know that our students aren't just coming to MacEwan for a fancy piece of paper. They're coming to be prepared for the world. It's our job to prepare them.

Our mascot, the Griffin, blends the wit, strength and courage of a lion together with the speed, vision, and intelligence of the eagle. A magical combination of qualities that spell out "well roundedness".

That is the character we seek to inspire, awaken and foster in our graduates.

At a time when there's rapid change in the economy... more upheaval in society... rising issues in the environment... what we need in our world is more griffins.

Innovative, collaborative and competitive grads who are job ready.

We know that work-integrated learning can play an instrumental role in generating that type of graduate...

So, we are committed to making work-integrated learning available across as many program offerings as possible.

Again, we're starting from a place of pride.

We will exceed our 2021 target in our provincial Investment Management Agreement, of 75 percent of programs offering a work-integrated learning component. The target for 2022 is 78 percent, and we are confident of hitting that too.

Ultimately, the goal is for 100 percent of eligible programs to have a work-integrated learning component.

At the same time, we have some work to do when it comes to student participation rates. As you can see, rates are quite varied between faculties.

There will always be differences based on programs that have regulatory requirements – like nursing and some of our health and community studies programs. We can also learn from each other, and mine the areas of success to help lift everyone.

Right now, more than 5,000 MacEwan students a year participate in work-integrated learning through placements or projects.

That is one out of five students, in addition students are involved in work-integrated learning projects.

The Faculty of Arts and Science has made great strides to increase their student participation in work-integrated learning.

As we do that, we're energizing our work to expand partnerships in the community. If you've been following the media, you will have heard about some of these new partnerships, with organizations such as the Edmonton Elks, Edmonton International Airport, the Citadel Theatre and we are soon to announce our one with the Sarah McLachlan School of Music.

These and other partnerships will help facilitate more work-integrated learning opportunities for MacEwan students. The result will be a MacEwan that is even more effective at producing the magical griffins needed by our society, economy and environment.

DIRECTION FOUR: PERPETUAL MOTION

Now, I used that word "more." You'll hear it a lot. More of being who we are. More of doing what we're really good at.

And, importantly, more students.

We have ambition to grow our enrollment, at an average of 5 per cent per year. Ultimately, we want to reach a level of 20,000 full-time equivalent students, this is about 30,000 people.

This isn't simply a vanity exercise. We know MacEwan has a critical role to play in meeting rising demands for post-secondary education, driven by demographics.

Yet we also know we offer something unique that learners and employers are demanding.

So, we can do our part... and then some.

On the screen behind me you'll see some projections.

The light blue is current enrolment.

Then there's planned international student growth, constituting projected growth of 10 percent,

And our projected growth from maintaining our historic share of post-secondary enrolment when Alberta's demographic bulge comes through.

All of that gets us to the top of the dark blue segments. That's "doing our part."

The red segment represents "and then some." It's our aspirational growth.

And this is where we get to work. We plan to reach that stretch goal through a combination of efforts.

Some of it will come from targeted expansion.

For example, earlier this year MacEwan was successful under the "Alberta at Work" initiative in securing funding to expand seats in high-demand programs.

Other parts of it will come from us working internally...

Such as expanding recruitment of Indigenous students....

Responding to the demands of mature learners who want to upskill....

And strengthening academic and other supports to help improve the retention of students in our programs.

It's a marathon, not a sprint. Yet one that I'm confident we can achieve together.

It does, however, come with an associated challenge --- and that is, where do we put everybody?

Even as we integrate hybrid learning modalities across the institution, we still have a physical capacity issue.

Slated for the corner of 109 Street and 105 Avenue, and with a schematic design that has already been funded and approved, the new business building will expand MacEwan's capacity by 5,000 full-time equivalent students.

Seven stories of state-of-the-art, flexible space. We own the land. We are shovel ready.

And we are undertaking an aggressive capital campaign to raise \$25 million to get it built, with major fundraising efforts led by supporters and community builders John Day and Rob Seidel.

It's an exciting development whose time is right.

We are launching the campaign today: MacEwan Means Business.

You will see a fantastic image of MacEwan Soccer player Grace Mwasalla, who was also Female Rookie of the Year. This image was chosen to amplify the next generation of talent and innovation.

And wasn't our Women's Soccer Team grand taking the National Championships.

The images you will see over the coming weeks on billboards in the community will signify the spirit of MacEwan, bold, maverick and inclusive.

