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## 2017 Academic Action Plan – Themes & Goals

In the [2017 Academic Action Plan](#) a suite of over 30 goals and 165 associated recommendations were woven together into a comprehensive narrative designed to help UNBC address its challenges and be ready with the direction, flexibility, and responsiveness that post-secondary organizations would need to be successful in the decades to come. The report was organized under the thematic headings of **Respect**, **Restructure**, and **Innovate**.

*Please use the information below to hone in on the goals of most importance or relevance to your context and try to evaluate if you believe there have been successes in this area over recent years or there are remaining opportunities for UNBC. Please bring these thoughts, comments, and ideas to the upcoming engagement sessions.*

*There is an indication against each goal as to which [2023-2028 UNBC Strategic Plan READY](#) theme it may relate most closely with. This is provided as an aid, to help focus the reflective discussion for the themed engagements session as a part of the Academic Plan Refresh process. Please note these attributions are somewhat subjective, and the themes along with the foundational goals in the READY strategy are present throughout.*

### READY Themes

CC – Cultivate Curiosity  
ATR – Act on Truth & Reconciliation  
ENC – Empower Northern Communities  
FLSGI – Foster Local Solutions for Global Impact

### READY Foundational Goals

Support fulfilling student learning journeys.  
Celebrate the best of UNBC's achievements.  
Attract and retain outstanding people for our community.  
Influence local and global policy

## 1.1 RESPECT

Respect is about being true to our university motto, “En cha huná”, reminding us that all people have a voice and a viewpoint, and about respecting all of those who work for the betterment of life, learning, and research at UNBC. It is about recognizing and respecting the many communities of place and interest who support us and our work. Such respect is demonstrated through action towards achieving our collective potential.

Goals:

### University Direction – Strengths, Enrollment, Research / **READY theme(s): CC, FLSGI**

- UNBC should aspire to have a strong and innovative community and culture of teaching, learning, research, and service in which all people feel secure, welcomed, and challenged in the pursuit of knowledge, and in which student voices and responsibilities are central. Faculty are free, able, and supported in generating and sharing knowledge and experimenting with approaches to teaching, research, and service. Students and faculty benefit from and rely on staff, who are essential to (and recognized for) maintaining the functioning of this community and culture.
- Build an ongoing culture of enrolment planning by adopting Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) in principle and approach.

The University will transform lives and communities by transforming itself, and asking how the University can fit the student rather than how the student fits the University.

Reflect and focus on student success throughout the SEM continuum by developing and implementing comprehensive pre-recruitment, recruitment, retention, completion and alumni relation strategies that showcase our values and promote UNBC in a manner consistent with the notion of “Destination YOUNbc.”

Promote inclusiveness and diversity in UNBC enrolment by embedding the principles of universal design in the development of pedagogy, physical spaces and buildings, enrolment processes, and governance.

- UNBC provides outstanding undergraduate and graduate learning opportunities that explore cultures, health, economies, and the environment. As one of British Columbia's research-intensive universities, we bring the excitement of new knowledge to all of our students, and the outcomes of our teaching and research to the world. In addition to fostering and celebrating academic excellence, UNBC is a welcoming place, with a learning environment that is friendly, inclusive, and supportive.

**University Life / READY theme(s): CC, ATR**

- We aspire to a life for the entire UNBC community that is fulfilling within and beyond work and study. Life on all of our campuses should be exciting, be engaged with the pressing issues of our time and world, and reflect the University's northern places and peoples, as well as its diverse international population.  
An obvious and prominent inclusion within the draft Academic Plan is the acknowledgement of "Indigenization and Decolonization" as being an important part of UNBC's path forward. Not only is this complementary to the institution's overall mandate and mission, but it celebrates UNBC as a leader in this area. It is important to recognize that Indigenization and decolonization is not intended to be prescriptive in nature. Instead, by embedding this terminology within the context of the overarching Academic Action Plan, the opportunity for evolution and change as related to these two areas can be realized. Succinct and tightened definitions of what Indigenization and decolonization means at UNBC may potentially disadvantage the creative and innovative ways our institution respectfully implements Indigenous and decolonizing-related initiatives as part of UNBC's institutional identity and strength. Through dialogue exchange and sharing, further understandings of how UNBC can embrace Indigenization and decolonization will be enacted.
- Through rich student engagement, develop transition and retention strategies that promote community, student success, and academic excellence as core values of UNBC, and completion strategies to mitigate attrition within at-risk student groups.
- Make student experience central to UNBC's values and its commitment to being "Canada's leading destination university."
- Ensure conditions for student success are in place by increasing awareness of the benefits of existing student support services among students, faculty, and staff.

