



Operational Review of Laurentian University

January 2022

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1. Executive summary

SCOPE OF REVIEW

On 11 October 2021, the review of Laurentian University's administrative operations began. The review included:

1. an assessment of the strategies, service delivery models, structures, processes, systems and capabilities for seven administrative functions within the university;
2. the development of recommendations for an institution-wide Transformation Program;
3. a preliminary implementation approach and plan to implement the recommendations.

The review has captured themes obtained through interviews with administrative staff, students, faculty and unions, along with information provided by the administrative functions. Over 70 individual stakeholders were engaged with on administrative issues and opportunities to improve Laurentian's administrative functions.

The review has identified seven core transformation opportunities for Laurentian University.

THE REVIEW'S APPROACH



THE CHALLENGE

The review has found that Laurentian University's administrative operations are less efficient, effective and resourced than many universities. Findings indicate deficiencies across all functions, many of which appear to be operating below a baseline standard. The changes required to address the deficiencies are significant and include changes to strategic plans, service delivery, financial performance, structure, processes, systems and capability.

THE TRANSFORMATION OPPORTUNITY

A major transformation program is needed for the institution to meet baseline standards for modern universities. This transformation has an estimated cost of \$26M to \$32.5M* over three years and should include:

1. Resetting the strategic plan to chart a new course forward
2. Optimizing service delivery for students, faculty and staff
3. Improving financial performance to support sustainability
4. Realigning administrative structures to drive accountability
5. Redesigning processes with a focus on lean principles
6. Updating systems to enable more efficient operations
7. Building capability and capacity to enable effectiveness

SUMMARY

A transformation program over the next three years can help Laurentian improve its operational efficiency and effectiveness to regain its position of pride amongst Northern Ontarians, the City of Sudbury, and Laurentian's students, faculty and staff.

* This amount includes a contingency of 30% but excludes estimated annual continuous improvement costs in the amount of \$2-3M after year three.

Declining income from tuition fees, rising expenses and global events have left Laurentian in an unsustainable financial position.



Income from tuition fees has declined. Consequently expenses have grown faster than revenue for years.



The operating deficit has grown unsustainably, propelled by key events including the COVID-19 pandemic.

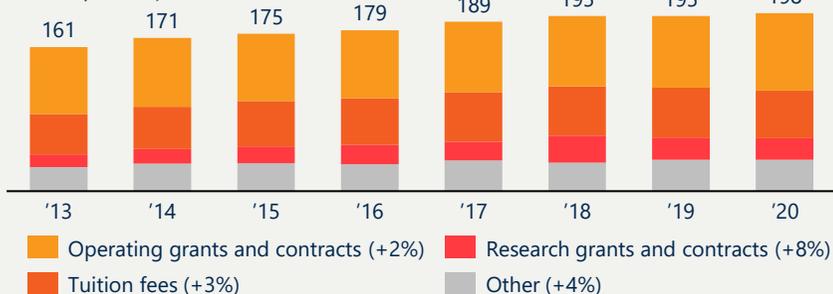
Income from tuition fees has declined slightly to 27% of revenue in 2020.¹ This is in contrast to an industry that has seen the share of revenues from tuition fees grow from 24.7% to 29.4% from 2014 to 2019. Salaries and benefits made up approximately 67% of expenses in early 2020, compared with the industry average of 59%.² This share of expenses in the post Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) fiscal year is anticipated to decline significantly.

Laurentian has recorded an operating deficit in six of the past eight years. The university's operating deficit over the period 2013 to 2020 grew by \$12 million. This operating deficit does not include other components of net assets, therefore the total accumulated deficit during this period may be even greater.

Laurentian has been in a financially unsustainable position over the years.

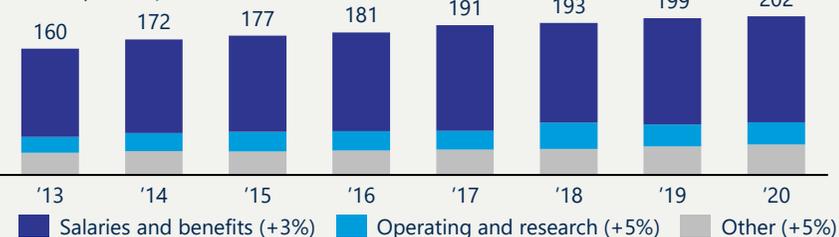
Laurentian main revenue sources and CAGR FY 2013–20

(millions of dollars)



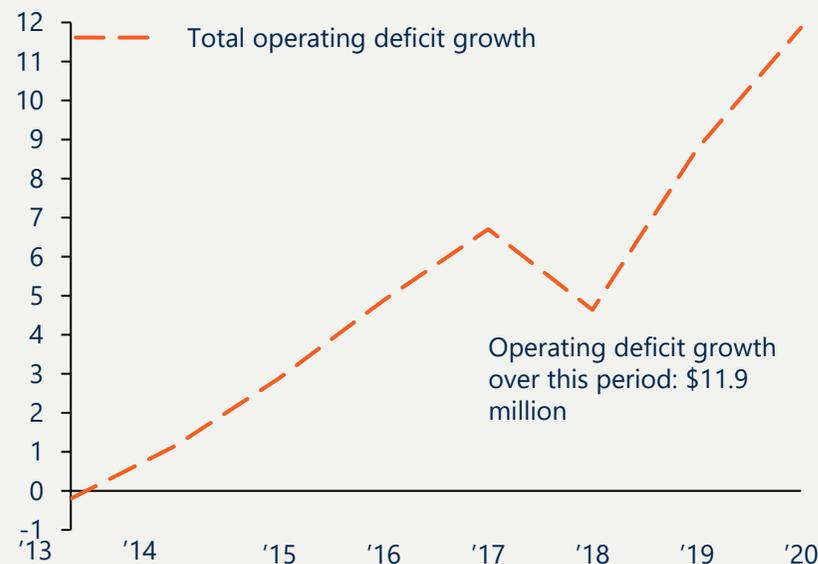
Laurentian main expenses and CAGR FY 2013–20

(millions of dollars)



Laurentian's cumulative operating deficit growth FY 2013–20*

(millions of dollars)



Source: 1) Laurentian consolidated financial statements; 2) StatCan "Financial information of universities for the 2018/2019 school year and projected impact of COVID-19 for 2020/2021"
*Laurentian's fiscal year ends April 30th, e.g., FY 2020 refers to April 30th 2019-20

Since starting its restructuring in February 2021, it is estimated that Laurentian will save approximately \$38 million annually.

Through the CCAA process, difficult decisions had to be made.

On starting the CCAA process in February, Laurentian began its restructuring with oversight from the Ernst & Young (EY) Monitor. In April 2021, decisions were made by the institution to cut programs and staff. Direct impacts to students were minimized, though it was a challenging process for faculty, staff, management and unions. The result was a \$38 million annual cost reduction.

Reviews have set the stage for renewal.

Three reviews have been launched to identify ways in which Laurentian can improve its financial performance and operations. The Real Estate Review, Governance Review and Operational Review findings are critical for setting the path forward for Laurentian's transformation.

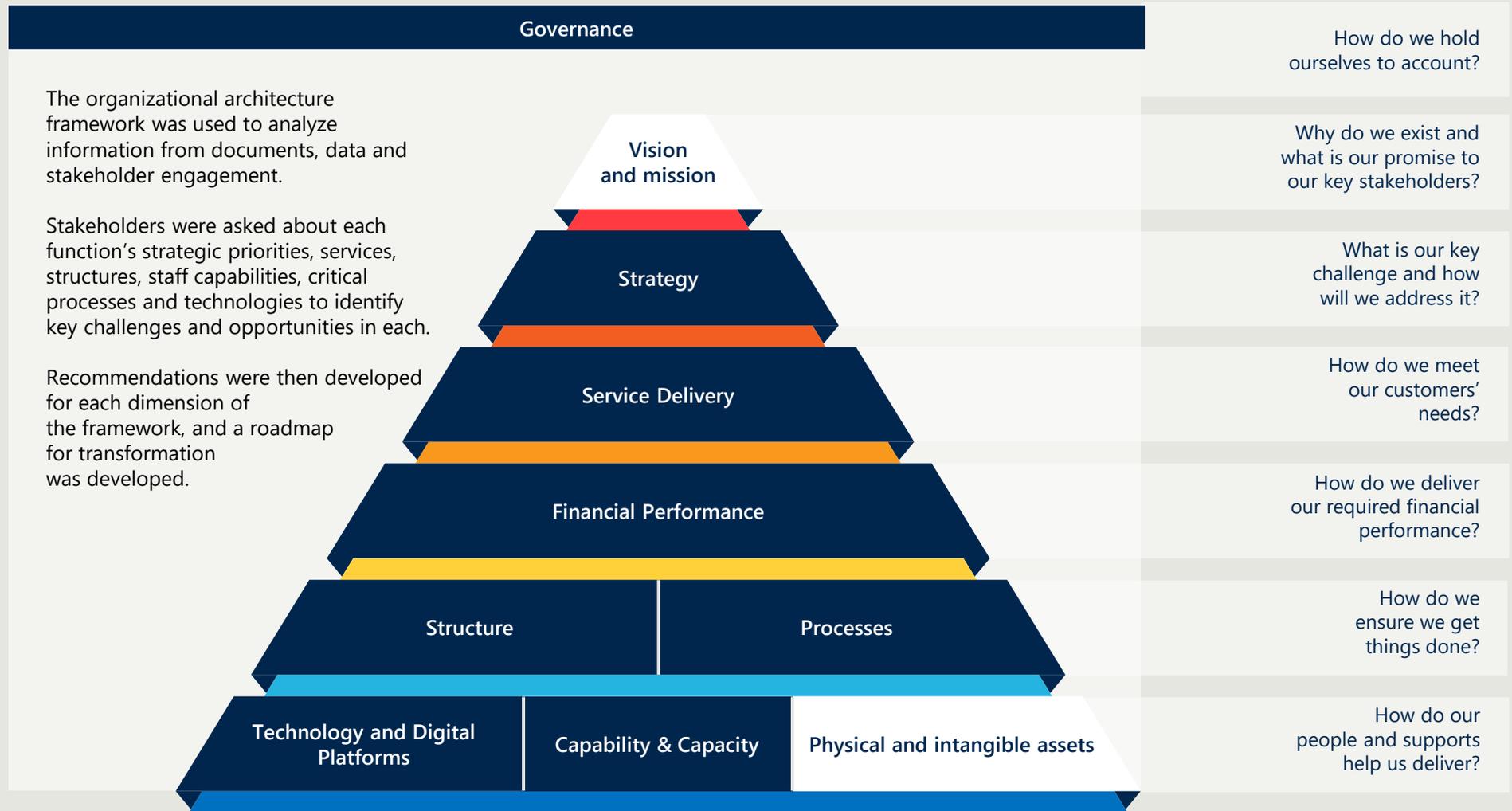
Laurentian is unique and has pillars on which to rebuild.

Laurentian is a unique Northern Ontario institution with a tri-cultural mandate for supporting bilingualism and a comprehensive Indigenous education. Many of its graduates find employment with high salaries after graduation.*

Its students, faculty and administrative staff want Laurentian to succeed. The path to renewal will be challenging, but if Laurentian can change it will enable the delivery of a post-secondary education to students for years to come.



During the Operational Review, Laurentian's administrative functions were assessed across dimensions of the organizational architecture framework.



The review identified seven core issues within Laurentian's administrative functions.



STRATEGY

1

Strategic planning has been unclear, with ineffective execution. The current strategic plan does not reflect the pandemic or Laurentian's post-CCAA realities. Its goals are not specific or sufficiently measurable. Furthermore, there is minimal accountability for its strategic outcomes, as leadership's performance is not measured against the strategic plan.



SERVICE DELIVERY

2

Service delivery is provider-centric rather than user-centric. Students, faculty and staff are bounced from administrator to administrator because there are unclear points of entry. Channels for seeking services are outdated and prone to error. Services where strategy and operations connect are inefficient. User satisfaction is low.



FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

3

Budget management, financial processes and reporting lack rigour, and have likely contributed to Laurentian's insolvency. Financial frameworks, policies and revenue strategies are outdated or missing. Immature budget planning and management tools and capabilities hinder financial performance and effective decision making.



STRUCTURE

4

Laurentian's structure is not aligned with modern universities. Critical structural issues include inconsistent reporting structures, low spans of control, absent accountability frameworks, unstandardized job titling, and weak inter-administrative interfaces that do not support integration and collaboration.



PROCESSES

5

Processes are inefficient and prone to error. Many are highly manual and paper-based. A lack of documentation drives inconsistent and duplicated processes. Complexity is high; processes tend to have too many steps and interdependencies. User feedback is not actioned for continuous improvement. The risk management process is underdeveloped and not rigorous enough.



TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL PLATFORMS

6

Laurentian's current digital strategy is poorly resourced and has not been advanced. The University has inadequate and aging digital tools. An organization-wide skills gap in digital dexterity has driven poor adoption of critical enterprise resource planning software and other essential tools that bridge silos.



CAPABILITY & CAPACITY

7

Critical capability gaps exist throughout the University. Bilingualism requirements and a lack of institutionalized remote working restrict Laurentian's talent pool to applicants without sufficient capabilities. Resistance to contracting, under-resourced units and the upwards push of transactional decision-making limit capacity. Collectively, low capability and capacity result in a lack of strategic focus.

The review identified seven transformation initiatives that, if implemented together, can set Laurentian on a path to improved performance and sustainability.



STRATEGY

1

A new strategic plan can enable the reset of the institutional direction and focus resources on transformation. A steering committee should be established and stakeholder consultation should be included. Goals must be specific, measurable, achievable, mission-aligned, and time-bound. Outcome accountability must be assigned to specific University leaders.



SERVICE DELIVERY

2

All student services should be consolidated into a single point of entry: the Hub. Open-access service delivery should be digitally-supported inclusive of a ticketing system, self-servicing and cloud collaboration software. Points of entry for faculty and staff services need to be defined. A business partner model should be implemented for administrative services.



FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

3

There should be an implementation of new financial planning, budgeting and reporting practices, and new controls, to increase the maturity of the finance function and support improved performance. Working with the Board to update and establish policies and financial procedural rules is a first step to improving financial management.



STRUCTURE

4

Administrative functions should be restructured to reflect good practice in reporting lines, accountabilities, span of control and roles. Functional areas should have clear lines of authority and accountability. Roles and titles should be standardized and requisite skills defined. Cross-function interfaces must also be defined.



PROCESSES

5

Processes must be simplified, standardized and automated where possible. Process changes should remove unnecessary steps, understand interdependencies and remove approval layers, where feasible. Feedback from stakeholders should be actioned for continuous improvement. New enterprise processes for risk and records management should be established.



TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL PLATFORMS

6

Resources need to be allocated to identify and prioritize investments in digital tools and capabilities. University-wide staff recruitment should consider digital dexterity to enable the digital strategy. A fully activated cloud-based ERP system with appropriately trained staff and good data governance can improve data integration and digital maturity.



CAPABILITY & CAPACITY

7

Laurentian must attract new capabilities. To draw from a broader talent pool, it should review the application of its bilingualism policies for select roles and institutionalize remote-working. Capabilities require upskilling to provide strategic support. To increase capacity, select services should be contracted and transactional decisions pushed downwards. Understaffed units should be resourced.

2. Transformation opportunities

A new strategic plan can enable the reset of the institutional direction and focus resources on transformation and achieving financial sustainability.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Laurentian's current challenges present an opportunity to refresh its vision and establish a new path forward. To establish a new vision and direction for a post-CCAA Laurentian, the university should develop a new five-year strategic plan. The strategic plan could present objectives that include: attracting and retaining local and international students, achieving financial sustainability, modernizing teaching and administrative functions, creating more professionalized and collaborative administrative services, improving the student experience and transforming the way Laurentian is governed and operates.*

The development of the strategic plan should consider:

1. the strategic framework
2. what is (and is not) a priority use of limited resources
3. an analysis of Laurentian's internal and external environment
4. a clear vision and direction for a path forward
5. concrete goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, mission-aligned, and time-bound
6. goal accountability assigned to specific university leaders.

KEY ISSUES

The current strategic plan is insufficient

Laurentian's current strategic plan, Imagine2023, does not reflect the university's current realities and recent changes, given that it was drafted before CCAA restructuring and the pandemic.

Laurentian's goals are not specific, measurable or realistic

Imagine2023's goals are not specific, measurable or realistic. This has also been an issue with previous strategic plans. For example, Imagine2023's Outcome 1 relates to the engagement of stakeholders; it was deemed completed on the basis that *"this is an Outcome that is accomplished every day by members of the Laurentian University community"*). If success is not specific, measurable, or realistic, it cannot genuinely be achieved.

There is minimal accountability for the plan outcomes

Management is not held to account against Laurentian's current strategic plan. Further, Nous could not find any formal reporting on the achievement of the goals to Laurentian's governing bodies. Each of Imagine2023's outcomes has a sponsor and a lead. However, when Nous asked senior leaders about their respective mandates and strategic priorities, not a single leader referenced Imagine2023. This indicates that the strategic plan has not been cascaded throughout the institution.

Imagine2023 was not published in a format where it can be used by leaders, nor are senior leaders' performance measured against it, given the lack of key performance indicators.

Finally, an annual operating plan to execute on the five-year strategy does not appear to exist.

The strategic plan must be specific, and actions to advance the plan must be cascaded throughout the organization.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Set the stage for the strategic plan

- Establish a steering committee to oversee the strategic planning process.
- Define the scope of the strategic plan and the strategic framework (such as the one shown on the previous page).
- To inform the strategic plan, conduct preliminary research on the internal and external landscapes (including scenario planning). This could include analysis of international and domestic student enrolment growth areas, learning technology changes, student expectations, etc.
- Engage an experienced third party to facilitate and guide the steering committee.

2. Set the vision, goals and key performance indicators

- Conduct visioning workshops that leverage strategic foresight and meaningfully engage all stakeholders in drafting the strategic plan to increase buy-in (including students, faculty, staff, alumni and external community members).
- Define the strategic plan horizon, goals and key performance indicators (KPIs), and assign responsible parties.
- Validate and communicate the new vision and strategic directions.

3. Cascade the strategic plan throughout the organization

- Build the monitoring and reporting framework to support implementation.
- Translate the strategic plan into the annual operating plan.
- Cascade actions and accountabilities for the plan across staff levels, business units and faculties.

RISKS

No alignment with budget and annual plans

Low stakeholder buy-in and accountability

Leaders are not making decisions based on the plan

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Indicate in a five-year budget the financial and staffing resources/capabilities required to achieve the strategic plan.

Embed the strategic plan in annual plans for the university and its functions and hold leaders to account for advancing the annual plan.

Ensure effective and transparent engagement in the process of drafting the strategic plan.

Identify champions for each goal and delegate accountability appropriately.