"Trendsetting/trend breaking" energy.

DIRECTION FIVE: TRENDSETTERS AND TRENDBREAKERS

On the subject of our campus... and trendsetters and trendbreakers...

As we developed the strategic vision, one thing that came into sharper focus was our role as a downtown university.

Being right in the centre of the capital city, with tendrils into many parts of community, positions us smack dab in the middle of a living lab.

MacEwan faculty are uniquely positioned to work with other community partners to explore and address the challenges facing our city, province and broader society.

Yet even in our scholastic work, MacEwan stands apart. Because, once again, we've got that laser focus on delivering exceptional undergraduate learning.

We want to support members of the academy in taking the fruits of their research activity and using it to inform their courses, their pedagogy and their teaching.

And along the way, make an outsized impact on our economy, environment and society.

To that end, I'm proud to report that we'll be nominating two Tier 2 Canadian Research Chairs in the areas of Social Innovation and Urban Wellness.

I also want to congratulate MacEwan faculty for their success in securing major research grants. Nine MacEwan faculty members will collectively receive more than \$600,000 from NSERC and SSHRC grants.

Last year I was absolutely amazed and inspired by the scholarly activity and projects that our faculty collaborated on with our students.

Our students examined creating safer space for Edmonton transit users and were invited to present those solutions to Edmonton City Council.

Life on the Edge was a fabulous interdisciplinary project, where our students created a game for biology students to learn about viruses and cell biology. A fantastic teaching tool.

HONOURING OUR PLACE IN O-DAY'MIN

Our place in O-day'min – in the heart of the Edmonton – also influences the ways we behave and the choice we make as we pursue our new strategic vision.

Indigeneity and reconciliation are key aspects of that. As we all return to campus in person, we're reminded this land we're on has been a special gathering place since time immemorial.

Reflecting on that leads us to recognize we have a duty, and an opportunity, to foster and support economic reconciliation.

We can do this by enhancing our inclusiveness as a university and working to enhance participation from more Indigenous learners.

We inspire Indigenous youth by bringing them to Campus with our annual Youth Rising Conference. Youth can see themselves in role models and can engage and feel comfortable that MacEwan can be a home away from home.

We have a new partnership with Indspire through their annual gathering, "Soaring."

This event, hosted in Edmonton this year, will bring hundreds of Indigenous high school students together in May, to inspire them and help them plan their future careers.

To encourage high school completion and the pursuit of post-secondary education.

MacEwan University will have the privilege of holding a campus day, where we will host tours and faculty workshops.

Efforts like Soaring, and other strategies we'll pursue based on advice from the Indigenous Advisory Council, will help engage more Indigenous learners at MacEwan.

And that will complement broader work to move the needle on equity, diversity and inclusion.

Here are some results from our demographic survey. We do well in some areas and need to improve in others.

Ultimately, we want our faculty and staff to be representative of our students. Our student body changes as our community changes.

How we get there needs to be informed by data. We've already implemented mechanisms for students and staff to share relevant demographic data through self-identification.

This is going to help us develop a more reliable data set.

This will help guide us to create and implement strategies to build an environment where equity, diversity and inclusion in our leadership, faculty and staff are encouraged and supported.

Our student body is always changing.

And as you can see on the visual behind me, there are ways our faculty reflects our student and the community well, and others where we could have closer alignment.

Last May, our General Faculties Council supported the recommendation of our Nursing Faculty Council to implement equity admissions, which will see 10 per cent of seats earmarked for qualified Indigenous candidates.

We need to keep moving the bar. For instance, we are committed to growing our Indigenous faculty, with as many as five cross-appointments with kihêw waciston annually

We understand the tremendous importance of representation.

When our students see themselves represented in our classrooms and hallways, it deepens their connections with our institution and campus community.

That sense of belonging is crucial for growth, engagement, learning and success.

CONCLUSION

And that is, ultimately, what and who we are here for.

I'm excited about the year ahead. I'm excited for everyone to be back on campus. I'm excited about our vision and ambitions. I'm excited to learn about and showcase the amazing achievements of our faculty, staff and students.

And I'm excited about the possibilities we have.

We know who we are. We know what makes us unique. We know where we're headed.

And we know that what we offer is needed now more than ever before.

People are looking our way a lot more these days... and they like what they see.

Teaching Greatness.