**Empowerment and Collaboration / READY theme(s): CC, ATR**

- University operations will become more efficient and effective when front-line employees are empowered to make decisions without having to wait for permission from their "one-up" or higher to approve and then for the approval to work its way back down the ladder. Better decisions and more efficient use of resources will result from enhanced communication and collaboration among academic and administrative units, and involvement of employees in decision-making processes will support employee commitment and productivity. Engagement feedback suggested opportunities for faculty and staff development that included attention to enhanced professional development, training, and mentoring. Together, these suggestions identified a collaborative approach to faculty and staff recruitment, retention, and succession planning that could greatly enhance job satisfaction and performance, and assist overall the University functioning.
- Students, faculty, and staff develop relationships with various functions, groups, and individuals during their time at UNBC, that are an important component of productivity and job satisfaction. Our goal is to ensure that these relationships are maintained when individuals leave, by having a robust and effective renewal and retention plan.

**Faculty Renewal and Development / READY theme(s): CC, ATR, FLSGI**

- Faculty members at UNBC feel strongly that teaching, research, and service are a core mandate for faculty members. The University must support faculty in achieving those expectations. This includes

ensuring that there are a sufficient number of instructors with the disciplinary expertise to maintain the existing curricula at the Prince George and regional campuses.

11. Faculty at UNBC of all ranks expressed considerable interest in improving and innovating their teaching, broadening their research program, and exploring new areas of service to their profession, the community, and the university. Many faculty members spoke of the selfless community that is UNBC, and committed to helping colleagues achieve their goals for professional achievement. This included a desire to serve as mentors. The University must support the mentorship process through all stages of career development.
12. Faculty expressed a sense of disengagement from governance structures (such as the Senate and the Board of Governors) and decision-making at UNBC. In the survey responses and survey comments there was an expressed desire that senior administration make every effort to build a stronger and more transparent relationship with faculty members.
13. Health and wellness are elements that are closely related to retention and recruitment. In our survey of Canadian universities, we found that other universities have developed health and wellness policies. Policies of this nature seem to be lacking at UNBC and need to be developed.

#### **Decolonization and Indigenization / READY theme(s): CC, ATR, ENC**

14. Decolonization and Indigenization are inextricably linked, and in keeping with its strategic priorities and its founding intentions for Indigenous students and communities, UNBC commits to decolonization and Indigenization of the institution.

## **1.2 RESTRUCTURE**

Restructure is about realizing those organizational opportunities that have been created over time in order to reposition and realign each unit, and the University as a whole, in more effective ways as a platform for the next generation of success.

Goals:

#### **Academic Units – College Structure / READY theme(s): CC, ATR, FLSGI**

15. The goal is to have organizational structures that enhance opportunities for academic programs to be supported, to grow, to function efficiently, and to enable effective leadership. The goal is also to have an organizational structure that supports creativity, flexibility, and the interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration that will allow UNBC to respond to opportunities that fit our unique skills and assets.

#### **Academic Support Units / READY theme(s): CC, ATR, FLSGI**

16. Institutional priorities in the area of student support and innovative teaching are well supported, efficiently operated, and engaged in meaningful collaborations among related units and academic programs.
17. UNBC should have a clear set of realistic enrolment targets and a competitive admissions process. Admission processes are streamlined and efficient, and UNBC is competitive with other institutions regarding response time for admissions.
18. Create a personalized student experience in concert with UNBC's strategic priorities, through prioritized investment in staff and faculty positions that enable an increase in meaningful contact between students and UNBC personnel. Prioritize investment in staff positions that enable seamless service delivery and timely, effective communication.  
Encourage optimal recruitment, retention and completion by highlighting academic excellence, and better linking our alumni success stories and the type of education we provide to recruitment.

**Faculty of Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies / READY theme(s): CC, FLSGI**

19. Graduate students and supervisors are aware of normal completion timelines and expectations by discipline, and work together for timely completion of graduate programs.
20. Enhance the number of graduate scholarships and the amount awarded.
21. Develop unique, integrated graduate programs that respond to big ideas and challenges. Enhance communications about the program offerings.