Communicate the plan concisely and effectively, and celebrate wins.

Integrate the goals into performance management.

Align the strategic plan with the leadership performance framework and assess leaders on how they are advancing the plan through their decisions.

Service delivery to students is not seamless and efficient. The student union has to help students navigate processes. Satisfaction is low.

KEY ISSUES

Unclear points of entry for student services

There is a lack of clarity around roles and accountabilities. Students are bounced from administrator to administrator so much that Laurentian's student unions devote a considerable energy helping individual students navigate points of service entry. There has been little recognition of the need to better understand and optimize students' customer journey in seeking administrative services.

Outdated channels for service delivery

The call centre receives 14,500 calls annually, only 11,000 of which it answers. Students repeatedly take issue with the call centre's limited hours (10:00–14:00). Installed in 2003, Laurentian's landline equipment is past its end-of-life cycle as of 2020. Additionally, knowledge of its maintenance has been lost with the sudden loss of an IT administrator, so automated phone trees have outdated and incorrect messages (such as incorrect helpdesk hours). Switching to a cloud-based phone system has been estimated to reduce costs of telephony by 30% to 50%.*

Email inquiries for high-volume tasks have been highlighted by student union leaders as significant causes for process breakdown with issues remaining unresolved (for example, addressing issues with the Ontario Student Assistance Program). The Hub alone receives over 7,800 email cases annually, with Student Records reporting upwards of 70,000 emails to resolve issues annually.

In-person, hours-long line ups at the Hub at the beginning of academic terms have been reported, exacerbated by manual services (45,000 out of 80,000 class registrations were done manually).

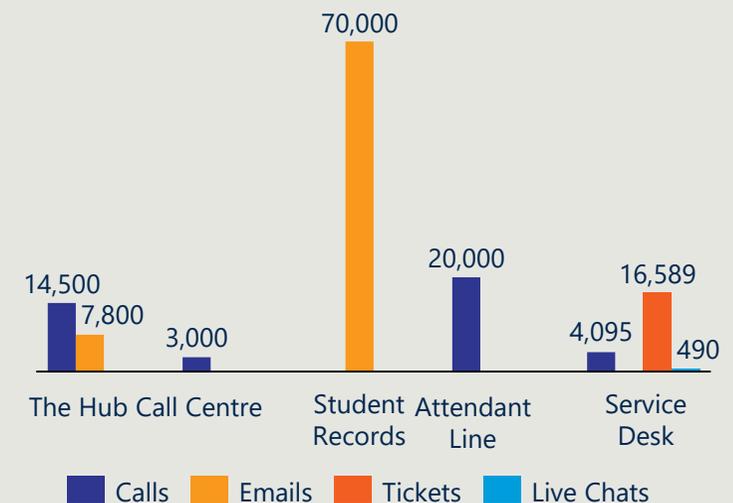
Student satisfaction is low, and retention needs improvement

According to Maclean's Student Satisfaction Survey (which was conducted prior to CCAA restructuring), Laurentian is last in the rankings among Canadian universities. Dissatisfaction is particularly pronounced where it relates to experiences with staff.** The retention of students has been a focus for Laurentian, given exit rates between 13% and 20% over the years.***

A lack of integrated structures compromises service delivery

Due to a lack of integrated processes between the Registrar, Finance and IT for Awards and Fees, students cannot predict when they will receive certain funds or incur select fees. This places an undue burden on students to ease personal cash flows. Students also incur late penalties when funding on their accounts does not offset fees due.

Number of engagements**** by channel in the Registrar's Office and Student Affairs (2020)



* The cost-benefits of switching to a VoIP service, 2020: <https://telzio.com/blog/cost-benefits-switching-voip-service>.

** Maclean's Student Satisfaction Survey, 2020: <https://www.macleans.ca/education/canadas-top-school-by-student-satisfaction-2020/>

*** Laurentian Academic Plan: <https://laurentian.ca/assets/files/Academic-Plan-EN.pdf>

**** A single issue often requires multiple interactions with the Registrar's Office, increasing the total number of engagements by channel.

Delivering efficient services and a positive experience to students can help increase student satisfaction and potentially retention.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Registrarial Services and Student Affairs should shift from offering services that meet providers' requirements towards a tiered model that is student-centric.*

1. Consolidate all student services into the Hub

The Hub should be a single point of entry for all student services. Decentralized channels for service delivery inclusive of department-wide call and email enquiries and the call centre should be consolidated into the Hub.

2. Digitalize service delivery

The university should implement digital forms and information processing, migrate the call centre from landlines to cloud collaboration software, and implement a digital ticketing system to manage queries from all channels, assign agents and run performance analytics.

3. Invest in self-service strategies

The first tier of service delivery should be self-service to equip students to solve issues independently. This should include:

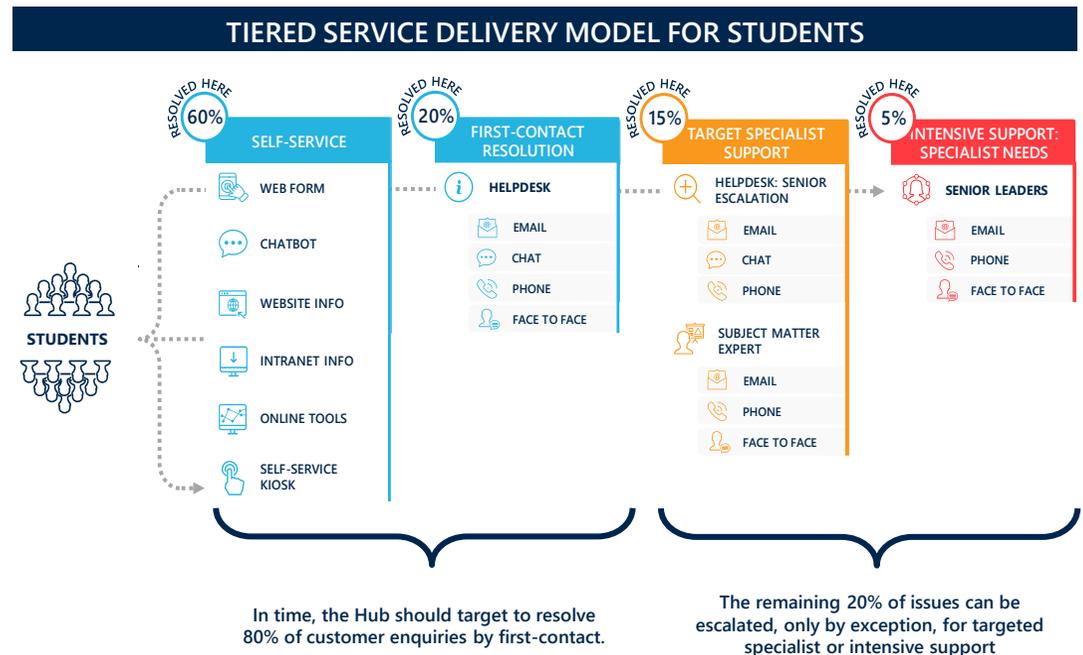
- A target of 60% self-service issue resolution through use of web-based submission forms**
- Adding more website content
- Developing a knowledge management repository
- Enhancing the chatbot and self-service kiosks.

4. Professionalize the customer experience for students

There should be a target of 80% issue resolution by the second tier (first contact with administrative staff). The remaining 20% of more complex issues should be escalated through The Hub and targeted to third and fourth tiers of specialist support.**

5. Drive service excellence

Frontline generalists should drive quality and efficiencies for high-volume transactional tasks. There should be student feedback loops to support continuous improvement.



*Examples of a university service delivery transformation can be found in Appendix D, cases 1, 2, 4 and 5

** Source: Nous Group (2020): Student Service Delivery Model Framework

Enhancing the Hub experience and creating a continuous student feedback loop where feedback is actioned can help with service performance.

A SINGLE SERVICE ENTRY POINT WILL PROVIDE EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF TRANSACTIONAL STUDENT SERVICES.

Most student issues do not require management support. Service delivery can be standardized and streamlined to improve efficiency.

HOW SERVICE HUBS WORK

- Maintain an **open access point** to student services to deliver services with a focus on efficiency and **student satisfaction**.
- **Broker specialist advice** from senior helpdesk staff and subject matter experts.
- Understand the ecosystem of policies and processes within the Registrar's Office and Student Affairs to work as a **flexible resource** and respond to fluctuations in service demand.
- Develop and manage **increasingly integrated self-service** customer portal functionality and push adoption of self-service.

WHY SERVICE HUBS WORK

STUDENT FOCUSED



- There is **professionalized service delivery**, consistent with the agreed scope of services and standards.
- Hub staff **consult regularly** with students to clarify their needs and **seek their input**.
- Hub staff proactively **update students** on case progress and **explain delays** if required.

ACCOUNTABLE PROCESSES



- Hub staff understand the **complexities of processes** to guide students through policy frameworks.
- Hub staff are responsible for providing **accurate advice** as the **designated ticket owners**.

MEASURABLE, ACTIONABLE FEEDBACK



- **Feedback mechanisms** are built into service requests and directly reflect on responsible parties, who can **immediately action feedback**.
- Hub staff **inform and steer** policy and process improvements by the central functions and leadership based on their experience and the **experience of customers**.

Engaging students in the design of processes and Hub interfaces can ensure services are designed for students rather than administrators.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Understand the current model and pain points

- Document 'as is' service delivery model, roles and responsibilities.
- Conduct rigorous quantitative analysis on current data to understand performance: review service request volumes and resolution times; categorize by type of service delivered; review content on website including ease of navigation and visitor statistics.
- Consult key stakeholders (students, as well as service providers) to gather qualitative data on the major service delivery pain points.
- Understand who is the customer and their needs through customer workshops and/or creation of personas.

2. Define the opportunities and the future model

- Facilitate co-design workshops to improve the service delivery model. Identify improvements and provide a short- to medium-term roadmap to a new model.
- Undertake review of core enablers to achieve the new model (technology, policy, process simplification, change of service levels).
- Establish appropriate navigation channels for services inside and outside the Hub.
- Develop knowledge base articles for common issues in the Hub.

3. Implement the new delivery model and tools

- Scope the requirements for the cloud collaboration software, and procure.
- Train staff on the use of the call centre software, customer service essentials.
- Implement the ticketing system (preferably same software currently used at the IT helpdesk).

RISKS

There is inadequate frontline staff capability

Provider-centric service design prevails

Poor adoption of self-service floods frontline staff

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Hire staff with a natural service orientation. Prepare standardized onboarding, training and performance management for generalist staff. Implement a buddy system to accelerate training.

Standardize and document processes. Create knowledge base articles for common issues so frontline staff can independently solve problems.

Create a unifying student-oriented vision, and have Hub process managers accountable to this vision.

Develop a strong culture of continuous improvement. Leverage data from consolidated digital channels to add, remove and/or improve services from the portfolio to better respond to changes in user needs.

Identify and publicly report service metric performance

Build a knowledge base, continually improve the knowledge base, offer updates, and keep knowledge bases simple.

Trust student feedback and act on it.

Administrative service delivery to faculty and staff can benefit from the establishment of service business partners in functions and more self service.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Clarify points of entry for faculty and staff users of administrative services. Create structures and processes that support accountability in service delivery, fostering a culture of service excellence. Standardize and streamline processes to drive efficiency.

1. Integrate silos

Create a unified vision of service delivery collaboration and work towards common goals to support better service delivery.

2. Digitize processes to enable more self-service

Internal administrative service efficiency can be improved by enabling more online self-service options, such as for submitting expenses or using digital HR submission forms through the staff intranet.

3. Implement business partners

Create business partner roles within Finance, HR, IT and Advancement. The business partner would be responsible for ensuring faculties and staff have the appropriate support from the administrative function as it relates to, for example, budget planning, hiring, tech support or soliciting alumni donations. Business partners can also help solve more complex issues and liaise between service users and subject matter experts, senior leaders and external providers.

KEY ISSUES

A lack of integrating structures compromises service delivery

For example, HR does not have access to financial information such as salaries. This restricts HR from delivering services core to its mandate, such as supporting discussions on pay increases or starting salaries.

Advancement does not foster relationships with faculties to enable collective or coordinated alumni engagement and fundraising. That means that if faculties do not conduct their own alumni outreach they have unengaged alumni and potentially missed fundraising opportunities.

Staff online portal services are not comprehensive

Invoices come in multiple forms (fax, email, mail), and need to be printed and undergo a lengthy, error-prone manual process. Faculties and functional units expressed a pattern of errors in invoicing, difficulty identifying variances in how invoicing is recorded in their budgets, and difficulty resolving variances with Finance.

Managing HR-related documentation such as personal leave requests is not enabled through the portal and is therefore manual.

Tasks where strategy and operations connect are inefficient

Hiring is a prolonged process. There is an unnecessary amount of back and forth between functions/faculties and HR. In Libraries and Archives, for example, hiring for existing positions takes upwards of six months. Hiring for new positions takes upwards of 12 months.

Business partners play a key role in providing advisory and support services to faculty and staff to address their finance, HR, IT and advancement needs.

A BUSINESS PARTNER ROLE WITHIN FUNCTIONS IS CRUCIAL TO SUPPORT IMPROVED SERVICES TO STAFF AND FACULTY AND ENABLE MORE CONSISTENT SERVICE PERFORMANCE ACROSS FUNCTIONS.

BEST PRACTICE APPROACH

HOW TO GET THERE

WORKS STRATEGICALLY

- links **strategy with operations** - providing a strategic perspective in operational decision-making, and an operational perspective in strategic planning
- **liaises** with business partners in **other portfolios**, maintaining internal strategic communication at levels **below senior leadership**
- acts as an **advocate** for **customer experience** in strategic planning.

BREAK OUT AND EMBED

Business Partners (BPs) **venture out of their home function** and embed themselves within the business units they serve. Leadership must recognize this division and assist BPs in managing/redirecting requests from individuals or units outside their allocated role. When BPs are immersed in a business unit it allows them to develop a greater understanding of the specific needs, processes and goals of the unit. This fosters collaboration, trust and genuine solutions.

PROVIDES ADVICE

- has a **thorough working knowledge** of the subject matter of their function, and of the **work carried out** in customer areas
- uses up-to-date knowledge to **understand problems in context** – and then guides, advises and triages
- plays a small role in a large number of project and program conversations, as a **source of contextual insight**.

EVOLVE FROM GENERALIST TO CONSULTANT

BPs evolve from general transactional support staff into strategic business consultants who understand the nuances of business, its needs and its competitive environment (for budget allocation). Best practice business partnering involves individuals being engaged on the frontline of activity, actively solving problems using analysis, data and reports and bringing their 'home function' expertise into committees and decision making with leadership and function.

PROVIDES ADVICE

- **builds relationships** with line managers, key staff and/or senior leaders within customer work areas (depending on level)
- **explains** service limitations and strategic priorities to customers, from a starting point of **empathy and trust** – grounded in a **close working relationship**
- helps **shape implementation**, and disseminate **internal comms**, for new initiatives.

INVEST IN UPSKILLING

The university should invest in developing skills and capabilities in three areas:

1. **Business fluency**: combining financial acumen and operations knowledge with 'home function' expertise and an understanding of the Laurentian landscape.
2. **Consulting agility**: including skills in data analytics and aligning 'home function' capabilities with business unit imperatives.
3. **Leadership**: enabling BPs to successfully advance ideas within business units and promote their 'home function' throughout the university.

Working with clients to understand service pain points and co-create new services and interfaces will ensure services are client-centric.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Understand the current model and pain points

- Document ‘as is’ service delivery model, roles and responsibilities across HR, Finance, IT and Advancement.
- Conduct rigorous quantitative analysis on current data to understand performance: review service request volumes and resolution times; categorize by type of service delivered; review content on staff portal including ease of navigation and visitor statistics.
- Consult key staff to gather qualitative data on the major service delivery pain points.
- Understand the customer needs through customer workshops.

2. Define the opportunities and future model

- Facilitate co-design workshops to improve the service delivery model. Identify improvements and provide a short- to medium-term roadmap.
- Establish appropriate navigation channels for services inside and outside the staff portal.
- Determine future cross-function interfaces required for service delivery.
- Develop knowledge base articles for common issues in the staff portal.
- Define the business partner role and assign function staff to role.

3. Implement the new delivery model and tools

- Issue change communications to the community.
- Train staff on the use of any new forms and self-service functions.
- Implement new staff portal functionality.

RISKS	MITIGATING STRATEGIES
Lack of leadership capability and change resistance	Strengthen leadership alignment by having the right leadership team in place. Ensure leaders understand the change and impacts, and have the right strategic and digital capabilities to support transformation.
Organizational change resistance	Promote organizational alignment through a comprehensive communications plan to inform employees of changes and support buy-in for successful and sustained adoption of change.
Service process teams create roadblocks to business partner success	Create a unifying service-oriented vision for each function. Elevate the role of the business partner within the function by creating a cross-unit service forum where the business partner can share client feedback and units can continuously improve.
Service portal design has limited user input	Co-create service-level blueprints upfront to ensure greater transparency and to align users’ expectations about what to expect from the portal. Define who is accountable to update portal content for greater usability.

Budget planning and management practices are still maturing, and require priority attention to address weak areas and build rigour into practices.

KEY ISSUES

Current financial insolvency

Laurentian's CCAA restructuring and the disclosure of certain matters in connection with the restructuring have raised concerns around budget management, financial processes and oversight at the university.

Outdated or missing frameworks, policies and practices

- A fulsome budget model for each function and faculty is lacking. Unit managers can't make informed decisions about investments (for example hiring new professors) and manage within their budgets, because they don't have complete and updated information surrounding their budget and expense actuals.
- Internal stakeholders have indicated a lack of rigour in defining expense items and setting budgets for business units. For example, expense category amounts are set arbitrarily and sometimes do not reflect real spending categories, which impacts the accuracy of institutional reporting on expenses.
- Financial information is not easily accessible and consistent across the university. Information on costs and full-time equivalent (FTE) staff levels have been difficult to gather for this analysis.
- Fully digital and integrated financial management through the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system has not been adopted. IT has noted that several modules are not being used by Finance currently, leading to disconnected systems such as the General Ledger from Excel sheets being used.
- The Capital Debt Policy was set in 2010 and updated in 2016. It was set to be updated in January 2021 but has not been. The ratio of debt to total revenue maximum that has been established is 45%. This policy should be updated and reassessed given the current financial context and the slowing growth of local enrolment in the higher education sector, along with the revenue volatility created by COVID.*
- The policy on tuition fee exemptions was due to be updated in 2017 but has not been. This policy outlines tuition exemptions for relatives of staff with a broad definition of 'dependants.**

Immature budget planning and management

- Laurentian has a backlog of repair of its assets of \$135M, some of which concerns high-priority asset rehabilitation based on Facilities Service's risk assessment, such as roofing and electrical repairs. Currently there is no funding to address the backlog other than through partial grants from the provincial government. Budget planning at Laurentian appears to not incorporate capital planning with lifecycle cost allocations to ensure ongoing asset repairs are properly funded.
- There is an incrementalistic approach to developing budgets currently, where historical figures are used to plan for the year rather than applying a more informed and rigorous methodology.
- Overspending relative to revenue has been common practice over the last several years, as illustrated on page 6.

