



3 June 2016



HELPING MOVE OUR COMMUNITY FORWARD

I'm pleased to introduce to the Algoma University community and to its many stakeholders this Five Year Rolling Academic Plan, which lays the groundwork for much productive and hope filled work. I expect it to shape conversations over the next five years and provide guidance on the process the community will engage to make Algoma University an ever greater educational resource for Sault Ste. Marie, the surrounding northern region, and beyond.

The creation of this plan is the result of much collaborative and consultative work by members of the community writ large and small. Members of the faculty, external commentators, and community members have all influenced the direction of this plan. The core work has been done by the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee of Algoma University's Senate, of which this is now the core guiding document on all matters related to AU's academic house. Though guided by the Senate, this becomes truly a shared articulation of aspirations and hope for the future embodied in this institution. It emphasizes from the outset our firm belief that the special mission conferred on this university remains its heart and soul, it reminds us that our reason for existence is found in service to students and the community of which AU is a part, it highlights the need for ongoing rigour in evaluating the mix of programs offered at AU, and this plan rests on the desire to achieve excellence in all that we do.

My sincere thanks goes out to the members of the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee for their dedication to this institution and the effort they have put into the consultative work that undergirds this brief document. Over the course of the past year especially they have followed through with a process to thresh the ideas herein with colleagues resulting in a plan that has been endorsed by the community. I must acknowledge my heartfelt thanks to the entire committee, whose thoughtful and thorough concern to help AU move forward is reflected in this document. I especially wish to thank Ms. Dawn Elmore, who has been a pillar of strength and a shining light in the production of this plan. Her enthusiasm and energy animate this plan, her love and concern for the institution is everywhere present in it.

I came to Algoma University in large part because I see in this institution great hope for the role of higher education in Northern Ontario. I was drawn especially to this place because of its deep roots in the aboriginal community, which lives and breathes in the very walls of the institution. Here I saw a vision and rare opportunity to participate in the transformation of what was a dark chapter of Canadian history into a beacon of light illuminating that darkness. No academic plan can fully capture the intangible spirit that is the ground of our being at AU, but I invite all members of







MIIGWETCH • THANK YOU

this community to join together to make Algoma University a truly thriving source of inspiration, its light visible across this land for all to see.

Let's join together to make this document a truly living document for the sake of our children, for the students, faculty members, and staff who care so deeply about higher education in Sault Ste. Marie. Let's work together on this campus and at our extension sites to bring something fresh and new to the higher education scene in

Ontario, and let's stay grounded in our mission while we do it. In the end, I believe deeply that through thick and thin, if we stay the course, allow ourselves to be guided by these joint aspirations, then the future of Algoma University will be bright indeed.

Warm and friendly regards,

Richard McCutcheon, PhD

Academic Dean, Algoma University

Richard M' Cutcheons

Miigwetch • Thank you

Algoma University is situated on the shores of the St. Mary's River at Bawating, a significant site in the long history of Anishinaabe peoples. The University occupies the site of the former Shingwauk Indian Residential School and works with its partners to transform the negative legacy of the Indian Residential School system into a positive legacy for current and future students. The Academic Plan acknowledges and respects the traditional territory of Anishinaabe peoples on which the campus is located and recognizes the need to work closely with Anishinaabe partners to foster opportunity for all students.

Maanpii sa Algoma University e zhinikaademigak gichi kinoomaagegamigoong, minoganawaabimaawok kina go gewe e bikinoomaagozidjik maanpii, dibi go e binjibaawaagowen go, miinawaa dash gaye go bekish, gichipiitendjigaademigat iwi sa wii ninandogikendjigaademigak iwi sa anishinaabe bimaadiziwin miinawaa newe anishinaabe kinoomaagewinan.

Algoma University embraces the diverse composition of its student population and celebrates its distinctive mission for Anishinaabe education and research.

Indigenous peoples
have the right to the
dignity and diversity
of their cultures,
traditions, histories and
aspirations which shall be
appropriately reflected
in education and public
information.

United Nations
Declaration on the
Rights of
Indigenous Peoples



ACADEMIC FOUNDATIONS

Algoma University was originally established as Algoma University College in 1964. Granted its charter in 2008, Algoma University continues to build on the legacy of high-quality undergraduate education that has been provided to students in Sault Ste. Marie for over 50 years. This Academic Plan is informed by the efforts of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners. It also aligns itself with Algoma University's Research Plan, which was approved by the Algoma University Senate on 2 October 2015.

