Ontario Agricultural College
Strategic Planning Status Report

Initial Survey Responses
June 2017

Table of Contents

Strategic Planning Process Overview

In late 2016, OAC began a strategic planning exercise to build on *Our Path Forward: The University of Guelph's Strategic Framework*. The intent is to engage members across the college, and provide a strategically relevant document that showcases priorities voiced by the OAC community. OAC staff, faculty and students will be able to refer to the final strategic planning document for guidance.

This report summarizes the themes identified though an online survey conducted in April 2017. 134 OAC internal community members (faculty, staff and students) answered survey questions. The summarization was completed by the OAC Strategic Planning committee members, who are listed in the final section of this report.

In the fall, the committee will offer more opportunity for input from members of the OAC and University communities and various stakeholders including industry, alumni and donors. We invite you to review this summary, consider your own input and join one of the various engagement opportunities that are listed on page 6. When participating in an engagement opportunity, reflect on how you see yourself being involved and the benefits of actively contributing to the future of OAC.

Input gathered during the second phase of consultations will be considered and incorporated with the initial survey results. Together they will form the final Strategic Planning document that will provide a summary of input and themes. The final document, that will serve OAC over the next five years, will be presented to the OAC community in early 2018. OAC leadership will report back to the community on an annual basis, starting in September 2018, on the actions happening across OAC to address the priorities identified in the document.

Survey Overview

OAC Community Makeup (~4,445)	Survey Respondents (~134*)
610 staff 140 faculty 670 graduate students 2400 undergraduate students 625 diploma students	45 staff 39 faculty 32 graduate students 20 undergraduate students 3 professor emeritus 1 sessional or college lecturer 6 respondents identified as 'other' *Note: Some respondents replied to more than one option.*

Survey Question Summaries

It should be noted that while we have organized the responses according to the initial questions posed, certain themes and responses that would certainly benefit multiple aspects of OAC appeared under several questions. Where sample responses are included, permission to include the quote was attained from the original respondent.

Q1: How can we improve OAC's academic programs and learning experiences?
123 responses

THEMES IDENTIFIED

- Continue to enhance infrastructure (information technology, classrooms, lab facilities, equipment, video conferencing).
- Increase the number and awareness of experiential learning opportunities in its various forms, including international experiences; provide support (administrative, equipment, technical) to facilitate delivery of these experiential learning opportunities.
- Diversify and add to the curriculum to reflect emerging areas and cross-disciplinary topics.

"We need to require and support writing courses for our students. We need to allow students to attain breadth of study that prepares them to be citizens. We need better teaching infrastructure that allows for hands on activities in the winter months when weather is not conducive, allowing classes to be scheduled in both the fall and winter semesters." – Faculty

"Continue to ensure experiential learning is a focus in the undergrad program. I was able to get into the field, greenhouse and many labs and it really fostered my love for agriculture and research." – Graduate student

Q2: How can we support and strengthen human resources at OAC?
98 responses

THEMES IDENTIFIED
- Training and mentoring for all respondent groups (faculty, staff, students, managers).
- Increase cross-college interaction and the sharing of best practices amongst new faculty and not-so-new faculty and staff.
- The importance of recognizing excellence and achievements, making people feel valued and encourage them to reach their full potential.
- Support that enables everyone to focus on their functional areas of responsibility.
- Increase the number of permanent positions as opposed to contract positions.
- Improve IT support and resources.

"More consistent and comprehensive onboarding/orientation. Training and mentorship support, especially at the operational-level. Facilitation of networking opportunities. Address workplace culture: articulate values and expectations. Articulate key goals/action plans." – Administrative staff

"More professional development opportunities delivered by qualified personnel" – Graduate student

Q3: How can we support existing and new partnership opportunities?
85 responses

THEMES IDENTIFIED
- Tell our story better (e.g. recognize media as a key avenue; communicate the breadth of OAC to various audiences through on/off campus activities, improve web presence).
- Support and facilitate engagement with broader OAC community locally and internationally (e.g. hold partnership symposiums and networking events; maintain a database of willing/existing partners, have partners contribute to course delivery, curriculum reform; foster cross-college collaborations to improve partnership potential).
- Support excellence in research and education; partnerships will follow.
- Streamline small grants/partnerships policies/procedures; provide seed funds.

"More opportunities for alumni, corporations and stakeholders to have hands on involvement with classrooms, projects and mentorship of students." – Administrative staff

"The College needs to give considerable thought to how we mobilize knowledge emerging from the research at OAC." - Faculty

Q4: How can we support and grow OAC's research?
86 responses

THEMES IDENTIFIED
- Remove obstacles for researchers (this sentiment was expressed by individuals of several respondent groups).
- Seek more funding to support research positions (permanent, admin, stats, IT, technical).
- Encourage people to work collaboratively and across disciplines; apply for more interdisciplinary grants; reward those doing interdisciplinary research.
- Encourage faculty to engage more at grassroots/industry level to share and identify research needs.
- Continue to invest in research infrastructure (e.g. state-of-the-art equipment and space).
- Get students involved in research as early as possible.

"I think if a faculty member is an excellent researcher, we need to find a way to give them the opportunity to spend more of their work life on research. If that means hiring others to teach, then perhaps that is what needs to be done." – Administrative staff

"Place more emphasis on applying to graduate school and pursuing research during 3rd and 4th year of undergrad. Have workshops dedicated to applying for funding, determining a research topic and finding an advisor." – Graduate student

Q5: How can we improve and enhance OAC's infrastructure?
79 responses

THEMES IDENTIFIED
- Create a database/resource list for equipment, lab partners.
- Optimize the capacity of all campuses and research stations.
- Support increased collaboration between departments; break silos; development of equipment proposals that benefit multiple departments; where possible, look for opportunities to support sharing of equipment within/across departments.
- Improve lab space and adaptable work/meeting/study spaces for students.
- Increase technical support for maintaining specialized equipment and training students on its use.
- Hold lab/equipment demo days.
- Share data between labs.

"Create a database that includes all the equipment and lab resources available." – Graduate student

"Sharing resources would be difficult in most cases. Every case should be analyzed separately." - Faculty

"Look at ways to leverage partnerships with satellite research stations and those communities more." – Administrative staff

Q6: How can we improve OAC's organizational effectiveness?
69 responses

THEMES IDENTIFIED
- Support a culture of communication, awareness and connectivity of staff, faculty and students within/between departments to foster collaboration; better connect students with available resources.
- Provide strong leadership and a central, cohesive strategic plan that includes action and evaluation.
- Centralize administration effort where possible.
- Provide better information, data and the tools needed for analysis of various college activities (administration, teaching and research).

"Have college administrative brain-storming meetings." – Administrative staff

"More college-wide communication. Special events, achievement, opportunities could be shared across college." – Graduate student

"To work better as a college its members have to have a stronger sense of community which can be achieved through interaction." – Technical staff

Next Steps: Additional Input Opportunities (Fall 2017)

1. Engagement with three remaining groups through in-person town halls: a) External community, b) Undergraduate students, and c) Associate diploma students at Ridgetown Campus.
2. In-person town hall for internal community members who want to provide additional feedback beyond the survey.
3. Online opportunity to provide additional feedback.

Please visit https://www.uoguelph.ca/oac/about/strategic-planning for regular updates about this process and to plan your next involvement. If you have questions or comments, you can also contact one of the OAC Strategic Planning committee members:

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