*Laurentian Capital Debt Policy: <https://intranet.laurentian.ca/policies/2016.Feb.12%20-%20Capital%20Debt%20Policy%20-%20EN.pdf>

**Laurentian Tuition Fee Exemption policy: https://intranet.laurentian.ca/policies/2016.Feb.12%20-%20Policy_Tuition%20Fee%20Exemp%20-%20EN.pdf

New financial planning, budgeting, reporting and controls can increase the maturity of the finance function and support improved performance.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Laurentian entered court proceedings in CCAA with a view to emerge as a financially viable institution. A new and more rigorous approach to and process for budgeting and reporting can support that objective.

Approach

Laurentian should introduce a new approach to planning, budgeting and reporting where a framework and rules are established with senior leadership and the Board, to be followed by Finance. This should include a budgeting approach that is tightly linked with revenue changes and projections.

The Finance lead should review the budget model with the Board and university leadership, and should establish the university's budget framework, budget objectives, deficit rules, budget planning cycle, reserve target as percentage of total operating expense, maximum debt to revenue ratio, the chart of accounts structure, and variance and actual reporting requirements.

When reporting to the President and Board, the Finance AVP must develop in-depth knowledge of the business and its strategy to evaluate the financial implications of plans and provide decision-making support and advice to leaders. Finance leaders must analyze data for insights to produce targeted and relevant reporting and to identify or anticipate risks, issues and trends for the Board and President.

Process

The university should implement activity-based budgeting with faculties. This model will not rely on historical cost; rather it will thoroughly analyze revenues, activities and cost drivers within the institution when setting budgets. Finance should also establish better financial management practices for classifying expenses from faculties to improve the accuracy of financial reporting.

Finance should implement use of the Budget Management, Project Accounting and Fixed Assets modules on the Ellucian ERP system to enable better financial oversight and reporting.

EXAMPLE OF KEY FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



Working with the Board to update and establish new policies and financial procedural rules is a first step to improving financial management.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Establish the model and financial rules

- Engage the Board and senior leadership on the status of the budget model and financial goals, and assess where the model and goals need updating.
- Recommend key financial rule and reporting changes to the Board (for example variance reporting, reserve funds, debt ratio, unrestricted funds).

2. Implement changes to the financial rules and modules

- Implement new financial management and reporting rules.
- Implement use of ERP financial modules and change processes to align with the use of these tools.

3. Finalize the budget model and allocation approach

- Finalize the budget model approach for capital planning, faculties and administration.
- For budget-setting on the administrative side, with the Board and leadership, identify and agree on the cost drivers responsible for revenues and expenses and the allocation method for indirect costs (for example, registration, library and writing centres might have allocations based on student numbers; admin departments servicing staff might be allocated based on staff served) and space/maintenance costs based on square footage allocated to each department.
- Establish the calculation procedures necessary to enact the new model.

4. Implement the budget model

- Implement the new budget model with change management support.
- Monitor performance and adjust as necessary.

RISKS

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Resorting to old practices

Monitor the performance of the new practices and set a budget process review cycle timeline.

Lack of budget model buy-in

Deploy change management practices to communicate changes to the community, including the benefits.

Include departments in the approach. Engaging them in the roll-out of changes will support buy-in.

Inadequate capability

Staff within and external to Finance should receive initial and recurring training on good practices in financial accounting and management.

A revenue strategy can focus on how to price services, increase sales and reduce revenue leakage to increase the ancillary services contribution.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

While managing its costs Laurentian needs to drive revenue, including in its ancillary services.* Laurentian should develop a new business plan for ancillary services to increase their net contribution to the university. While some of this work is already underway, it should be expanded and accelerated given the current financial situation. The approach should include:

1. **Optimizing existing offerings to increase demand**
2. **Diversifying ancillary offerings with partners for delivery**
3. **Adjusting pricing to optimize revenue**
4. **Maximizing revenue through revenue assurance**
5. **Driving implementation with targeted marketing plans.**

REVENUE GROWTH LEVERS FOR ANCILLARY SERVICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

ADJUST PRICING

Explore new pricing strategies to drive recurring revenue and profitable fee structures.

INCREASE SALES VOLUME

Understand how Laurentian can deliver on customer needs by extending services and expanding reach through existing and new services.

ASSURE REVENUE

Assess how revenue might be “leaking” through free offers, non-chargeable services and existing contract terms, and work to plug the holes.

*Examples of institutions that underwent financial improvement programs can be found in Appendix D, cases 1, 3 and 5

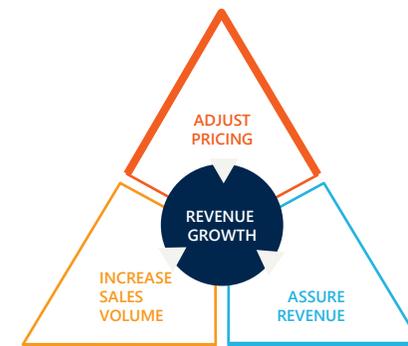
KEY ISSUES

Opportunity costs of not having a robust strategy

Laurentian does not appear to have a robust revenue generation strategy where it determines the potential for services and revenues. There may be opportunities for growth in existing and new channels (e.g., the bookstore, OneCard, childcare, parking, food services, technology training, space leasing, residences, procurement, high school programs, senior programs, etc.).

Reduced ancillary revenues due to COVID

Laurentian’s ancillary services revenue as declined during the pandemic. According to the 2020 Annual Report, ancillary’s contribution dropped by 15% in 2019–20. Due to restrictions during that time there was minimal food service, fewer students requiring accommodation, reduced demand for parking and reduced demand for conference services.



Assessing ways to improve revenue from current services should be conducted first. Other service options should be assessed through business case analysis.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Current state analysis

Review data and documents relating to financial performance to understand current room for growth in what's working and which offerings are optimized in their delivery model.

2. NACAS benchmarking

Perform benchmarking analysis based on information in the National Association of College Auxiliary Services (NACAS) survey.

3. Options assessment

Develop a preliminary long list of opportunities across offering categories (bookstores, OneCard, parking, food services, space leasing, residences, etc.). Quickly remove opportunities that do not generate a significant return on investment, are too difficult to implement, or are not aligned with the university's values or operating mandate.

4. Create a business plan and implement the strongest initiatives

Develop short-term and long-term strategies for increasing the net contribution of ancillary services and implement the strongest initiatives.

RISKS	MITIGATING STRATEGIES
Insufficient demand for ancillary services	Business cases should be modelled on demand-side economics.
Balance sheet health and tight cash flows	Create short-term and long-term strategies to prioritize high impact quick wins early.
Diverting resources from core areas of focus	Focus on delivering current services well to generate revenue. Consider partners to deliver any new services, if financially viable.
Revenue assurance	Assess how revenue might be leaking through free offers, non-chargeable services and existing contract terms, and determine a feasible plan to plug the holes.
Unintended consequences	Pricing models should not be considered without assessing the demand-side, reputational and equity impacts. Pay close attention to the impacts of proposed changes on demand.

Administrative reporting lines, structures and roles should be redefined to help drive greater accountability and standardization across functions.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Restructure the administrative functions to better reflect good practice in reporting lines, accountabilities, span of control, and roles. The new structure should be updated based on good practice rather than existing reporting lines and capability gaps.

1. Determine central function focus areas

Determine the scope of responsibilities and services for each function, guided by refreshed institutional plans and good practices.

2. Define the vertical and horizontal lines of authority

Increase the spans of control to six to ten to align with modern practices. Standardize titling in rungs of seniority (AVP, Director, Manager, Co-ordinator). Introduce several generalist roles that share responsibility for more transactional tasks.

3. Define the distribution of activities across units and formalize accountabilities with key performance indicators

Define what activities are owned by which units and departments, and who will be making which decisions within each unit and department.

4. Standardize job roles and define the required skills

Define roles of each position. Define the education, skills, and experience required for each position. Institutionalize HR's involvement in all recruitment to ensure new hires have the education, skills, and experience required of the role.

5. Define the structures that support inter-function relationships

Institutionalize a business partner model to bridge silos across functions and faculties.

KEY ISSUES 1/2

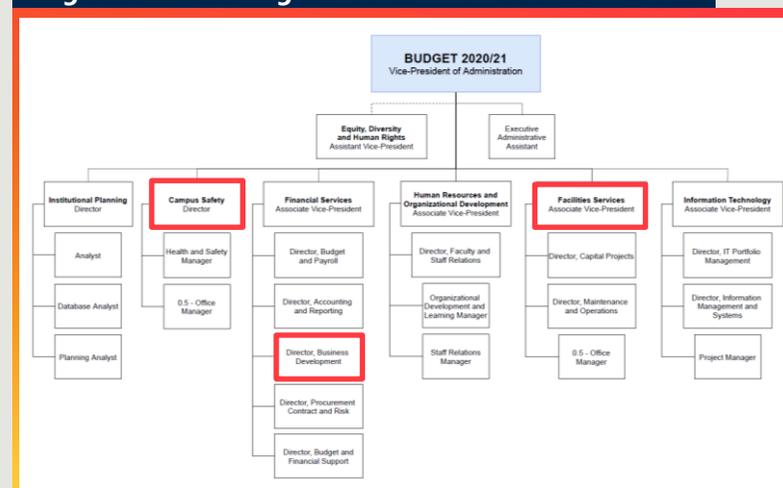
Poor alignment of functional units

The current structure is not aligned with modern practices. For example, Facilities, Ancillary Services ('Business Development'), and Safety are separate units despite the close alignment of their mandates (see Organizational Design of Finance and Administration below).

Inconsistent reporting structures

Reporting lines are inconsistent in several areas, such as the Director of Safety reporting directly to the VP, Finance and Administration, or a Manager in HR reporting directly to the AVP of HR.

Organizational Design of Finance and Administration



Current spans of control are low and some managers have no direct reports. Departmental accountabilities are unclear.

KEY ISSUES 2/2

Low spans of control

Laurentian's vertically-hierarchical structure, multiple layers and low spans of control restricts information flow and slow down decision-making. For instance, there is scope to flatten and improve the spans of control in finance from 3.25 (Organizational Design of Finance) to the better practice range of six to ten. Similarly, there is scope to improve spans of control administrative wide (HR=3.7; IT=5.3; Advancement=2.3; Research=4.5; Registrar=4.9).

Accountability frameworks missing

There is an absence of accountability frameworks for departments and units, which has not enabled the performance of departments. At the leadership level, the lack of performance expectations or key performance indicators for departments aligned to the strategic plan has fostered a culture of low accountability and performance on strategic outcomes. Furthermore, functions do not appear to see basic practices that should be within their responsibility as part of their role. For example, HR doesn't take accountability for vacation leave requests, has inconsistent involvement in hiring processes, and does not ensure performance evaluations are conducted. General Counsel does not review significant contracts before they're signed by business units.

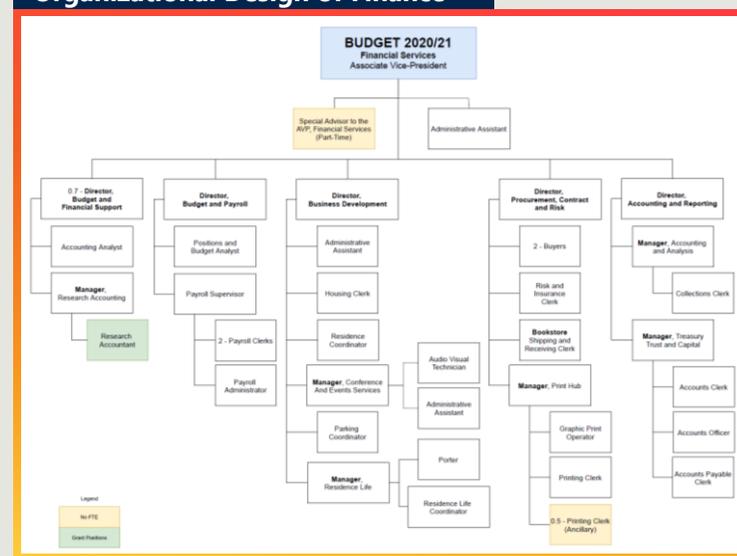
Non-standardized job titles and roles

The seniority of job titles is inconsistent across the university. For example, in Registrarial services and student affairs there are managers without direct reports, and in Research a manager reports directly to a VP, a structure that pushes administrative tasks upwards, detracting from senior management's time focused on strategic planning. Laurentian's non-standardized titles (1) complicates the hiring process; (2) clouds compensation equity; (3) confuses employee career paths; (4) pushes transactional decision-making upwards at a cost to strategic planning; and (5) confuses service users trying to understand roles when seeking the appropriate point of entry for service.

Poor inter-functional connection points

Administration can be highly siloed. For example, Finance handles payroll, and HR does not have access to salary information which is critical to its operations.

Organizational Design of Finance



SPAN OF CONTROL: 3.25

FTE'S: 40

PEOPLE-MANAGER ROLES: 12

LAYERS: 4

SPAN OF CONTROL = (FTE-1) / PEOPLE-MANAGER ROLES

Accountabilities, structures and roles should be informed by a new strategic plan to align the organization to deliver on a new set of priorities.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Current state assessment

Undertake a thorough assessment of the current organizational design to understand financials, FTE, purpose, roles, capabilities, services, tasks, key performance indicators and authorities.

2. Future state structure

- Benchmark Laurentian's organizational design and FTEs against activity-based data from comparable universities.
- Develop the top-level target organizational design, based on best practice research, strategic drivers and key design criteria (that is, control versus responsiveness).
- Develop high-level organizational structures for each administrative function, taking into account core design principles, to ensure effective spans of control and organizational layers.
- Develop mandates for each function in alignment with the strategic plan that outline financials, FTE, purpose, roles, capabilities, services, tasks, function interfaces, key performance indicators and authorities.
- Establish consistent job architecture and design standardized roles that promote clear career pathways, consistent titling, pay equity and efficient recruitment.

3. Transition to new structure

- Assess impact on staff to determine those that can be directly placed into new roles versus those that must apply. Develop staff transition plans.
- Begin transitioning staff into new roles; launch training and onboarding activities.
- Evaluate post-implementation to test effectiveness.

RISKS

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Capability of leadership to implement change and manage a flatter structure

Strengthen leadership alignment by having the right leadership team in place, ensuring leaders understand the change and impacts and are equipped to manage larger teams.

Change resistance

Promote organizational alignment through a comprehensive communications plan to inform employees of changes and support buy-in for successful and sustained adoption of change.

Critical process failure

Identify critical processes (for example payroll) and minimize disruption through effective planning and change management.

Jeopardizing union relationships

Develop a working approach early, be transparent, and keep unions engaged in the process.

Financial uncertainty

Establish financial targets (overall costs, costs by administrative function, etc.) and design the structure within these parameters.

Design mutation

Establish strict organizational design governance. Roles that exist outside the approved structure should go through a business case and approval process.

Processes across functions are manual, complex and at times undocumented. Redesigning these processes can produce more efficient operations.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Consultations with Laurentian stakeholders and analysis of process data has uncovered significant opportunity for improvements to service quality and efficiency through process redesign. Simplifying, automating and digitizing heavily paper-based transactional processes would also minimize multiple points of data entry, address quality assurance issues and better track performance data.

SIMPLIFY

Simplify processes
Remove unnecessary steps and duplication

RE-ALLOCATE

Better allocate processes
Centralize or outsource to the right level

CHANGE SERVICE LEVELS

Change quality or quantity of services to what's needed to achieve outcomes

TRANSFORM VIA TECHNOLOGY

Automated or enhanced through the use of new or existing technology

INCREASE PROFESSIONALISM

Build specific and technical capability of staff to enhance service performance and build engagement

IMPROVE RISK MANAGEMENT

Streamline compliance or change risk approach to enable processes to be more efficient

KEY ISSUES

Processes are provider-centric rather than user-focused

For example, Finance does not conduct month-end, quarter-end, or mid-year reports that enable university budget managers to engage in variance analysis.

Processes lack streamlining

For example, internal stakeholders noted that "40% of HR's time is spent on paper-based processes that should be digital." For hiring, there's an unnecessary amount of back and forth between functions/faculties and HR. One stakeholder noted that "hiring for existing positions takes upwards of six months, whereas hiring new positions takes up to a year."

Processes lack controls

Finance receives invoices in multiple forms (fax, email, mail), prints invoices, and engages in a manual process that lacks controls. Internal stakeholder interviews indicated that invoicing is prone to error. They can be paid in the wrong amount due to manual keying errors. There are no controls in place to rectify errors other than the vendor self-identifying.

Process flow can be encumbered by bottlenecks, double-handling, waiting and other limitations

In the Registrar's Office there are many manual processes with double entry, like deferrals and enrolments. Staff key in Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) applications submitted on paper. Grade point averages (GPAs) are calculated manually.

Service levels are dictated by supply rather than demand

The Hub, for instance, has hours-long line-ups at the beginning of term. Higher demand times require better resource allocation.

Service performance data is inconsistently collected, reported and actioned

For example, student leaders have noted that "Laurentian engages with students and seems to acknowledge necessary improvements, yet often this doesn't result in positive change." For instance, student leadership has advocated for formalized processes in providing teaching assistants, lab assistants etc. contracts and honouring those contracts. Consistent feedback, however, is not actioned.

The four-step approach to process redesign will involve developing solutions with process owners and soliciting feedback from end-users on pain points.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Interrogate

- Establish project governance, including sponsors, objectives, risks and mitigations. Dedicate resources from process redesign and subject matter experts.
- Develop design criteria for process redesign such as: iterative, outcomes-focused, client-inclusive, accountable.
- Interrogate current state data to identify and prioritize processes for redesign based on complexity and benefit.
- Define customer value (such as process time, effort or quality).
- Map current state and identify steps, channels tools and accountabilities. Identify pain points.

2. Scope

- Scope solutions using the six-lever framework and test with stakeholders.
- Partner with IT for advice where solutions include technology.

3. Design

- Design future state and estimate benefits based on defined customer value.
- Create an action plan that prioritizes actions based on positive impact and effort to implement. Use this to categorize actions into horizons of near-term and long-term wins. Identify responsibility for actions.
- Develop communications and change management plan (including training where necessary).

4. Implement

- Implement changes. Monitor success at planned intervals (one month and three month). Iterate solutions if necessary.

RISKS

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Resulting design does not actually address the critical issues from a user and/or provider perspective

Active participation, representative of all stakeholders involved in the process, as well as proper facilitation from the project team, should adequately identify value and design solutions to address process issues.