Over the next five years, Algoma University will build on its core strengths to enhance its reputation as a preferred destination for local, regional, and international students. Algoma's programming will respond to emerging trends in post-secondary education, technology, and the labour market in order to prepare graduates for success in entrepreneurial endeavours, employment in a variety of fields, for graduate school, professional degree programs, advanced certificates, and for all aspects of lifelong learning.

A key tenet of the Academic Plan is its focus on enriching the student learning experience by fostering excellence in undergraduate programs. By pursuing the initiatives described in this Academic Plan, Algoma University will increase its capacity to attract and retain a diverse body of domestic and international students. This plan works within the economic, structural, and demographic challenges of the present time while encouraging Algoma University to be action-oriented and aspirational. It is rooted in community and regional partnerships, and in particular, partnerships with Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association, and regional Anishinaabe organizations.

The Academic Plan is a rolling plan that will be revisited annually by the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee to make recommendations to Senate that maintain the relevance and progressive focus of the plan.

On the following three pages are the pillars of the academic foundation upon which this plan is built - Special Mission, Transformative Learning, and Academic Quality.







SPECIAL MISSION

The academic vision of Algoma University is grounded in the special mission of the institution. The special mission, as defined in Algoma University's Charter, is to:

- a) Be a teaching oriented university that provides programs in liberal art and sciences and professional programs, primarily at the undergraduate level, with a particular focus on the needs of northern Ontario; and
- Cultivate cross-cultural learning between Aboriginal communities and other communities, in keeping with the history of Algoma University and its geographic site.

Algoma University's teaching focus is a core component of the Academic Plan. The Algoma University experience places students in direct and regular contact with faculty members. This connection fosters meaningful student-faculty interaction within and outside the classroom. Research further strengthens the teaching focus of the university, as students in many programs complete a fourth-year thesis project where they conduct original research under the direct supervision of a fulltime faculty member. These self-directed projects develop knowledge and skills that lead to academic and future career success. Algoma University's strong focus on teaching has resulted in what many graduates have termed a 'transformative learning experience'.

The University serves the needs of Northern Ontario by bringing a highly skilled workforce and a global perspective to a Northern Ontario community. By providing accessible post-secondary education to learners in the Algoma region, Algoma plays a vital role in helping to nurture new and emerging sectors in the regional knowledge-based economy. The university seeks to be an active partner in innovative community and regional partnerships to assist northern development.

Algoma University has a particular mission to serve Anishinaabe peoples (First Nation, Métis, and Inuit) of the Algoma district and beyond. The Academic Plan acknowledges and respects the traditional territory of Anishinaabe peoples on which the campus is located, and recognizes the need to work closely with Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig and with Anishinaabe partners to foster opportunities for all students. The Academic Plan acknowledges the need to work through the question of how academic programming reflects and incorporates this special mission. This work is an ongoing part of the overall institutional strategic planning process and represents both a long-term commitment to crosscultural learning and a partial response to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

We at the TRC believe that it will be education, again, that will be the tool that best addresses all of that, for education will create knowledge and from knowledge will come understanding.

The Honourable

Justice

Murray Sinclair



TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

There are many components to a transformative educational experience including what has variously been called experiential learning, service learning, and work-integrated learning. In a series of consultations, we learned students identify hands-on learning opportunities and high levels of faculty-student interaction as positive aspects of their Algoma University experience, while expressing a desire for more opportunities to apply their learning in what they refer to as real-world situations. More than ever, students seek to emerge from their undergraduate experience with a concrete understanding of how their skills, knowledge, and abilities can be applied to

future careers or educational endeavours.

In general, experiential learning theories recognize that learning often occurs as a result of direct experience and the ways in which learners make sense of that experience. As Lewis and Williams indicate in their 1994 article, "Experiential Learning: Past and Present", experiential learning means learning by doing, and includes reflection about the experience that results in new skills, abilities, or ways of thinking. Using this broad definition, experiential learning is a strength of Algoma University as many students are participating in service learning, case competitions, internal research possibilities, and field placements. For example, students studying in the

Education is a human right with an immense power to transform.

On its foundation rest the cornerstones of freedom, democracy and sustaianble human development.

Kofi Annan, former Secretary General,

English as a Second Language Program regularly get out into the community to apply their developing language skills in a real-life setting. Experiential learning as a foundational aspect of a transformative education builds on prior experience and places the learner at the centre of the educational experience.