**Council of Deans / READY theme(s): CC, ATR, ENC, FLSGI**

22. We were very concerned with how academic programming at UNBC could become more flexible and responsive to changes and opportunities moving forward. Rather than being mired in nearly continuous academic planning exercises, we felt that academic structures to support responsiveness which draw upon UNBC's hallmark attributes would be essential. We expected that within any new Faculty structure, there would continue to be Chairs' Councils organized by the individual Deans. In addition, we recognized the need to create a platform for dialogue which would support cross-university discussion. Such dialogue would be important for sharing opportunities, finding synergies, and mobilizing a responsive campus strategy. Therefore, it was recognized that a Council of Deans be established and be distinct from the current Deans' Council reporting to the Vice-President Academic and Provost.

**Regional Programs / READY theme(s): CC, ATR, ENC**

23. Identify best practices in the provision of academic supports and services, and provide resources to translate these practices between UNBC campuses in a contextualized manner.  
Strengthen a sense of community on regional campuses so that all students feel a sense of belonging with UNBC.

### 1.3 INNOVATE

Innovate is about taking the lead in post-secondary creativity and responsiveness. It is about letting go of the past rigidities, walls, and silos, and about being open and welcoming to the new questions, issues, and insights emerging in the world around us.

Goals:

**Teaching and Learning / READY theme(s): CC, FLSGI**

24. The University focuses its efforts towards high-impact teaching and learning and on developing capacity and appropriate use of experiential education, and affirms that faculty need space and time to be able to engage in high-impact teaching.

**Curriculum Flexibility / READY theme(s): CC, FLSGI**

25. To have an academic structure that is flexible and adaptable, allowing UNBC to modify programs to meet emergent topics and subject areas.

**Experiential Education / READY theme(s): CC, ATR**

26. Create, foster, and support undergraduate and graduate student access to high-quality, ethical, and culturally appropriate experiential education embedded across disciplines, across campuses, throughout our communities, and internationally.
27. Update and integrate risk management practices into experiential education.

**Internationalization and Interculturalization / READY theme(s): CC**

28. Create, foster, and promote interculturalization as a central tenant of our institution, along with the authentic promotion and facilitation of global learning at UNBC and around the world (internationalization). An interculturalized institution has processes, learnings, and organization that is adapted to the diverse and multicultural nature of the University community. This connects with the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (see Indigenization). However, it is important to note that while Indigenization and interculturalization do intersect, they are not the same thing and their differences must be honoured.

As stated in our Values, UNBC has a strong commitment to diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, and UNBC faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to understand and articulate their own positionality (cultural self-awareness), and to identify how their work and lived experience is shaped by viewing the world through an intercultural lens.

Internationalization is an institutional commitment to international enrollment, international engagement (through partnerships, exchanges, and international student experiences), international research and its translation, and internationalizing curricula. International creates, fosters, and promotes authentic global learning opportunities for UNBC faculty, staff, and students.

29. Interculturalization and internationalization are approached as a positive opportunity for learning and scholarship while providing the support needed for positive educational, cultural, and instructional experiences when students arrive and enroll at any of our campuses, or travel abroad and return.

30. UNBC faculty actively work toward building intercultural teaching competence (ITC). ITC is defined as: “the ability of instructors to interact with students in a way that supports the learning of students who are linguistically, culturally, socially or in other ways different from the instructor or from each other, across a very wide definition of perceived difference and group identity”. Intercultural teaching competence enables instructors to bridge cultural, linguistic or other differences in the classroom, communicate successfully across disciplinary cultures, and establish meaningful relationships with and among students in order to facilitate learning and promote student engagement. In addition, intercultural teaching competence also includes the ability to model intercultural competence for students in the classroom and to facilitate dialogue about global issues using respectful, inclusive, and culturally relevant teaching strategies. Interculturally competent instructors are open to diverse ways of knowing, are reflective in their approaches to assessment and curriculum design and promote multiple perspectives when they select content, readings, and learning activities.

**Marketing / READY theme(s): CC, ATR, ENC, FLSGI**

31. To have an effective marketing strategy that portrays a clear and authentic identity and is strategically targeted.