Difficult implementation of new processes and systems

Recognize and communicate that it might take time for people to adjust. For difficult implementations, start with user acceptance testing and pilots to identify issues prior to launch. Monitor and iterate designs where necessary.

Unwillingness of service providers to support redesign or adapt to the change

Identify stakeholders early and consult to understand perspectives. If necessary, escalate to senior leaders to help drive change.

Dependence on technology as the solution

Ensure the project team explores quick win opportunities first, including process simplification, policy, risk and education, before higher value and more complex solutions like technology enhancement and changing service levels.

Enterprise procedures are absent and policy enforcement could be improved. A redesign of enterprise policy management can help mitigate risk.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Update and enforce major enterprise policies and operating procedures that are critical for institutional compliance and to mitigate risk. This should include the risk register, records management, and the accommodation of individuals with accessibility issues. An ongoing review process for enterprise policy compliance and effectiveness should also be adopted.

1. Develop a formal enterprise approach to risk management and update the enterprise risk register

Develop a new risk management register and framework based on input from the Board on the preferred institutional risk appetite. Translate the risk appetite for the function level so leaders can understand what risks to identify for the President and Board. Develop training for leaders to evaluate and manage risks within their functional areas.

2. Develop, implement and enforce a records management policy

Establish formal accountability for records management with the university Secretary and develop an enterprise records management policy. Assess current records gaps and risks and implement the appropriate records management changes across the institution, supported by training.

3. Conduct an ongoing review of policy efficacy and compliance and provide training on policies like equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Through the university Secretary, schedule a periodic review of policy efficacy and compliance, such as with the accommodation policy, to assess gaps and potential risks, and update policies or enhance training to address issues. HR should implement a comprehensive training program on EDI for management, staff and faculty.

KEY ISSUES

Minimal or absent policies for internal control and risk management

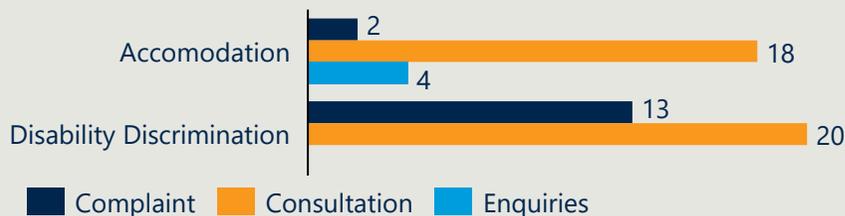
- Legal and compliance risks are notably absent from the Risk Register, despite claims and grievances being high according to Legal Counsel.
- It is not clear how the risk appetite of the university should be applied within functions and whether there is formal training on identifying, evaluating, documenting and managing risk for leadership.
- Accountability for records management and the related enterprise policies and training appears to be absent within the institution. There was little evidence of formal and standardized practices and awareness across functions. For example, it was noted that HR does not have comprehensive information on current or recent employees.

No Records Management Process

Laurentian is reliant on individuals having maintained their own records in whatever form they choose. When an individual leaves, it is at times not possible to locate even the most critical of records (e.g. employee contracts).

Minimal enforcement of policies creates risk

Accommodation for students with disabilities was noted to be an area where compliance with accommodation support and plans by staff could be improved. Further EDI training has not been undertaken. According to data from the Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights Office, 20% of all case contacts in 2019-20 focused on accommodation issues and disability discrimination.



A review to identify gaps and issues, along with recommendations for consideration by the Board, are the first steps toward policy and procedure renewal.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Set the stage for policy review

- Define the which roles relate to policies and records management.
- Establish a core team dedicated to overseeing the revision policies, procedures and documents – the team can pool resources as needed to do the groundwork and training support.
- Review existing policies and assess whether updates are needed based on a set of criteria, such as clarity, necessity, whether it is currently implemented effectively and whether it effectively accomplishes its intended objective.
- Conduct desktop research on best practices relevant to the documents being changed.

2. Identify opportunities for change or enforcement

- Identify where policy gaps exist and develop new policies to address gaps.
- Test policy changes with internal stakeholders to assess feasibility.
- Provide recommendations on new and amended policies to the Board.

3. Develop and implement new policies and provide training

- Rewrite policies and issue communications to staff describing the policies and procedures for following the policy.
- Develop training modules for staff on the policies and procedures.
- Establish a timeframe for policy reviews to update or improve implementation.

RISKS

Procedures and policies are still not followed

There is resistance to change from the start

Policies are not monitored for compliance and efficacy

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Involve staff in the development of the procedures so they are user-friendly and clearly understood.

Conduct ongoing audits to determine where procedures might not be followed and to understand the reasons for this. Determine an appropriate mechanism to address the issue (for example training, escalation to management, amended procedure).

Leaders must demonstrate and urge compliance, and they should be held to account when they are not compliant with processes.

Initiate change management activities before introducing the change to highlight the purpose, the key changes and the support that will be provided.

Clearly indicate who is responsible for policy upkeep and enforcement.

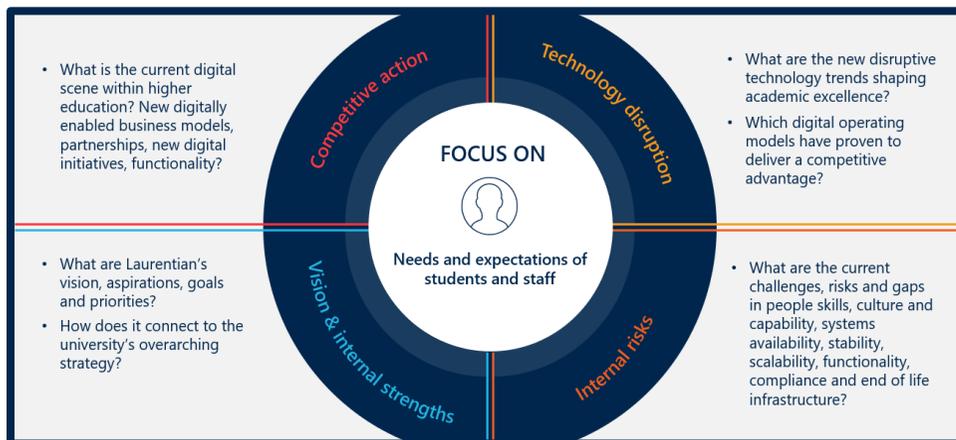
Digital capability at Laurentian is low. A digital strategy can help identify and prioritize investments in digital tools and capabilities.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Laurentian should develop, fund and implement a refreshed institution-wide digital strategy to enable functions across the university to operate efficiently and in line with current digital trends in teaching and administration. An effective strategy will help with prioritizing digital initiatives. It will:

- improve staff productivity and operational effectiveness by automating manual processes
- support the achievement of the Strategic Plan and the Academic Plan
- enable Laurentian to take advantage of emerging technology
- help academic and administrative functions by providing staff with accurate data and business analytics at the right time

University Digital Strategy Framework



KEY ISSUES 1/2

Current digital strategy has not been advanced

An overarching technology architecture has been developed, but the university remains anchored by legacy systems. These systems hinder the productivity of staff, create opportunities for error, and keep the university locked into dated practices, unable to capitalize on current technological trends.

Digital tools are inadequate

Functions across the university lack the digital support they require to perform optimally. For example:

- Human Resources has no software to handle faculty recruitment, no method to handle Laurentian Staff Union (LUSU) performance management and no records management solution.
- The Registrar's Office does not have the ability to mass-change application statuses. Class scheduling and conflict resolution are not automated. 6,000 transcripts are processed manually every year.

These manual or digitally-limited processes create additional workload for staff and prevent the efficient operation of the university as a whole.

Underinvestment in IT assets has meant that teams have had to deploy a patchwork of homegrown tools to address digital gaps.

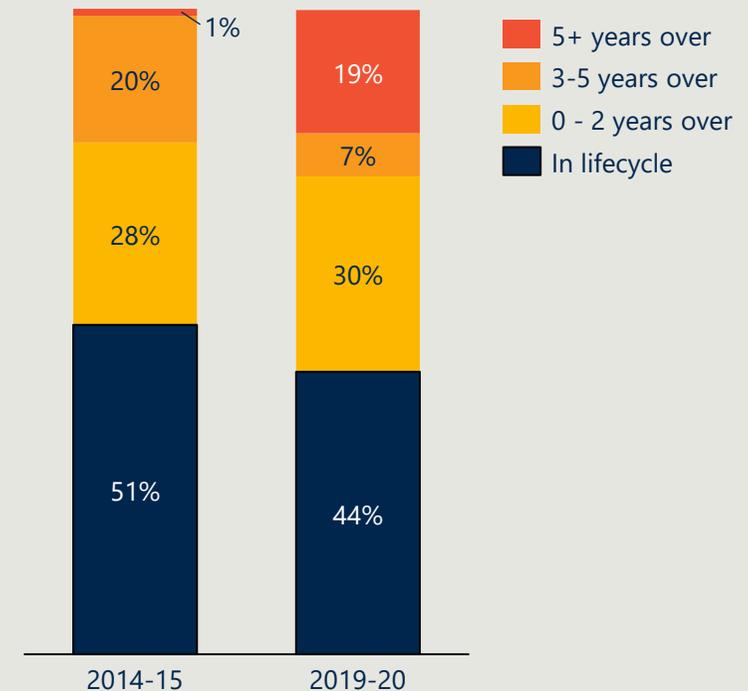
KEY ISSUES 2/2

Dated technology

As of December 2020, 56.2% of IT assets were at renewal or past their product lifecycle by at least one year, with 15.7% of IT assets being ten or more years past their lifecycle. This creates IT-support complications and restricts the university's ability to implement new technologies or digital processes. For example, IT is still in the process of upgrading WIFI networks to technology released in 2013 (WIFI5) while the world is shifting to more advanced networks (WIFI6), and Registrarial Services and Student Affairs rely on older homegrown systems.

The present telephone system, last upgraded in 2010, is past its end of life. It has no manufacturer support and limited IT support, and it poses a risk of long-term system failure. Compared to modern unified communication services that integrate telephone, messaging, email, voicemail and video into a singular location, Laurentian's system offers only landline telephone and voicemail. This acts as a barrier to efficient working practices across the university.

IT Assets past or at renewal FY 2015 and 20



A digital strategy should support the achievement of both the strategic and academic plans. Prioritized initiatives will need to be budgeted for.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Assess current state gaps

- Understand and document processes and manual issues that cannot be resolved with the ERP and system integrations (which should be implemented first) to determine value-added options for the digital strategy, such as robotic process automation, digital telephony, etc.

2. Set the vision

- Assess the implications of the new strategic plan on technology needs at Laurentian over the next five years.
- Conduct a visioning / brainstorming exercise to identify opportunities for the organization to lead digitally. This includes opportunities to deliver new digital business models and trial new emerging technology.

3. Prioritize and allocate funding

- Prioritize the opportunities through stakeholder consultations and develop business cases.
- Agree on digital opportunities for implementation and phasing.
- Allocate funding to support prioritized initiatives.

4. Prototype and implement phase 1 solutions

- Support the development of minimum viable products through journey mapping, persona analysis and high-level solution design.
- Assess the impact and identify prerequisites across the overall operating model for the university.
- Develop an implementation plan for the new digital initiatives, including change management and training initiatives.
- Launch implementations with the appropriate project management and oversight.

5. Incorporate the strategy into annual IT planning and budgeting

- Develop annual plans based on the strategy.
- Develop and implement an approach to IT evergreening.

RISKS

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Funding cannot be secured

Understand the funding amount available over the next several years and prioritize initiatives based on greatest impact.

Assess the risks and opportunity costs of keeping the status quo, and estimate potential savings of the proposed initiatives.

IT staff have low digital capability

When developing the strategy, assess gaps in the IT team capabilities and develop a training and hiring plan to address the gaps.

Implementation takes too long

Establish feasible timeframes and test the degree of feasibility with third parties.

Assign a steering committee and project manager to oversee the project, reporting into the CIO and VP of Finance and Administration.

There are cost overruns

Projects should be scoped with diligence, and the data and infrastructure setting should be well understood when project scoping. Ensure the team and project manager are sufficiently experienced to deliver the project.

The current ERP system is underutilized and uses on-premise software. A fully activated cloud-based ERP can improve data integration and digital capability.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Laurentian should upgrade its on-premise, self-managed Ellucian Colleague ERP system, which was implemented in 1997, to the cloud-based version. This will improve integration of information across faculties and administrative functions, help modernize administrative processes, and transfer responsibility for managing and upgrading the system to the vendor. A private cloud version will enable Laurentian to create bilingual submodules for student services.

Option	Overview	Considerations
1. Improve use of the current on-premise ERP version	Remain on Ellucian's Colleague on-premise version but implement the use of key submodules that are currently not being used. Determine the appropriate add-on modules that should be purchased to further improve operations. Use the Ethos platform for data integration between other applications and the ERP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickest fix • Lower cost and effort to change • Might not result in significant change to operations and system use
2. Upgrade to Ellucian's Colleague private cloud ERP (recommended)	Migrate to the cloud ERP while making targeted changes to processes that can be simplified and moved onto the underutilized ERP submodules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student information system is still maturing and will not meet all needs • Bilingual customization still needed • Implementation will take over one year • Efficiencies about \$350,000 annually
3. Migrate to a premium cloud ERP (for example Workday)	Implement a cloud ERP that has more advanced and user-friendly HR and Finance modules.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most expensive option • Not custom built for higher education • Bilingual customization still needed • Student information system is still maturing and will not meet all needs • Long implementation • Efficiencies about \$350,000 annually

KEY ISSUES

Underutilized ERP functionality

Laurentian's enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, Ellucian Colleague, is underutilized: the university uses only a portion of the licensed 161 modules and submodules, according to IT and Ellucian's analysis. By not using the full functionality of the ERP, investment and effort are wasted and data is not integrated and accessible. For example:

- The Project Accounting and Budget Management modules, which connect to the General Ledger, are not used by Finance.
- The Planned Giving Module, which could help reduce the manual processing of up to 3000 gifts annually, is not being used by Advancement.
- HR is not using leave plan management within the system, which is a major pain point for faculties.
- Position Budgeting, which can help manage the compensation of roles across the organization, is not being used by HR.
- The Communications Management module is not used within HR. This could help reduce FTE effort – currently 0.4 FTE time is spent managing contract and probation renewals manually.

On-premise ERP

Moving the ERP system from on-premise to the cloud addresses two issues: it avoids Ellucian modules becoming dated from the server-side nature of self-managed upgrades; and it reduces server-based workload from IT to Ellucian. This ensures that Ellucian modules remain in their most up-to-date state, and IT can re-allocate about 1.6 FTE on server maintenance to other issues, aligning with their cloud-based operational de-risk strategy.

The ERP implementation will need to be scoped in detail by the vendor first. Areas for maximizing utilization will also need to be confirmed.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Set the stage for implementation

- Formally scope the cloud project with Ellucian and determine which processes will be targeted for changes based on module underutilization and client needs.
- Develop the project plan, agree on the outcomes and milestones, and assign internal and external roles.
- Establish the project steering committee.
- Establish the change management approach.

2. Implement the cloud solution

- Issue change communications.
- Establish the cloud architecture.
- Begin migration of data.
- Initiate training of staff.
- Establish a protocol with IT to support and maintain the cloud ERP.

3. Update processes to align with Ellucian modules

- Assess where processes can be changed to move onto Ellucian modules.
- Initiate changes and support staff through training.

RISKS

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Cost and time overruns

Scope the project clearly upfront, agree on timelines with vendor, and establish a project management office (PMO) to drive the project and connect stakeholders.

Improper or incomplete data transfer to the new system

Investment in training and reskilling end-users is needed. Users should be involved in the implementation to learn the system iteratively.

Ongoing monitoring of module usage should be conducted.

Inadequate IT and leadership capability to drive the changes

Capable change leaders who will be accountable for implementation success should be in place before the project begins. An expert steering committee will be needed to hold leaders and the vendor to account.

Capability improvements are required to enable the workforce to deliver on new priorities and support transformation.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

To adopt new service delivery models, processes and supporting structures, the university will need to ensure the necessary administrative capabilities are in place.

1. Attract new capabilities

Attracting leaders with experience managing transformation is critical. Other capability gaps throughout the workforce need to be identified and staff need to be recruited in line with the university's strategic direction.

2. Attract talent from a broader talent pool and formalize the hiring process

Review policies that might limit the pool of potential candidates for jobs, such as by defining the must-have bilingual roles versus non-bilingual roles. Institutionalize remote working for roles that do not require on-campus presence (for example in IT and Finance). Formalize the hiring process and make it more transparent and rigorous.

3. Upskill the workforce

Identify foundational skill gaps (for example digital dexterity, customer service, compliance, data analytics) by measuring performance against established role KPIs, and target development accordingly.



KEY ISSUES 1/2

Capability gaps compromise service delivery and create risk

- Capability gaps exist at the leadership level that need to be immediately addressed, particularly with regard to strategic planning. In Finance, for example, budgeting and risk management do not appear to be treated as strategic activities that ensure the accuracy of financial information, appropriate resourcing and assessment and planning against risks. In HR, strategic workforce and succession planning is absent.
- Organizational development, as indicated by internal stakeholder interviews, is a capability largely absent at Laurentian. Organizational development is approached on an ad hoc basis. Process mapping with HR indicated that organizational development begins with a "survey (annually or every second year) to the Laurentian community to identify needs, areas of interest", rather than longer-term workforce development planning.
- Labour relations represent a critical gap in capabilities. The recent resignation of the Associate Director, Labour Relations has exacerbated this critical skills gap. Consultations with internal stakeholders revealed a pattern of managers unable to manage chronic underperformance due to process breakdown with labour relations. One leader noted, "I've stopped trying to address [redacted]'s performance issues and simply have to work around their presence." Furthermore, internal stakeholders indicated that industrial relations with the faculty union are considerably more complex than with the staff union. Indicative of this skills gap, HR has structurally partitioned FTE who deal with faculty and staff relations due to an inability of select staff to engage in faculty relations.
- Employees are often hired by senior leaders through informal decisions, with inconsistent or absent involvement from HR. Structures are lacking to ensure HR assesses a new hire's education, skills and experience against position requirements. Some staff in key functions are inadequately qualified. For example, there are few certified public accountants (CPAs) in the Finance function. As well, when the university's Legal Counsel went on long-term leave, the university did not fill the position and therefore had no internal legal support for that period.

Not having the right skillsets in key functions leads to organizational performance issues.