This Academic Plan seeks to encourage and support the expansion of experiential learning to make it a strong differentiating feature of an Algoma University education. This includes further integration and strengthening of work-integrated learning opportunities across the curriculum, including for-credit co-ops, internships, work placements, and enhanced opportunities for service learning. Today's world demands flexible, innovative, and forward thinking individuals with excellent communication and interpersonal skills.

Algoma University is uniquely positioned to develop these skills as part of a transformative educational experience.







ACADEMIC QUALITY

Academic quality is a way of measuring the long-term sustainability of an academic program. Academic quality is developed and maintained by fostering program excellence through quality assurance processes, teaching excellence, and institutional supports and mechanisms.

Program excellence is informed by provincial quality assurance standards and considers data such as alignment with the special mission, enrolment trends, degree completion rates, student feedback, student-to-faculty ratios, annual reports on program costing, retention rates, and graduate employment rates.

A key component to program excellence is the examination of the student experience to identify how relevant the program is to students. Program excellence also provides a framework for the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee of Senate to identify at-risk programs and allows for timely intervention. A focused consideration of program excellence establishes a reliable mechanism outside of the seven-year cyclical review cycle to allow for timely actions to enhance a program's future success. Program excellence will include consideration of quantitative and qualitative data, be well informed by faculty members and departments, and work within current governance structures with maximum transparency.

This program excellence framework will be approved and regularly reviewed by Senate and used each year by the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee in its program planning activities.

In developing the new Quality Assurance Framework for postsecondary education, Ontario universities have shown significant leadership and a firm commitment to cultivating a culture of quality in education. This new quality assurance process is more streamlined, more effective, more transparent, and more publicly accountable. By bringing Ontario's universities into line with international quality assurance standards, the Framework will also facilitate greater international acceptance of our degrees and improve our graduates' access to university programs and employment worldwide. With the implementation of the Framework, Ontario universities place themselves in the mainstream of quality assurance both nationally and internationally.

> From Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance



ACADEMIC THEMES

Faculty of Humanities

Faculty of Social Sciences

Faculty of Sciences







FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Anishinaabemowin

English

Fine Arts

History

Music

Algoma University students engage in creative learning through a suite of programming in the humanities.

In addition to the programs listed above, courses are also offered in Anishinaabe Studies, Modern Languages, and Philosophy. All programs and courses in the humanities prepare students to be independent thinkers with strong written and verbal communication skills. Students learn by doing, with an emphasis on the production of creative work ranging from printmaking to music performance to creative writing to historical monographs. Students in the humanities learn about the beauty of ambiguity and uncertainty, and graduate with the capacity to participate as active citizens addressing contemporary social issues in an increasingly complex society. Learning occurs in a variety of settings – in the studio, through performance, in the field, outside of the classroom, and as dialogic learning in a classroom setting. Unique programs such as the Bachelor of Arts in Anishinaabemowin support the university's special mission by empowering students to revitalize a language and pass on teachings to future generations.

Special Mission:

- Complete the new program review for a Bachelor of Arts in Anishinaabe Studies.
- Begin program development planning for the four-year Bachelor of Arts (Honours)
 in Anishinaabe Studies, which includes merging Anishinaabemowin with a four-year
 Anishinaabe Studies program.
- Participate in coordinated efforts to develop, prioritize, and enrich pathway initiatives.
- Explore effective extension and distributed learning programs.

Transformative Education:

- Produce an inventory by program of existing experiential and transformative learning opportunities by October 2016.
- Submit a plan for experiential learning enhancement by program that inserts a minimum of one new experiential learning opportunity into each year of the program by November 2016.
- Leverage institutional support structures to enhance opportunities for work-integrated learning through the incorporation of program elements such as structured co-ops, internships, practicums, and field trips.
- Participate in consultations surrounding the increased integration of recruitment, academic
 advising, employment services, and student services into the academic fabric of the
 institution.