KEY ISSUES 2/2

A narrow talent pool restricts Laurentian's capabilities

- Bilingualism policies potentially restrict an already shallow local talent pool. For example, top finance talent could be minimal in Sudbury compared to other cities, and there are more lucrative finance opportunities locally in the mining sector. Attracting capable talent has been noted to be difficult. Further, staff noted that the bilingualism policy is not applied consistently across the university.
- Top IT talent in Sudbury is likely to be similarly scarce, compared to other cities. For example, IT has had to waive bilingual requirements for non-client-facing roles. There are some roles such as financial analyst (non-faculty/student-serving) that may not need to be bilingual.
- Remote workers, particularly for roles that do not require on-campus presence, are not used.

There are underdeveloped skillsets that limit capability

- There is an institutionalized lack of digital dexterity. For example, a chatbot functionality that appeared to have added efficiency to the Registrar's Office was eventually removed because staff were unable to use the system as it was

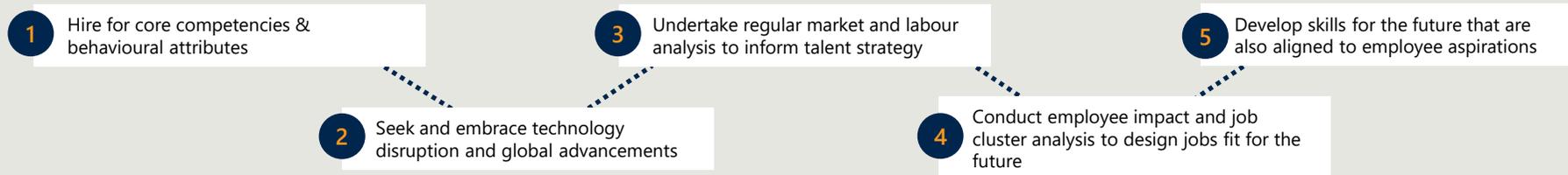
intended. Similarly, Advancement's module on Ellucian's ERP is used inconsistently by faculties and the President's Office. This has led to inconsistent alumni engagement by faculty; some alumni are not engaged with at all.

- Siloed specialists, combined with limited succession planning, make some activities completely dependent on one individual. Finance is made up of small teams where a single person knows each role. Internal stakeholders indicated that "there is an inability to solve issues when someone leaves or implements a process incorrectly". This was evidenced when a payroll clerk left for vacation and staff were not able to get paid on time.

Lack of transparency for position requirements

- Open positions don't consistently have established requirements for education, skills or experiences to measure candidates equally against. Because HR's role in hiring is not consistent across the university, many hiring decisions are made by managers based on unclear criteria. Internal stakeholder interviews revealed concerns around hiring transparency. Either nepotism/bias or simply the appearance of it is an issue. Nonetheless, hiring must be formalized through clear and established position requirements.

THE FUTURE OF WORK REQUIRES A DATA-DRIVEN APPROACH TO JOB DESIGN AND TALENT MANAGEMENT



To support the transformation, capacity should be increased in some areas and a selection of services should be delivered by third parties.

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Laurentian needs to ensure that administration has the capacity to sustain the goals of large-scale transformation. Transactional activities should be pushed down and/or contracted to ensure that management has the capacity to engage in strategic planning.

1. Contract selected services to increase internal capacity

Administration needs to assess the feasibility of contracting select functions and processes to free up capacity internally. For example, payroll, security, pension administration and components of recruitment and training are opportunities for contracting in higher education.

2. Resource understaffed functions

Benchmarking against other universities, Laurentian is understaffed in some areas, including the Registrar's Office and Student Affairs, Facilities, Advancement, Library and Archives. Prioritization should be given to revenue-generating functions (e.g., student recruitment, Advancement, etc.).

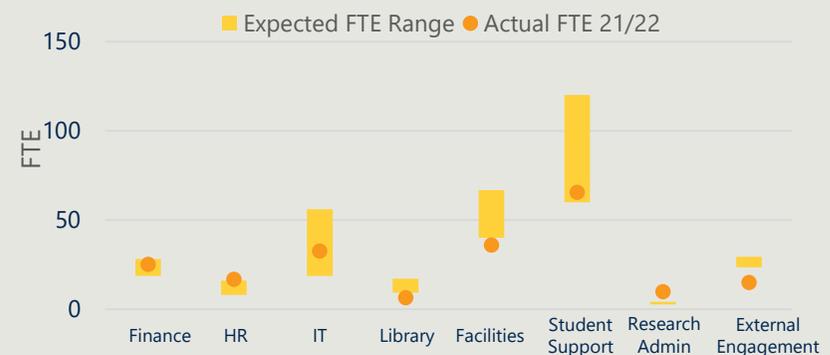
KEY ISSUES (CAPACITY)

Nous has conducted a preliminary analysis of Laurentian's administrative function resourcing. Using the appropriate key drivers of effort (faculty and non-faculty FTE, student FTE and research FTE) for each function and industry ratios, current resourcing can be compared to an expected range relative to the size of the institution.

Based on this analysis, there are opportunities for Laurentian to optimize administrative resourcing in a number of functions. Insufficient capacity in these functions may impact student attraction, experience and retention:

- Facilities management (36 FTE) is below the expected range.
- External engagement (15 FTE) (which includes both marketing and advancement activities) is below the expected range.
- Library (6.5 FTE) is below the expected range.

Expected FTE per function and Laurentian actuals 2021-22



Source: Laurentian Faculty & Non-Faculty FTE Budget with internal benchmarking metrics

Workforce planning and building capabilities to deliver on the strategic plan are key steps. Performance management should also be prioritized.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

1. Take a strategic and longer-term view of the required workforce

- Develop a strategic workforce plan that incorporates the university's new strategic vision, target operating model and existing workforce supply to identify the gaps in capabilities, capacity and diversity targets.
- Develop strategies to address the gaps. Where possible, seek opportunities to maximize the use of existing workforce through talent development and programs (such as a mobility program) that train and redeploy staff from areas of excess capacity to areas of low capacity.
- Where gaps cannot be filled internally, Laurentian should prioritize for external recruitment (see 'third parties' below).
- Implement succession plans and talent management strategies across all functions to retain future leaders and minimize capacity issues.

2. Establish standards through a new performance framework

- Build internal capability by establishing a new performance framework for management and staff. Assess performance regularly and identify opportunities to improve capability.
- Link performance to rewards, where possible.
- Use information gathered through performance assessments and executive engagement to inform the talent development programs for ongoing training and staff development.

3. Partner with third parties to fill both capacity and capability gaps

- Retain a search firm to replace vacating leaders and other staff, such as the AVP vacancy in Facilities, and hire staff in areas that are on average leaner than other universities, such as Marketing and Advancement, Student Services, and Facilities.
- Explore ongoing service contracts for payroll, training, security, ancillary services, recruitment, and pension and benefits to free up staff to perform more value-added work and add capacity.

RISKS

MITIGATING STRATEGIES

Difficulty attracting talent

Review and communicate the employee value proposition to potential candidates.

Consider outsourcing the talent acquisition of key appointments to an external agency.

Consider waiving the requirement for bilingualism for roles that are not student or faculty facing.

Institutionalize remote working for positions where physical presence is unnecessary and local talent is scarce (for example select roles in IT and finance).

Conduct research to ensure compensation and total rewards are comparable with the market.

Key resource attrition and retirement

Monitor attrition and identify high risk segments. Develop succession plans where attrition or retirement is expected.

Implement talent management strategies that identify high performers to provide accelerated development and support opportunities.

Minimize single incumbent dependencies by building knowledge base materials (for example staff wikis) and explore post-retirement consulting arrangements.

Monitor employee engagement and identify key drivers of disengagement. Develop engagement strategies and monitor progress.

Inability to attract a diverse workforce

Consider a broad definition of diversity and analyze current state data to identify the most pressing needs.

Ensure compensation and rewards are equitable.

3. Implementation approach and plan

Implementation will be challenging, but a formal Transformation Program is necessary to set Laurentian up for longer term success if delivered effectively.

A multi-year Transformation Program will require sustained effort and focus.

Key features of the program would include:

- a **comprehensive program** focused on establishing improved governance, setting the new strategy, improving service delivery, realigning structure, redesigning processes, building capabilities and updating systems
- streams of work driven by a **program management office**, overseen by a **steering committee** and informed by a **client focus group**
- a program comprised of largely **external resources** to enable Laurentian staff to focus more on day-to-day service delivery
- **staff capability-building** to support program buy-in and build internal capability for when the program winds down
- a **strong change management** approach to proactively communicate the change and enable change adoption through training and change champions
- a **benefits realization plan** to define, track and report the benefits of the change and the overall Transformation Program.

Six key drivers must be in place to deliver a Transformation Program for Laurentian.

To get the transformation right, the vision must be shared, the leadership must be strong, accountability must be clear, capability must be adequate, and the mechanisms to enable sustainable change must be put in place.

1 A COMPELLING VISION AND STRATEGY

A powerful vision and transformation strategy should have an outcomes focus and be committed to sustainable results. This will provide an ongoing direction to unite and galvanize your community.

4 THE RIGHT CAPABILITY TO DELIVER

Dedicated staff with the right experience, capacity and professional expertise are needed to deliver the transformation. It should also draw heavily on the insight, capabilities and potential of its people, and use this as an opportunity for capability building and knowledge transfer.

2 GETTING THE DESIGN RIGHT

The path to transformation is informed by difficult design choices. These choices include what to standardize, what to centralize and what to report. Getting this balance right will be essential to delivering change.

5 ALIGNMENT TO A LONG-TERM VISION

An overarching program management structure to ensure process alignment between and within functions is needed. Adequate resourcing to support and accelerate the transformation is needed so that students, staff and faculty will trust the process.

3 STRONG GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Robust and transparent governance and accountability, aligned to target outcomes, calls leaders to action and drives an internally owned transformation program. Executive attention and funding must be directed to those few changes that deliver the most value.

6 A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Designing services that put users' evolving needs at the centre ensures that users' voices are heard and underpins a service mindset to continuously improve processes and delivery.

We recommend establishing a program management office to facilitate a successful, sustainable transformation.

Good program management includes four key activities that will accelerate transformation initiatives, enable the changes and deliver sustainable benefits.

ENHANCE

Define university-wide program management standards, processes and templates to ensure good practice is consistently applied across the transformation process.

Iterate transformation management to capitalize on learning.

Drive program planning and scheduling to enable short- and long-term vision.

1

SUPPORT

Provide expert program management resources for transformation delivery across all streams of work.

Drive resource concentration to the right areas at the right time.

Influence program outcomes through sustained and strategic support.

2

ASSURE

Provide assurance to the executive on the effective and efficient management of transformation initiatives.

Have university-wide visibility of emerging issues.

Maintain a client-focused lens across all activities.

Develop and maintain a risk and issues register.

3

ASSESS

Co-develop and implement a balanced scorecard.

Act as challenger or critical friend for transformation teams.

Report on the program to communicate key messages to clients and the executive.

4

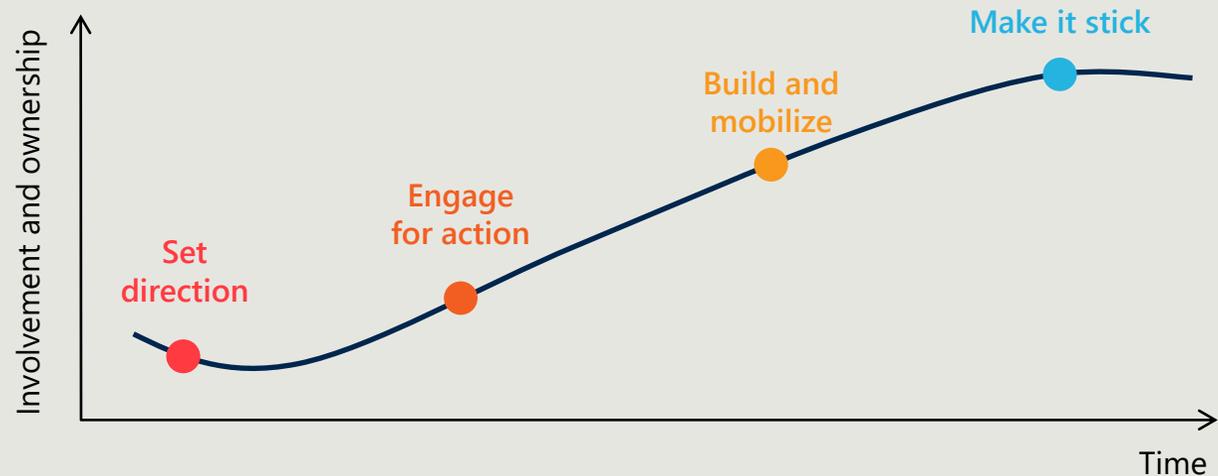
The Program Management Office should provide central change management expertise.

The Program Management Office (PMO) should have overall responsibility for supporting the transformation effort. Central change management expertise should support each work package across the transformation.

Change management expertise should support the change effort through:

- building leadership capability
- embedding a culture of accountability
- redesigning key performance indicators and processes
- reviewing and redesigning job roles
- developing a training program
- reviewing governance mechanisms.

Change management should support each work package, following Nous' change management approach, shown below.



Build awareness
Define where we are going and why

Deepen understanding
Equip and activate leaders to drive change

Create buy-in and build commitment
Use leverage and engagement at scale to build critical mass

Take action
Embed and sustain the change

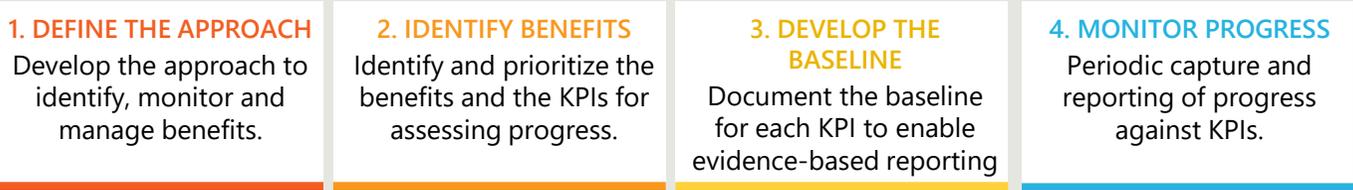
The Program Management Office should be responsible for overseeing realization of benefits. This requires upfront planning and regular reporting.

The transformation process should be regularly evaluated against agreed criteria. Each project and stream of work should be supported by measures and metrics that empower leaders through regular reporting on progress and key issues or blockers.

The scale of transformation for Laurentian will necessitate:

- reporting of benefits realization at monthly intervals
- stream leaders to be accountable for monitoring progress and early intervention if required
- progress reports to be included in monthly steering committee meetings and quarterly Board reports.

THE FOUR STAGES OF BENEFIT REALIZATION:



CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR REALIZING BENEFITS

- Incorporate benefits management into existing governance, accountability and reporting arrangements.
- Include benefits management into program management and transition activities.
- Early intervention to adjust delivery as appropriate to ensure that benefits are progressed and realized.

SAMPLE REPORTING FRAMEWORK:

Program Level Benefits Management Report: September 2020					
Category	Metric	Assessment	Target	Last month	This month
Category (to be determined)	SMART metric (to be determined)	●	74%	93%	91%
	SMART metric (to be determined)	Not commenced	<70%	64%	52%
	SMART metric (to be determined)	●	Decreasing trend	58%	56%
Category (to be determined)	SMART metric (to be determined)	●	90%	92%	93%
	SMART metric (to be determined)	●	85%	52%	74%

● Above target
 ● On target
 ● Below target

We recommend establishing a lean, executive-led governance model to help drive progress, ensure ownership and remove roadblocks.

Effective governance and accountability are essential for the transformation to achieve its potential benefits. Otherwise, business as usual will quickly usurp the Transformation Program agenda.

TRANSFORMATION GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



During our broad consultations, we heard that Laurentian can be disjointed in its strategy-setting and decision-making, restricting its ability to decisively direct change. To combat this, we recommend a lean, executive-led executive steering committee (ESC) whose membership would include:

- program executive sponsors
- deans' representatives

We also recommend setting up a customer focus group to engage the end-users of administrative services throughout the transformation on initiatives. This group should include students, faculty and staff.

An executive steering committee (ESC) should oversee the Program Management Office (PMO), which in turn manages each of the ongoing projects. The roles and responsibilities of these two functions are expanded below.

Executive steering committee roles and responsibilities

- Update the university community and the Board of Governors.
- Be active participants in shaping the Transformation Program.
- Make key decisions; consider funding and resourcing requirement.
- Champion changes through executive channels.
- Monitor and provide feedback on transformation progress and performance.

Program Management Office roles and responsibilities

- Lead the program and provide expert advice to delivery teams.
- Ensure alignment and cohesion of effort.
- Present regular updates and recommendations to the ESC.
- Be highly accessible and responsive throughout the program.
- Actively manage the transformation (see next page).

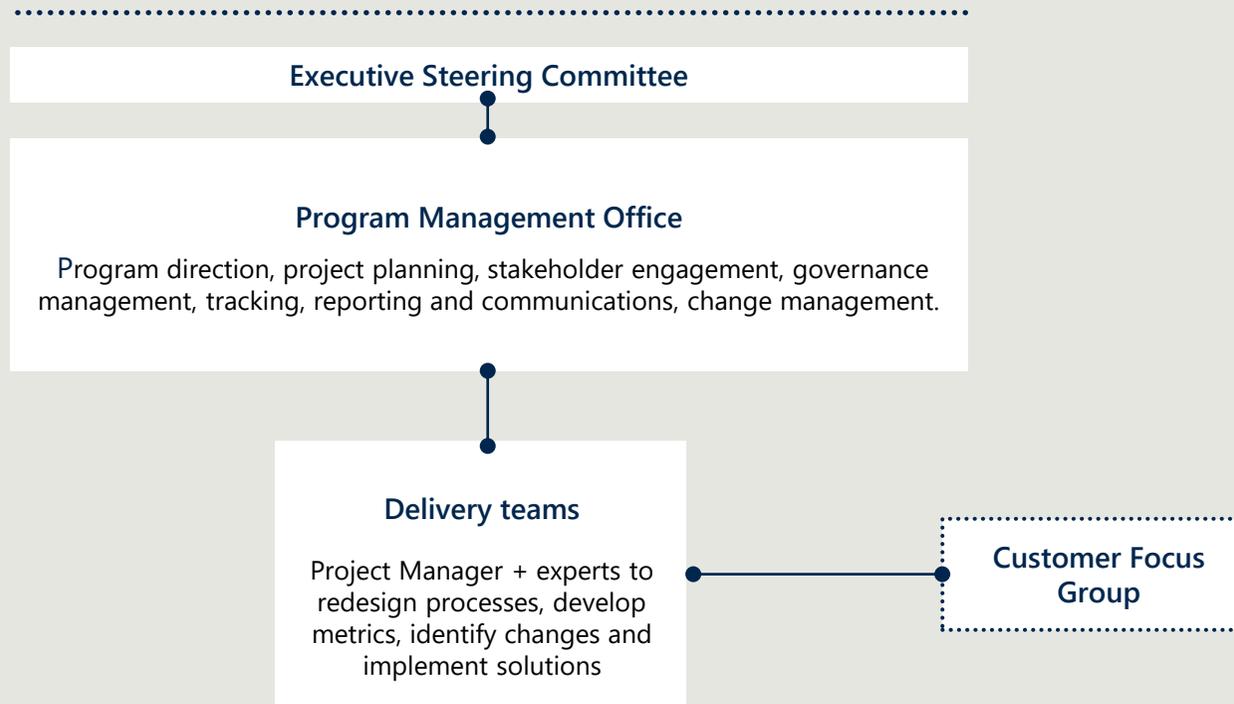
Note: tricultural representation should be reflected in the Steering Committee composition. If desired, 1-2 members could include staff or faculty. However, we recommend mainly executive oversight to enable greater accountability for program outcomes.

The right program structure, capability and intensity will be critical to executing the plan.

Nous recommends the following Transformation Program structure to ensure the right capabilities and resources are in place to achieve desired outcomes.

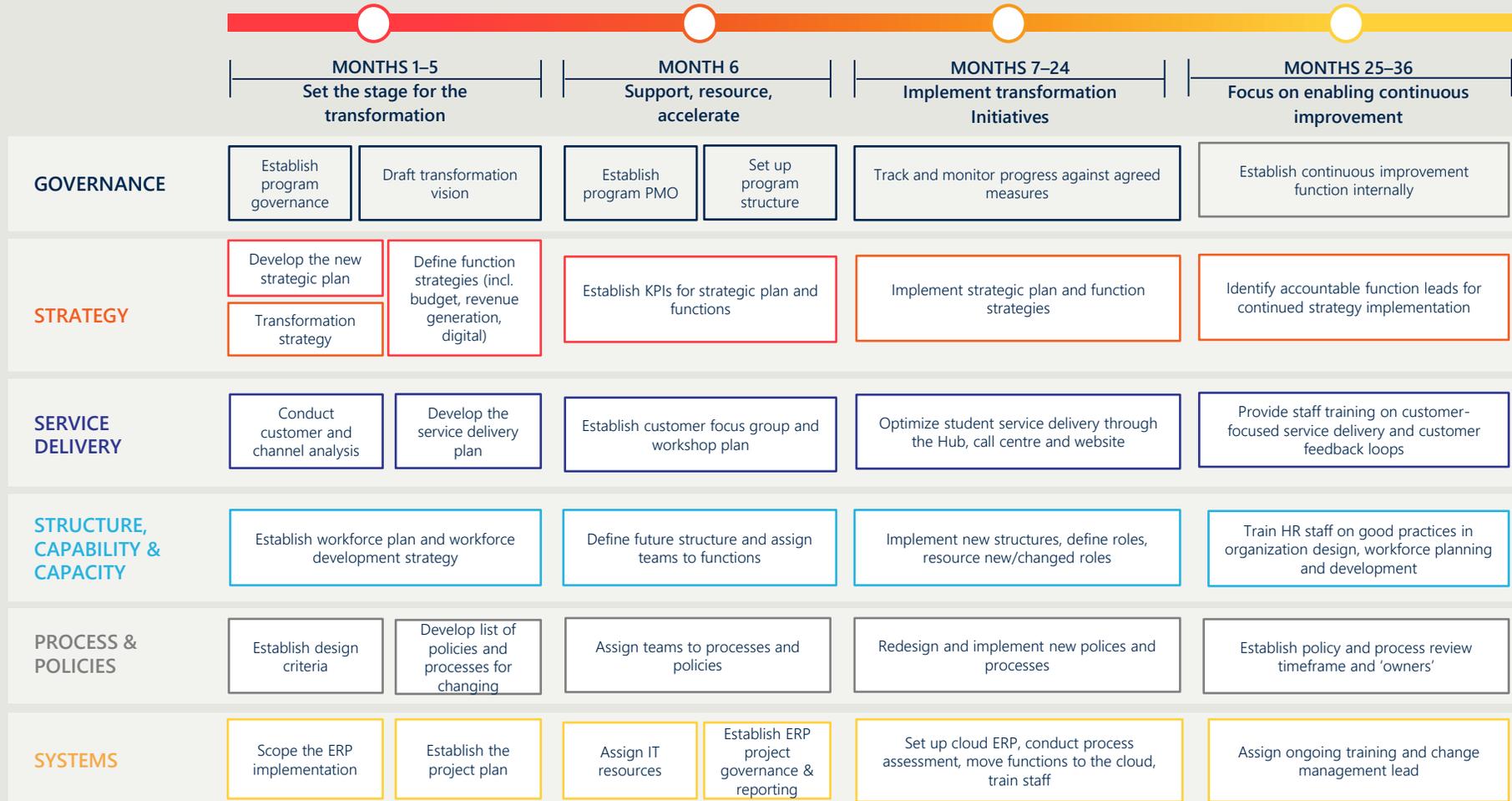
PROGRAM DELIVERY STRUCTURE

TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM



A well-planned but adaptive three-year roadmap will set Laurentian up to deliver success.

LAURENTIAN OPERATIONAL TRANSFORMATION THREE-YEAR TIMELINE



Appendix A: Stakeholders engaged

Nous Group interviewed over 70 stakeholders, many on a repeated basis. Members of the Board and Senate were also engaged via surveys.

Stakeholder Group	Name and Title			
Human Resources	Cindy Cacciotti Shawn Frappier Marc Saini	Associate Vice-President Director, Faculty & Staff Relations Associate Director, Faculty Relations	Julie Lacroix Tom Fenske Fabrice Colin	Manager, Staff Relations President, LUSU President, LUFA
Finance	Normand Lavallée Michel Piche	Associate Vice-President VP, Finance & Administration	Joanne Goudreault Tracy Fleury	Director, Budget & Payroll Director, Accounting & Reporting
Legal	Céleste Boyer	Interim General Counsel	Heather McPherson	Secretary, Board of Governors
Information and Communications Technologies	Luc Roy Martin Laferriere	Associate Vice-President Director, IT Portfolio Management	Laura Geryk David Green	Director, Info. Management & Systems Vendor
Facilities & Infrastructure	Pierre Fontaine	Director, Maintenance & Operations		

Stakeholders Engaged (continued)

Stakeholder Group	Name and Title	
Ancillary	Benjamin Demainuk	Director, Business Development
Research Planning, Management & Support	Tammy Eger	Vice-President, Research
External Relations	Isabelle Bourgeault-Tassé	Executive Director
Advancement	Tracy MacLeod	Chief Advancement Officer
Registrarial Services and Student Affairs	Serge Demers	Associate Vice-President, Student Affairs, Registrar

Stakeholders Engaged (continued)

Stakeholder Group	Name and Title			
Faculty Deans	Joel Dickinson Dean Millar	Dean, Faculty of Arts Interim Dean, Faculty of Science	Michel Delorme Céline Larivière	Dean, Faculty of Management Dean, Faculty of Education & Health
Faculty Business Managers	Meredith Teller Rachel Trudeau	Business Manager, Faculty of Arts Business Manager, Faculty of Science	Lisette Legault Patricia Seguin	Business Manager, Faculty of Education and Health Administrative Officer, Faculty of Education and Health
Libraries & Archives	Brent Roe	Associate Vice-President		
Teaching, Learning & Curriculum Support	Marie-Josée Berger	Provost and Vice-President, Academic		
Athletics	Anthony Church	Director, School of Sports Administration		

Stakeholders Engaged (continued)

Stakeholder Group		Name and Title		
Procurement	Ray Coutu	Director, Procurement, Contract and Risk	LeeAnne Croteau	Buyer
	Russell McMahon	Manager, Risk and Insurance		
Student Union Leadership	Eric Chappell	President, SGA	Simon Paquette	President, AEF
Laurentian University Staff Union (LUSU)	Tom Fenske	President		
	Thomas Matheson	Vice President		
	Diane Depatie	2 nd Vice President		
Laurentian University Faculty Association (LUFA)	Fabrice Colin	President	Linda St. Pierre	Chief Steward
	Louis Durand	Vice President	Robyn Gorham	Vice President
Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Office (EDHRO)	Shannon Goffin	Co-Director	Jennifer Dowdall	Co-Director
Laurentian University Native Education Council (LUNEC)	Susan Manitowabi	AVP, Academic and Indigenous Programs	Marnie Yourchuk	LUNEC Member
	Roxanne Manitowabi	LUNEC Member	Diane Balraj	LUNEC Member
			Mick Staruck	LUNEC Member

Stakeholders engaged (continued)

All Board of Governors and the Senate members were consulted through surveys. Those listed below were additionally consulted through group sessions, many of whom were also consulted individually.

Stakeholder Group		Name
Board of Governors	Robert Haché	Heather McPherson
	Claude Lacroix	Brian Montgomery
	Sonia Del Missier	Peter Faggioni
	Fabiola Garcia	Eric Chappell
	Martin Gran	
Senate	Albrecht Schulte-Hostedde	Josée Turcotte
	Ashley Thomson	Matthias Takouda
	Avery Morin	Pedro Jugo
	Chantal Barriault	Robyn Gorham
	Christina McMillan-Boyles	Shannon Bassett
	Christine Lalonde	Steve Havlovic
	Claude Vincent	Fabrice Colin
	Connor Koch	Tom Fenske
	Dan Scott	Eric Chappell
	Eric Gauthier	Simon Paquette
	Ernst Gerhardt	

Appendix B: Current state challenges

Strategic Planning

Current state challenges



Challenge	Annotation
The current strategic plan is insufficient	Laurentian’s current strategic plan, Imagine2023, does not reflect the university’s current realities and recent changes, given that it was drafted before CCAA restructuring and the pandemic.
Goals are not specific, measurable or realistic	Imagine2023’s goals are not specific, measurable or realistic. This has also been an issue with previous strategic plans. For example, Imagine2023’s Outcome 1 relates to the engagement of stakeholders; it was deemed completed on the basis that <i>“this is an Outcome that is accomplished every day by members of the Laurentian University community”</i>). If success is not specific, measurable, or realistic, it cannot genuinely be achieved.
There is minimal accountability for the plan outcomes	<p>Management is not held to account against Laurentian’s current strategic plan. Each of Imagine2023’s outcomes has a sponsor and a lead. However, when Nous asked senior leaders about their respective mandates and strategic priorities, not a single leader referenced Imagine2023. This indicates that the strategic plan has not been cascaded throughout the institution.</p> <p>Imagine2023 was not published in a format where it can be used by leaders, nor are senior leaders’ performance measured against it, given the lack of key performance indicators.</p> <p>Finally, an annual operating plan to execute on the five-year strategy does not appear to exist.</p>
Leadership’s strategic planning capability gap	Capability gaps exist at the leadership level that need to be immediately addressed, particularly with regards to strategic planning. In Finance, for example, budgeting and risk management do not appear to be treated as strategic activities meant to ensure the accuracy of financial information, appropriate resourcing, and assessment and planning against risks. In HR, strategic workforce and succession planning are absent.
Under-resourced functions	<p>Nous has conducted a preliminary analysis of Laurentian’s administrative function resourcing. Using the appropriate key drivers of effort (faculty and non-faculty FTE, student FTE and research FTE) for each function and industry ratios, current resourcing can be compared to an expected range relative to the size of the institution. Based on this analysis, there are opportunities for Laurentian to optimize administrative resourcing in a number of functions. Insufficient capacity in these functions may impact student attraction, experience and retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities management (36 FTE) is below the expected range. • External engagement (15 FTE) (which includes both marketing and advancement activities) is below the expected range. • Library (6.5 FTE) is below the expected range.

Indigenous Community Relations

Current state challenges



Challenge	Annotation
Management consideration of Indigenous views	It was noted that the Laurentian University Native Education Council (LUNEC) feels that management does not respect the tricultural mandate and does not prioritize and engage LUNEC. For example, it was noted that the President attends partial monthly LUNEC meetings or does not attend at all. Further, it was noted that the decision-making process is not inclusive enough. LUNEC feels that the tricultural mandate is not supported by the structures and the governance of the university.
Bilingual requirement	It was noted that the bilingual French-English capability requirement prevents Indigenous peoples from moving into management positions because Indigenous languages are not seen as equal to the bilingual French-English requirement.
Hiring and representation in positions	It was noted that hiring practices could be perceived as unfair, given there are few Indigenous staff and leaders, and there is no Indigenous recruitment strategy.
Policies and acts	It was noted that many policies and acts do not refer to the tricultural mandate or how a policy should be applied within the context of the tricultural mandate.
Board representation	There is a concern, with the turnover of Board members, that Indigenous voices could be eliminated from the Board.

Note: Nous Group met the Laurentian University Native Education Council (LUNEC) once in the development of the report. LUNEC's full views are not represented in this report due to report timeframes. We recommend the senior leadership of Laurentian undertake more in-depth consultation with LUNEC before launching a Transformation Program to ensure that the full views of LUNEC are taken into consideration.

Human Resources

Current state challenges (1/3)



Challenge	Annotation
Entrenched capability gaps (administration wide)	Performance management of senior leadership is ad hoc and inconsistent. When asked how many LUSU staff undergo “at least one performance review a year,” HR responded that none do. Of the few non-unionized staff that do undergo performance management, the process is vague and non-standardized. According to an AVP, “when managers do engage in performance management and the staff member fails to improve, HR’s discipline and termination processes are so broken that capability gaps become entrenched.”
Inconsistent involvement in hiring	Employees are often hired by senior leaders through informal decisions, with inconsistent or absent involvement from HR. Structures are lacking to ensure HR assesses a new hire’s education, skills and experience against position requirements.
Labour relations strained by capability gap	<p>Labour relations represent a critical gap in capabilities. The recent resignation of the Associate Director, Labour Relations has exacerbated this critical skills gap. Furthermore, internal stakeholders indicated that industrial relations with the faculty union are considerably more complex than with the staff union. Indicative of this skills gap, HR has structurally partitioned FTE who deal with faculty and staff relations due to an inability of select staff to engage in faculty relations.</p> <p>Relationships and communication between administration and staff/faculty have been strained and trust has been eroded over time. This has manifested in frequent grievances and freedom of information requests, such as requesting senior administrator contracts and continually raising concerns about administrative decisions. This has led to unsustainable workloads for the HR department. HR indicated that the end-to-end time required for resolving some faculty union grievances extends upwards of 528 days. There are numerous drivers of this inefficiency, including a lack of capability within HR, bottlenecks in union processes, and management’s lack of knowledge internally around collective agreements. All of these can result in increased grievances.</p>
Limited access to critical financial information	HR does not have access to financial information, such as salaries, to properly engage in strategic and transactional processes critical to the function.
Unclear points of entry for service delivery	It is unclear who employees should contact in HR. Staff are often bounced from administrator to administrator before they reach the appropriate contact. Internal stakeholder interviews show a pattern of HR being seen as a barrier to progress. Roles are unclear and accountability is undefined. Inefficiencies remain unresolved if it is unclear who owns an issue. Inconsistencies and inefficiencies persist in procedures related to retirement and leave.
Sub-optimal structure	The HR function has a hierarchical structure with a low span of control at 3.7 (the standard in higher education is between six and ten). This restricts information flow and slows down decision-making. Two managers have no direct reports. The team is also organized almost exclusively around faculty and staff relations, with limited purview of standard HR functions such as leadership and professional development, health and safety etc.

Human Resources

Current state challenges (2/3)



Challenge	Annotation
Inefficient paper-based processes	According to HR leadership, “40% of HR’s time is spent on paper-based documentation and processes.” Many transactional issues take too long, such as procedures related to compensation, pensions and severance calculations. Paper-based processes are also more prone to human error, creating quality assurance risks.
Ineffective vacation leave administration	HR is not accountable for short-term leave administration. There is no formal process (e.g. through an online portal administered by HR) to administer leave requests, so leave requests become the discretion of individual managers. This system is manual, untracked, and open to abuse. Furthermore, in the offboarding process, often there are no records of vacation pay owed to outgoing employees.
The rate of sick leave is high and the policy is generous	<p>Three AVPs flagged the high rate of sick leave. Employees are eligible for six months at 100% salary. HR estimates there are 45 annual occurrences of sick leave greater than ten consecutive days. That represents 8.7% of Laurentian’s 516 full-time regular employees. HR estimates that 50% of sick leaves are due to mental health, though more recently that estimate has increased to 75%. This sick leave rate could be evidence of systemic workplace issues that come at a cost to mental health. Whatever the cause(s), administrative units with chronically low capacity are stretched even thinner with a reduced workforce, exacerbating capacity issues.</p> <p>The sick leave policy contained within the staff union agreement is more generous than other broader public sector institutions.*</p>
Poor records management	Accountability for records management and the related enterprise policies and training appear to be absent. There was little evidence of formal and standardized practices and awareness. For example, it was noted that HR does not have comprehensive information on current or recent employees.
Reduced capacity for strategic planning	Superiors consistently erase work completed by subordinates. This undercuts employees’ confidence and conditions junior staff to seek unnecessary guidance on transactional tasks. This also leads to middle and upper management spending time on transactional tasks at the cost of strategic activities.
Prolonged hiring processes	There is a long time required for the hiring process. On average, there are 13 faculty hires a year. On the staff side, there are typically 15 to 20 new hires per year and 120 contract renewals per year. Many parts of these processes are paper based and require excessive approvals, including “3 finance people” inclusive of the VP Admin and Finance. There is an unnecessary amount of back and forth between functions/faculties and HR. In Libraries and Archives, for example, hiring for existing positions takes upwards of six months. Hiring for new positions takes upwards of 12 months.
Inefficient and absent structures for onboarding	Internal faculty stakeholders highlighted altogether absent structures for onboarding new employees, including no centralized records of employee information such as contracts. HR’s onboarding processes are significantly manual and prone to error. Of particular concern is a lack of centralized and secure recording-keeping of sensitive employee information such as SIN numbers.

*Laurentian University Staff Union Collective Agreement: <https://laurentian.ca/assets/files/LUSU-CA-2018-21.pdf>

Human Resources

Current state challenges (3/3)



Challenge	Annotation
Organizational development capability gap	Organizational development, as indicated by internal stakeholder interviews, is a capability largely absent at Laurentian. Organizational development is approached on an ad hoc basis. Process mapping with HR indicated that organizational development begins with a “survey (annually or every second year) to the Laurentian community to identify needs, areas of interest”, rather than longer-term workforce development planning.
Capability gap in pension administration	There are capability gaps in pension administration. Protracted processes further reduce capacity internally. In higher education administration many transactional pension administrative tasks are typically handled externally.
Low spans of control (administration wide)	Laurentian’s vertically-hierarchical structure, multiple layers and low spans of control restricts information flow and slows down decision making. For instance, there is scope to flatten and improve the spans of control in finance from 3.25 (Organizational Design of Finance) to the better practice range of 6 to 10. Similarly, there is scope to improve spans of control administrative wide (HR=3.7; IT=5.3; Advancement=2.3; Research=4.5; Registrar & Student Affairs=4.9).
Missing accountability frameworks (administration wide)	There is an absence of accountability frameworks for departments and units which has not enabled the performance of departments. At the leadership level, the lack of performance expectations or KPIs for departments aligned to the strategic plan has fostered a culture of low accountability and performance on strategic outcomes. Furthermore, functions do not appear to see basic practices that should be within their responsibility as part of their role. For example, HR doesn’t take accountability for vacation leave requests. General Counsel does not review significant contracts before they’re signed by business units.
Non-standardized job titles and roles (administration wide)	The seniority of job titles are inconsistent across the University. For example, in Registrarial services and student affairs there are managers without direct reports, and in Research a manager reports directly to a VP, a structure that pushes administrative tasks upwards, detracting from senior management’s time focused on strategic planning. Laurentian’s non-standardized titles (1) complicates the hiring process; (2) clouds compensation equity; (3) confuses employee career paths; (4) pushes transactional decision-making upwards at the cost to strategic planning; and (5) confuses service users trying to understand roles when seeking the appropriate point of entry for service.
Poor inter-functional connection points (administration wide)	Administration can be highly siloed. For example, Finance handles payroll, and HR does not have access to salary information which is critical to its operations. The absence of structures like business partners contributes to the extreme siloing of administrative units.



Challenge	Annotation
Inadequate budget planning, management, and reporting	<p>Laurentian's CCAA restructuring and the disclosure of certain matters in connection with the restructuring have raised concerns around budget management, financial processes and oversight at the university. There is an incrementalistic approach to developing budgets currently where historical figures are used to plan for the year, rather than applying a more informed and rigorous methodology.</p> <p>Finance does not currently develop month-end, quarter-end or mid-year reporting.</p> <p>Variance analysis between budget and actuals is not conducted, in part because the budget is reported differently from the general ledger and there is no process to reconcile the two systems.</p> <p>Internal stakeholders have indicated a lack of rigour in defining expense items and setting budgets for business units. For example, expense category amounts are set arbitrarily and do not reflect real spending categories at times, which impacts the accuracy of institutional reporting on expenses.</p>
Low competence or effort on strategy and policy development	<p>The function is transactional in nature. Upper and middle management spend significant effort on transactional tasks at the cost of strategic activities. Budgeting and risk management appear to be treated as information-gathering exercises rather than strategic activities that ensure accuracy of financial information, appropriate resourcing, and assessment and planning against risks.</p>
Financial data is not readily available to budget managers	<p>Financial information is not easily accessible and consistent across the university. Basic information on costs and FTE for this report alone were difficult to gather. A fulsome budget model for each function and faculty is lacking. Unit managers can't make informed decisions about investments (e.g. hiring new professors) and manage within their budgets because they don't have complete and updated information surrounding their budget and expense actuals. Budget managers should not be dependent on Finance for transactional activities. For example, HR is dependent on Finance for basic financial data, such as actuals and budget variance information, that should be readily available through data integration. Fully digital and integrated financial management through the ERP system has not been adopted. IT has noted that several modules are not being used by Finance currently, leading to disconnected systems such as the General Ledger from Excel sheets being used.</p>
Staff are under-skilled	<p>There are few CPAs in Finance. Top finance talent in Sudbury is scarce, and there are more lucrative finance opportunities in other sectors locally. Compounded with bilingual requirements, attracting capable talent is difficult. Many finance clerks perform repetitive transactional tasks without sufficient understanding of what they're doing and why. Currently, compliance issues are common within the finance function.</p>
Paper-based processes	<p>Supporting documents for financial and accounting transactions are paper-based and poorly organized. Finance staff are routinely unable to provide support for past transactions, let alone make adjustments to correct previous accounting errors.</p>

Finance

Current state challenges (2/3)



Challenge	Annotation
Invoicing is inefficient and prone to error	Invoices come in multiple forms (fax, email, mail) and are all printed and undergo an overly long manual process. Budget managers throughout the university report frequent errors with invoicing, with prolonged and/or ineffective methods to reconcile errors. The cheque run process is highly manual and involves too many managerial approvals. An accounts clerk issues and prints a paper cheques; these papers are counted by a manager; the clerk then seals paper cheques and resubmits to a manager for review and approval; a second manager reviews and approves the cheque run; an accounting analyst then creates and transfers the e-cheque file to the bank.
Processes lack controls	Finance engages in a manual processes that lack controls. For instance, internal stakeholder interviews indicated that invoicing is prone to error. They can be paid in the wrong amount due to manual keying errors. There are no controls in place to rectify errors other than the vendor self-identifying.
Low span of control	The finance function has a vertically hierarchical structure that restricts information flow and slows down decision-making. Span of control is 3.25, significantly below the recommended range of six to ten for these types of functions.
Single person dependencies compromise quality assurance	Finance is made up of small teams where a single person knows each role. There is an inability to solve issues when someone leaves or implements a process incorrectly. For example, when a payroll clerk left for vacation, institutional knowledge was lost and people couldn't get paid.
Procurement is a lengthy manual process	The procurement function relies on multiple technology platforms that don't interact seamlessly with one another, resulting in manual processes to reconcile data for reporting purposes and for tracking purchases across platforms.
Poor retention	According to interviews with finance leadership, managers are working up to 60-hour weeks. Middle managers are overburdened with transactional financial activities that should be occurring on the front line. As a consequence, middle management are feeling burnt out, exacerbating existing retention issues.
Low capacity and capability pertaining to institutional planning	The institutional planning function has been shifted to different parts of the university over the years. Currently it sits within the finance function and is performing more of a reporting role on behalf of the university to governments rather than supporting strategic decision-making related to the academic focus of the university. The function appears not to be designed to support the university in academic strategy and planning which can become a critical support function for the President and Provost.
Manual process to issue invoices	The creation of invoices is a manual process in Word/Excel. There are approximately 300–350 invoices created per year.



Challenge	Annotation
Payroll to casuals is unreliable	Internal stakeholders, particularly student leadership and research faculty with graduate assistants, indicated how inconsistent and difficult it is for students in paid roles to receive funds. One component of this issue is that casuals find it difficult to receive contracts for their roles, even well after their start date. However, those with contracts similarly report difficulty getting paid at their agreed rates for their labour.
Minimal self-serve options for records management	Employees cannot update and maintain their own payroll information, thus reducing capacity in Finance. Self-service and dashboard options are required.
Outdated capital debt policy	The Capital Debt Policy was set in 2010 and updated in 2016. It was set to be updated in January 2021 but has not been. The ratio of debt to total revenue maximum that has been established is 45%. This policy should be updated and reassessed given the current financial context and slowing growth of local enrolment in the higher education sector, along with the revenue volatility exemplified by COVID.*
Outdated tuition fee exemptions policy	The policy on tuition fee exemptions was due to be updated in 2017 but has not been. This policy outlines tuition exemptions for relatives of staff with a broad definition of 'dependants'.**
Poor capital planning	Laurentian has a backlog of state of good repair for its assets of \$135M, some of which concerns high-priority asset rehabilitation based on Facilities Service's risk assessment such as roofing and electrical repairs of buildings. Currently there is no funding to address the backlog other than through partial grants from the provincial government. Budget planning at Laurentian appears to not incorporate capital planning with lifecycle cost allocations to ensure ongoing asset repairs are properly funded.
Opportunity costs of not having a robust ancillary revenues strategy	Laurentian does not appear to have a robust revenue generation strategy where it determines the potential for services and revenues. There may be opportunities for growth in existing and new channels (e.g., the bookstore, OneCard, childcare, parking, food services, technology training, space leasing, residences, procurement, high school programs, senior programs, etc.).
Reduced ancillary revenues due to COVID	Laurentian's ancillary services revenue as declined during the pandemic. According to the 2020 Annual Report, ancillary's contribution dropped by 15% in 2019–20. Due to restrictions during that time there was minimal food service, fewer students requiring accommodation, reduced demand for parking and reduced demand for conference services.

*Laurentian Capital Debt Policy: <https://intranet.laurentian.ca/policies/2016.Feb.12%20-%20Capital%20Debt%20Policy%20-%20EN.pdf>

**Laurentian Tuition Fee Exemption policy: https://intranet.laurentian.ca/policies/2016.Feb.12%20-%20Policy_Tuition%20Fee%20Exemp%20-%20EN.pdf

Information Technology

Current state challenges (1/2)



Challenge	Annotation
Aging IT infrastructure	<p>As of December 2020, 56.2% of IT assets were at renewal or past their product lifecycle by at least one year with 15.7% of IT assets being 10+ years past their lifecycle. This creates IT-support complications and restricts the university's ability to implement new technologies or digital processes. For example, IT is still in the process of upgrading WIFI networks to technology released in 2013 (WIFI5) while the world is shifting to more advanced networks (WIFI6), and Registrarial Services and Student Affairs rely upon older homegrown systems.</p> <p>The present telephone system, last upgraded in 2010 is past its end of life with no manufacturer support, limited IT support, and poses a risk for long-term system failure. Compared to modern unified communication services that integrate telephone, messaging, email, voicemail and video into a singular location, Laurentian's system offers only landline telephone and voicemail, acting as a barrier to efficient working practices across the institution.</p>
Uncollaborative innovation	<p>IT expertise is centralized. However, other departments have legitimate contributions to make in digitizing their processes. IT has a tendency to act unilaterally in the development of digital processes at the cost of collaborative innovation. For example, the mail room has paper-based processes and has approached IT repeatedly with a business case to create digital efficiencies, but those systems remain paper-based.</p>
Low process standardization	<p>Processes are not sufficiently standardized or documented. When issues occur outside an IT staff member's immediate focus, they struggle to solve the problem from scratch. For example, when someone died unexpectedly knowledge of how to change the phone messages was lost. As a result the automated phone trees have outdated and incorrect information.</p>
Low capacity for continuous improvement	<p>The absence of a project management office in IT compromises the function's ability to manage large transformations, let alone continuous iterative change.</p>
University-wide digital capability gap	<p>Obstructions to implementation of IT systems are university-wide due to an institutionalized lack of digital dexterity. For example, a chatbot functionality that appeared to have added efficiency to the Registrar's Office was eventually removed because staff were unable to use the system as it was intended. Similarly, Advancement's module on Ellucian's ERP is used inconsistently by faculties and the President's Office. This has led to inconsistent alumni engagement by faculty; some alumni are not engaged with at all.</p>
Difficulty attracting qualified talent	<p>Top talent in Sudbury is scarce, and there are more lucrative IT opportunities in other sectors locally and further afield.</p>

Information Technology

Current state challenges (2/2)



Challenge	Annotation
Institution has failed to advance digital strategy	An overarching technology architecture has been developed, but the institution remains anchored by legacy systems. These systems hinder the productivity of staff, create opportunities for error, and keep the university locked into dated practices, unable to capitalize on current technological trends.
Inadequate digital tools	Functions across the university lack the digital support they require to perform optimally. For example, Human Resources has no software to handle faculty recruitment, no method to handle LUSU performance management and no records management solution. The Registrar's Office does not have the capability to mass-change application statuses, class scheduling and conflict resolution are not automated, and 6,000 transcripts are processed manually every year. These manual or digitally-limited processes create additional workload for staff and prevent the efficient operation of the institution as a whole.
Underutilized ERP functionality	<p>Laurentian's enterprise resource planning software (ERP), Ellucian Colleague, is underutilized with the institution using only a portion of the licensed 161 modules and submodules, according to IT and Ellucian's analysis. By not using the full functionality of the ERP, investment and effort are wasted, and institutional data is not integrated and accessible. For example, of the modules underused, IT has found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Accounting and Budget Management modules are not used by Finance which connect into the General Ledger • The Planned Giving Module is not being used by Advancement but could help reduce the manual processing of up to 3000 gifts annually • HR is not using leave plan management within the system which is a major pain point for faculties • Position Budgeting is not being used by HR which can help manage the compensation of roles across the organization • The Communications Management module is not used within HR which could help reduce FTE effort (currently .4 FTE time is spent managing contract and probation renewals manually)
On-premise ERP	Moving the ERP system from on-premise to the cloud addresses two issues: Ellucian modules becoming dated from the server-side nature of self-managed upgrades and it reduces server-based workload from IT to Ellucian. This ensures Ellucian modules remain in their most up to date state and IT can re-allocate ~1.6 FTE on server maintenance to other issues, aligning with their cloud-based operational de-risk strategy.

Registrarial Services & Student Affairs

Current state challenges (1/2)



Challenge	Annotation
Unclear points of entry for student services	There is a lack of clarity around roles and accountabilities. Students are being bounced from administrator to administrator so much that Laurentian's student unions devote a lot of energy to helping individual students navigate points of service entry. There has been little recognition of the need to better understand and optimize students' customer journey in seeking administrative services.
Lack of digital dexterity	A lack of digital dexterity in the function has been used to justify continued discrete improvements. Processes are manual, difficult, prone to error and inefficient, and lack the power of modern systems.
Leadership capability gaps	Senior leadership has inadequate capability for strategic planning and has an unclear grasp of the function's mandate, structure and accountabilities. For example, decisions have been made or implemented involving mechanisms for student registration, tuition charges, and external arrangements without proper due diligence and regard to accreditation standards, government directives, operational viability, compliance or contract review.
Outdated channels for service delivery	The call centre receives 14,500 calls annually, only 11,000 of which it answers. Students repeatedly take issue with the call centre's limited hours (10:00–14:00). Installed in 2003, Laurentian's landline equipment is past its end-of-life cycle as of 2020. Additionally, knowledge of its maintenance has been lost with the sudden loss of an IT administrator, so automated phone trees have outdated and incorrect messages (for example, incorrect helpdesk hours). Switching to a cloud-based phone system has been shown to reduce costs to local and international calls by 40% and 90% respectively. Email inquiries for high-volume tasks have been highlighted by student union leaders as significant causes for process breakdown with issues remaining unresolved (for example, addressing student OSAP issues). The Hub alone receives over 7,800 email cases annually, with Student Records reporting upwards of 70,000 email-based issues annually. In-person hours-long line ups at the Hub at the beginning of academic terms have been reported, exacerbated by manual services (45,000 out of 80,000 class registrations are done manually).
Sub-optimal structure	The function has a vertically hierarchical structure with a span of control of 4.9 (the recommended range is between six and ten). This structure restricts information flow and slows down decision-making. Additionally, job titles are not standardized (for example, there are managers without direct reports and associates with direct reports).
Unpredictable fees and awards administration	Due to a lack of integrated processes between the Registrar, Finance and IT for Awards and Fees, students cannot predict when they will receive certain funds or incur certain fees. This places an undue burden on students to ease personal cash flows. Students also incur late penalties when funding on their accounts does not predictably offset fees due.
Student satisfaction is low, potentially resulting in poor retention	According to Maclean's Student Satisfaction Survey (which was conducted prior to the CCAA restructuring), Laurentian is last in the rankings. Dissatisfaction is particularly pronounced as it relates to experiences with staff. The retention of students has been a focus for Laurentian, given exit rates between 13% and 20% over the years.

Registrarial Services & Student Affairs

Current state challenges (2/2)



Challenge	Annotation
Process flows encumbered by bottlenecks, double handling, waiting	In the Registrar's Office there are many manual processes with double entry, like deferrals and enrolments. Staff key in OSAP applications submitted on paper. GPAs are calculated manually.
Service levels dictated by supply rather than demand	The Hub, for instance, has hours-long line-ups at the beginning of term. Higher demand times require better resource allocation.
Service performance data is inconsistently collected, reported, and actioned	For example, student leaders have noted that "Laurentian engages with students and seems to acknowledge necessary improvements, yet often this doesn't result in positive change." For instance, student leadership has advocated for formalized processes in providing teaching assistants, lab assistants, etc. contracts, and honouring those contracts. Consistent feedback, however, is not actioned.

Facilities Services

Current state challenges



Challenge	Annotation
Inefficient structure	Currently Facilities, Ancillary and Safety are separate units, with the Director of Ancillary Services reporting to the AVP of Finance and the Director of Safety reporting directly to the VP Finance and Administration. It is unusual to have a Director of Safety reporting to an AVP, and in some institutions these three units would be combined because of the nature of their mandates and to create more streamlined operations.
Backlog of deferred maintenance	There is a \$135 million backlog of deferred maintenance. This can create structural risks and liabilities for the university. Further, the condition of assets overall is below the provincial average. In addition to risk, this creates more reactive work orders and demands to more frequently repair infrastructure and focus less on preventative maintenance.
New facilities lack proper cost-benefit due diligence	At times, new facilities are proposed and approved that might not be the best value for money. For example, a theatre was proposed to be built that would have low utilization. In the end the AVP of Facilities Services determined that a local theatre could be leased at much lower rates for the proposed use. A similar value for money assessment of the options could have taken place with the decision to create a new campus in Barrie.
Accessibility non-compliance	The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires that institutions comply with the accessibility standards contained in the Act. Currently Laurentian is not compliant with providing accessible facilities to staff, visitors and students.
Low capacity	Currently there is one AVP vacancy and one Director vacancy within Facilities Services. Unfilled leadership positions are creating additional workload at the Director level, which could create operational and compliance risks.
Facilities' footprint exceeds funding allocation	As the campus has increased in size over the last 15 years, operating funding and staffing levels have not kept pace. This could potentially result in service delays and reduced investment in asset repair.
No succession planning	Succession planning is not done within Facilities Services. With upcoming retirements and current gaps, there is a risk that operations could be impacted. Further, currently some leaders are not strategic enough in their focus and might not be suitable for succession into more senior roles.
Paper-based processes are inefficient	Work order processes still involve paper and are not efficient. Work orders are submitted by email and phone and then a paper work order is produced which goes to the trades staff. This reduces the ability to track the status of work orders and keep a digital record of the work completed.
Reporting non-compliance	Reporting on energy efficiency, utilities and sustainability has been falling behind schedule. This could have compliance implications for the university.

General Counsel's Office

Current state challenges



Challenge	Annotation
Provides very little legal support	The General Counsel's Office provides very little legal advice and support to the university's other administrative units. For example, the office does not review significant legal contracts before they're signed by leaders throughout the university. Additionally, it does not educate administrative units on laws relevant to their functions. Instead, the office is primarily focused on being a logistical secretary for the Board (i.e. scheduling, sending out packages, etc.) and engaging in a few other limited functions such as the management of general freedom of information requests.
No compliance function	There is no compliance function within the General Counsel's Office. For instance, corporate registration filings have not been updated for years and are out of date. Legal and compliance risks are notably absent from the Risk Register, despite claims and grievances being high according to Legal Counsel.
Critically poor risk management	Risk management through a risk register is almost non-existent at the university. For what does exist, the General Counsel's Office plays no role. It is not clear how the risk appetite of the university should be applied within functions and whether there is formal training on identifying, evaluating, documenting and managing risk for leadership.
Low capability	This office has been led by individuals without the minimum qualifications and experience required to serve as the General Counsel for an institution of this size.
Risk exposure to accessibility compliance	Accommodation for students with disabilities was noted to be an area where compliance with accommodation support and plans by staff could be improved. Further EDI training has not been undertaken by the University.
Low capacity	There is only one lawyer for the institution and external legal advice is sought regularly. This can contribute significantly to the university's legal costs if not managed appropriately. Furthermore, there is no "back-up" in-house legal support when the university's lawyer is absent. This creates significant risk.

Advancement

Current state challenges



Challenge	Annotation
Inconsistent processes working with faculties	Advancement does not foster relationships with faculties to enable collective or co-ordinated alumni engagement and fundraising. That means if faculties do not conduct their own alumni outreach, they consequently have unengaged alumni and have potentially missed fundraising opportunities. While Advancement has reportedly encouraged colleagues in faculties and the President's office to use the Advancement module of Ellucian, there appears to be a varying degree of system adoption. This leads to inconsistent engagement and/or the potential for too frequent engagement from multiple departments in the university.
Missed opportunities for synergies	External relations and Advancement are separate functions at the university, even though there are clear synergies between the two and the current sizes of each are relatively small compared with other portfolios.
Reputational harm has reduced capacity for fundraising	In addition to the retraction of gifts in reaction to media coverage, future commitments are more difficult to attract. Where five calls were enough to secure a donation in the past, it now takes 15 calls, according to staff.

Research and Planning Management

Current state challenges



Challenge	Annotation
Sub-optimal structure	Research's span of control of 4.5 is below the recommended range of six to ten, restricting information flow and unnecessarily siloing decision-making. Additionally, the current structure with a manager and staff reporting directly to a VP leads to administrative tasks being handled at a senior level.
Poor integrating structures delay inter-function processes	Handoffs to other units/departments lead to significant delays in processes, most notably in fees and awards (student stipends) and research finance.
Difficulty attracting top researchers	Prospective top researchers may be unwilling to risk aligning with the university due to the reputational harm associated with poor financial management of research funds.
Lack of digital dexterity	Support staff are not using the strengths of the Romeo platform fully.
Paper-based processes	Manual paper-based processes that require multiple users are prone to human error, rework and delays.

Appendix C: Additional opportunities to pursue

Rapid change and uncertainty impacts how universities must operate in the future. Laurentian needs more than just administrative change.

FIVE FORCES IN HIGHER EDUCATION



NEW GOVERNMENT EXPECTATIONS: The sector is in a moment of a generational change. The sector can expect several years of uncertainty and a fundamentally different relationship with the Government of Ontario through the use of Strategic Mandate Agreements.



MARKETIZATION OF UNIVERSITIES: The system encourages competition between universities in Canada and internationally. The onus is increasingly on university leaders to be commercially savvy and focused on educational and research standards.



RANKINGS AND METRICS: Success of universities is increasingly driven by publicly available rankings, measurements and other data. This forces universities to make strategic choices about identity, focus and resource investment.



COMPETITION FOR STUDENTS: As tuition fees increase and local enrolment growth slows, student expectations of the quality and style of education increase. Students are now also customers, and failure to deliver an excellent experience can have a lasting impact on the university's reputation.



OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH TECH: Technology offers ways to transform teaching and how services are delivered internally and to students. Innovative universities shape new learning and support experiences and operate more leanly.

There are additional opportunities that will support changes to grow revenue and help contain costs in the longer term.

OPPORTUNITY	CHALLENGE	BENEFITS
<p>Refresh the university's Academic Plan</p>	<p>The current Academic Plan was developed before the CCAA restructuring and the pandemic. Given that the plan directs efforts towards a number of areas which may longer be the top priorities, a refresh should be considered.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligns stakeholders around a renewed vision. • Provides the opportunity to look at the university's strategic position and the potential market opportunities.
<p>Redesign program architecture</p>	<p>Before the restructuring, good practices in prudent program development and setting professor-to-student ratios appear to not have been followed. Good practices set now can help prevent the same challenges from emerging in the future. Current programs must be assessed against enrolment trends. Program architecture must be redesigned to enable enrolment growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligns programs and courses with the renewed strategic position and market opportunities. • Establishes sustainable ratios for students to faculty.
<p>Develop and implement an international student strategy</p>	<p>Enrolment has stagnated over the years and started to decline. Trends across Canada indicate that local enrolment is slowing. International student enrolment is growing faster than local enrolment and can help boost revenue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies evidence-based opportunities to grow international student enrolment. • Establishes a plan to increase enrolment.
<p>Redesign faculty structures</p>	<p>As part of the restructuring, departments and faculties were swiftly consolidated. The structures of the faculties and departments could need standardization. If a new program strategy is introduced, faculties should be aligned to deliver on the academic program. Furthermore, strategic capacity needs to be built in faculties for planning engagement with alumni.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligns structures with new programming. • Establishes more sustainable norms for structures and the number of senior administrators.
<p>Join the UniForum Program</p>	<p>As the financial challenges have increased over the years without any recurring benchmarking to assess performance and cost, management and the Board have not understood Laurentian's performance relative to its peers. If performance is known, better decisions can be made. The UniForum Program offered by Cubane Consulting is a benchmarking tool that enables strategic management of university administration and support services through shared information (see the following pages for further details).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables ongoing assessment of administrative cost and quality. • Allows for comparisons against peers and provides strategic insights on where improvements can be made.

The UniForum Program is a multi-year benchmarking program for universities to help improve administrative performance and manage costs over time.

UniForum program

The UniForum program offered by Cubane Consulting is a benchmarking tool allowing strategic management of university administration and support services through shared information.

Program overview

UniForum members follow common procedures to collect detailed support services data, contributing to a pool of genuinely comparable information. Participants can then measure relative performance, gain clear direction for making better strategic choices and assess long-term implementation success on an always up-to-date, factual basis. These insights enable academic leaders to answer critical questions about how services are resourced and what choices are driving their effectiveness and efficiency outcomes.

Key benefits and outcomes

- understanding of how administrative services are delivered at Laurentian
- understanding of how you 'benchmark' against UniForum benchmarks
- key insights and understanding of the available strategic choices, embedded into your institution
- understanding what matters most to users in improving service delivery

Appendix D: University case studies

University transformation case studies

The following case studies bring insights from select transformation projects that Nous has conducted with universities locally and internationally. Some of the most relevant lessons from these case studies are summarized below. These cases have contributed to elements of the opportunities and recommendations Nous has identified for Laurentian.

These case studies demonstrate the benefits of strong transformation programs. While many of these universities realized savings from their respective transformation programs, it should be noted that Laurentian's operations are less efficient, effective and resourced than many of these universities. Therefore, a transformation program for Laurentian should target bringing Laurentian up to a baseline of operational standards through one-time costs rather than generating annual savings. Minimizing the growth of recurring costs, however, could be targeted once transformation across these seven improvement areas meets the baseline standards of modern universities.



STRATEGY

1

A new strategic plan was established with specific goals that are measurable, achievable, mission-aligned and time-bound.



SERVICE DELIVERY

2

Service delivery was redesigned to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative services.



FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

3

New targets and planning and reporting practices were instilled to improve financial management.



STRUCTURE

4

Organizational restructuring of the administrative functions was delivered to better reflect good practice in reporting lines, accountabilities, span of control and roles.



PROCESSES

5

Processes improvement was delivered to improve customer service and overall administrative effectiveness and efficiency.



TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL PLATFORMS

6

Technology and digital platforms were used to enhance university operations.



CAPABILITY & CAPACITY

7

New capabilities were identified and acquired to support and maintain the operating model changes.

CASE STUDY 1: Program design to transform in the face of unprecedented funding cuts

 STRATEGY

 SERVICE DELIVERY

 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

 STRUCTURE

 PROCESSES

 TECHNOLOGY

 CAPABILITY & CAPACITY

Relevance to this project

An initial strategic review of this U15 Canadian university led to support for an university-wide transformation program. The program focused on streamlining administrative services, redesigning academic and administrative operating models and redesigning services and associated processes to set in place an efficient, effective and financially viable operating model.

WHAT WAS THE OPPORTUNITY?

A U15 Canadian university needed a transformative change program to respond to the challenge of recent significant reductions in government funding. The university needed to scope and design a program of cost efficiency improvements in administrative services and non-labour expenditure in a short, intensive six-week period. Working closely with the Executive, Board of Governors and Faculty Deans, a university-wide change program was recommended. As a result of this review, implementation support was given to ensure transformational goals were achieved.

WHAT WAS THE APPROACH?

Over a six-week period the university carried out a strategic review to respond to the reduction in operating revenue and to identify opportunities across academic structures, administrative design and operations, procurement savings and important changes to the university's use of space and procurement.

From the initial review, the university received support to establish their service transformation program, driving operational and administrative changes, and to establish an academic restructuring working group to reform the academy. The university executive, transformation program teams, central portfolios and faculties worked to:

- determine the right scope and program design to deliver significant cost efficiencies in administrative services
- define the strategic goals and establish the overall transformation timeline and governance arrangements for their service transformation program
- support the university executive to design new portfolio leadership positions and responsibilities and complete portfolio restructures of the Finance and Administration, Research and Innovation, Facilities and Operations, VP Academic, and External Relations portfolios
- examine administrative functions, both centrally and in the faculties, including designing a new administrative services operating model, establishing a university-wide shared services function, and launching a new student services centre.
- redesign roles to shift work from faculties, centres and institutes to central units.
- redesign over 30 services and associated processes, with a focus on achieving economies of scale and specialization, across IT, HR, Finance, Communications and Marketing, Student Services and Research Administration.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

The transformation has put the university on a solid financial footing. The university has achieved over \$70 million in sustainable financial savings and is on target to achieve \$127 million in planned savings by 2023. From this foundation the university is well placed to seize opportunities for growth and reinvestment in its core mission of teaching, research and community service.

CASE STUDY 2: Close partnership on three-year transformation of York University already delivering benefits



STRATEGY



SERVICE DELIVERY



STRUCTURE



PROCESSES



TECHNOLOGY



CAPABILITY & CAPACITY

Relevance to this project

The university embarked on a multi-year transformation journey to scope, design and implement the service changes. Key objectives included changing the service delivery model to establish a university-wide shared services function; continuous improvement in key processes; and increased strategic specialization of functions through organizational redesign.

WHAT WAS THE OPPORTUNITY?

A large Canadian university saw an opportunity to drive major change through a program of process redesign, culture change and operational improvement across integrated services. Over time this will improve key university outcomes including research performance, learning and teaching quality and student experience. This transformation program is expected to act as a catalyst to improve all aspects of university performance.

WHAT WAS THE APPROACH?

The university engaged support with experience designing and implementing large scale transformation projects in the sector and developed a program with several key elements:

- **Leadership commitment:** An executive steering committee is made up of senior university leaders with the capacity to make immediate decisions, oversee the program's work and drive change implementation.
- **Expert program management:** A best practice Program Management Office (PMO) was established to support the program and train university staff to lead improvement projects in the future.
- **Service excellence culture:** A dedicated "culture change" stream of work to develop and embed a culture of service excellence and continuous improvement to sustain improvements beyond the program.
- **Process redesign:** Rolling functional assessments to design and implement simpler, faster and more efficient services in a way that balances consistency across the university with the individual needs of functional areas.
- **Capability building:** Regular opportunities to train staff through formal training and collaborative working practices.
- **Organizational redesign** to restructure the university's workforce around the new service delivery model and streamlined process design. The restructure was supported with a mobility program that retrained and redeployed staff displaced through the restructuring.

The three-year program commenced in 2020. The set-up of the PMO is complete and six streams of work are currently in their final stages. The new year focuses on implementation and support of a new approach to university services alongside the organizational change required to support this approach.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

The program aims to achieve three key outcomes: improved service quality, strengthened service culture, and simpler, more efficient services. These outcomes are regularly measured against a baseline dataset and reported to the executive steering committee and the university's broader faculty staff and students to demonstrate that benefits are being realized..

CASE STUDY 3: Transformation partnership to increase efficiency, productivity and collaboration

 STRATEGY

 SERVICE DELIVERY

 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

 STRUCTURE

 PROCESSES

 TECHNOLOGY

 CAPABILITY & CAPACITY

Relevance to this project

This large Australian university captured \$30 million in savings within the first 12 months of implementation through a university-wide change program including process improvements and governance advice. With the collaborative approach taken, the client's staff built internal change capability.

WHAT WAS THE OPPORTUNITY?

The largest Australian university by student enrolments aimed to develop and deliver a significant change program across its shared services functions. In an increasingly competitive sector, the university needed to improve its efficiency and collaboration to ensure it was well positioned for the future. Working with the Vice-Chancellor and senior leadership team over 18 months, strategic vision and targets were set for a university-wide change program, including organisational capability and change management.

WHAT WAS THE APPROACH?

Working with the university, 10 project teams were established, each tasked with a specific work stream to identify and implement change initiatives such as savings and cost reduction programs. Teams were supported by project and change management guidance, analytical frameworks, business process improvement methods, data analysis and facilitation support. This partnership approach drove high levels of client ownership and staff empowerment, and clear accountability for results. It also built internal change capability amongst executives and their teams.

Ongoing advice was provided to the Vice-Chancellor and his team, including:

- developing an overall business case as well as specific business cases for each proposed change initiative, including changes to the operating model, governance, resource deployment, processes, systems and facilities, based on detailed analysis of potential benefits and costs to implement (once-off and ongoing).
- providing organization design advice.
- building change and performance improvement capability amongst executives and their teams.
- supporting ongoing performance evaluation and measurement.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

The collaborative approach proved successful in driving rapid but sustainable change and creating strong client ownership of recommendations. The university captured over \$30 million in savings within the first 12 months without any industrial disruption or action. These savings have grown year on year. According to the Vice-Chancellor, collaboration and coordination amongst senior executives has noticeably improved. The university is now the most efficient institution that participates in the UniForum benchmarking exercise.

CASE STUDY 4: Review of professional staff ways of working provides improvement opportunities to deliver the university's strategy

STRATEGY

SERVICE DELIVERY

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

STRUCTURE

PROCESSES

CAPABILITY & CAPACITY

Relevance to this project

An in-depth current state analysis identified \$5 million in annual financial savings for this Australian university through process improvements and redesign and streamlining service delivery.

WHAT WAS THE OPPORTUNITY?

A mid-sized Australian university implemented a new strategy, which required more effective working methods for professional staff across the university. The university aimed to understand the current ways of working for professional staff in the faculties and identify opportunities for improvement.

WHAT WAS THE APPROACH?

Over an intensive initial period, the university was provided with:

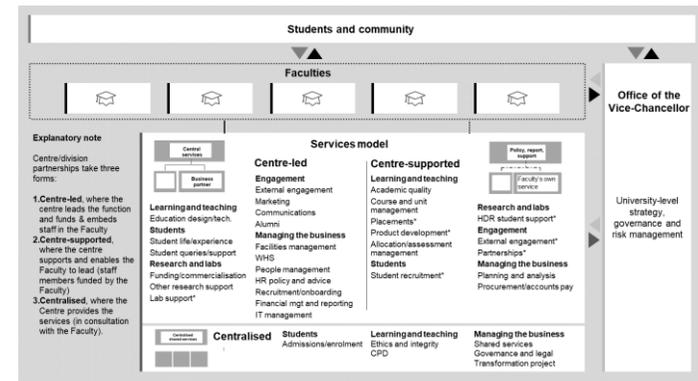
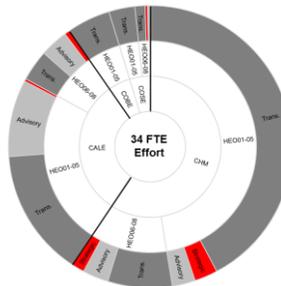
- an in-depth current state analysis that set out the faculties' views of current service performance, an assessment of where staff members were spending their time (activities and transactional/advisory/strategic work) and an analysis of staff spans of control and job families
- twelve clear priorities for the university. Each opportunity set out:
 - current view of service performance, and relevance to university strategy
 - the current staff effort within the faculties (FTE, dollars, classification between transactional, advisory or strategic)
 - a quantification of the potential benefit from the opportunity.
- specific focus areas for each faculty, with a clear link drawn between the faculty's own strategic plan, their current staff effort and view of service performance, and future opportunities.
- an overarching implementation plan and a framework for future ways of working, which the university could use when introducing new ways of working.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

The project identified \$5 million per year cost savings across a staff base of 300 through more effective ways of working, which could then be invested in future strategic activities. The university is currently being supported to implement the new operating model with a mandate to reduce costs while focusing on maintaining the university's excellent service standards.

EXAMPLE OUTPUTS: ANALYSIS AND OPERATING MODEL

FTE effort spent on strategic, transactional and advisory activities for each faculty



CASE STUDY 5: A new strategy, financial improvement plan and detailed transformation plan for a challenged university in the centre of London

STRATEGY

SERVICE DELIVERY

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

STRUCTURE

PROCESSES

Relevance to this project

This London university improved its financial performance through an organizational transformation plan and strategy for improved teaching, learning and student experience.

WHAT WAS THE OPPORTUNITY?

A central London university faced unprecedented financial struggles. A combination of decision-making and external factors meant the university foresaw falling enrolments and rising costs, putting its longer-term financial sustainability at risk. Other challenges included poor student experience, falling rankings, lack of academic focus and dangerously low staff engagement.

WHAT WAS THE APPROACH?

Working with the Vice-Chancellor and Executive group, a focused strategy and plan for a broader transformation program was developed, including guidance towards financial sustainability. Extensive engagement was facilitated across the university to collect information around staff and student 'pain points' to identify opportunities for improvement. This led to a series of over 20 individually prioritized and funded projects, including redesigning their operating model. The overall transformation is governed by a project executive and is supported by contracted teams working on each of the 20 projects.



Over an intensive 12-week project, the client was provided with:

- a **strategy and financial improvement plan** to define a focused path back to financial sustainability, improved teaching and learning, and improved student experience.
- a **transformation plan** to detail what the organization must do to mobilize the strategy, including business cases for investment and sequencing, governance, and prioritization of projects.

WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

The strategy, financial plan and transformation plan were all approved by the Court of Governors.

In the following years the university realized ongoing cost reductions of 4% of total expenditure per year. Further administrative savings have enabled reinvestment in strategic delivery to realize the university's mission. These have been achieved while seeing an uplift in student satisfaction, as measured by the national student survey.

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About Nous

Nous Group is an international management consultancy operating across Australia and New Zealand, the UK, Ireland and Canada.

For over 20 years we have been partnering with leaders to shape world-class businesses, effective governments and empowered communities.

450

PEOPLE

50

PRINCIPALS

5

COUNTRIES