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Academic Quality:

- Transform the Bachelor of Arts in French from a degree program to a service program with a focus on improving the relevance and accessibility of French courses to all degree programs.
- Examine the feasibility of a humanities degree and a commercial music degree using the criteria defined in Algoma University's quality assurance processes.
- Investigate the merger of the English and History departments.
- Reduce all minors to 18 credits and, where possible, follow the format of 3-6 credits of required courses followed by a list of courses from which students may choose.
- Where possible, reduce the number of core credits in all undergraduate programs to 54.
- Adopt new standard Senate-approved terminology for minors and specializations based on understanding minors as a secondary program of study outside the discipline and specializations as a major area of study within a discipline.
- Propose interdisciplinary programming that spans departments and faculties.
- Conduct a review of its programs with a view to strengthening interdisciplinarity and academic quality.







FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Business Administration
Community Economic and Social Development
Finance and Economics
Law and Justice
Political Science

Algoma University students engage in the analysis of real life situations by applying theory to practice.

Algoma University prides itself on a range of programs in the social sciences that prepare students for career opportunities and graduate school. In addition to the program areas listed above, courses are also offered in Anthropology. Regardless of discipline, students build creative problem-solving and critical-thinking skills that are increasingly important in a global society. Strong experiential and transformative learning components characterize this Faculty. These transformative experiences include field placements in community organizations, inter-university academic competitions and events, field trips, and international service. Many programs in the Faculty of Social Sciences have strong pathway agreements from community college diploma programs. The degree completion programming at our Timmins and Brampton extension sites have very high completion rates. All programs are led by skilled faculty who are able to highlight interdisciplinary connections through the learning environment.

Special Mission:

Sociology Social Work

- Participate in coordinated efforts to develop, prioritize, and enrich pathway initiatives.
- Explore effective extension and distributed learning programs.
- Explore how the presence of the special mission can be enhanced in programs.

Transformative Education:

- Produce an inventory by program of existing experiential and transformative learning opportunities by October 2016.
- Submit a plan for experiential learning enhancement by program that inserts a minimum of one new experiential learning opportunity into each year of the program by November 2016.
- Participate in consultations surrounding the increased integration of recruitment, academic
 advising, employment services, and student services into the academic fabric of the
 institution.
- Leverage institutional support structures to enhance opportunities for work-integrated learning through the incorporation of program elements such as structured co-ops, internships, and field trips.



FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Academic Quality:

- Determine the parameters for a stand-alone School of Business and a School of Social Work.
- Examine the feasibility of criminal justice and health studies programming using the criteria defined in Algoma University's quality assurance processes.
- Reduce all minors to 18 credits and, where possible, follow the format of 3-6
 credits of required courses followed by a list of courses from which students may
 choose.
- Where possible, reduce the number of core credits in all undergraduate programs to 54.
- Adopt new standard Senate-approved terminology for minors and specializations based on understanding minors as a secondary program of study outside the discipline and specializations as a major area of study within a discipline.
- Propose interdisciplinary programming that spans departments and faculties.
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FACULTY OF SCIENCES

Biology Computer Science Geography Psychology

Algoma University students engage in discovery through research.

Algoma University has strengths in its science-based programming built upon an existing foundation of experiential learning, community partnerships, and undergraduate research opportunities. In addition to the program areas listed above, courses are also offered in Mathematics, Physics, Information Technology, Geology, and Chemistry. The student learning experience includes small class sizes, regular interaction with faculty who possess exceptional research records, and laboratory facilities enriched by partnerships and the diverse natural landscape of the Algoma region. Programs in the Faculty of Sciences have strong fourth year thesis opportunities in which students have produced peer-reviewed publications and presented at national conferences based on their thesis work as part of their undergraduate degree. The strong linkage of research expertise to teaching innovation is a core strength of Algoma University's science programming.

Special Mission:

- Participate in coordinated efforts to develop, prioritize, and enrich pathway initiatives.
- Explore effective extension and distributed learning programs.
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Transformative Education:

- Produce an inventory by program of existing experiential and transformative learning opportunities by October 2016.
- Submit a plan for experiential learning enhancement by program that inserts a minimum of one new experiential learning opportunity into each year of the program by November 2016.
- Participate in consultations surrounding the increased integration of recruitment, academic advising, employment services, and student services into the academic fabric of the institution.
- Leverage institutional support structures to enhance opportunities for work-integrated learning through the incorporation of program elements such as structured co-ops, internships, and field trips.



FACULTY OF SCIENCES

Academic Quality:

- Examine the feasibility of environmental studies and pre-professional programming using the criteria defined in Algoma University's quality assurance processes.
- Transform the Bachelor degrees in Mathematics from a degree program to a service program with a focus on improving the relevance and accessibility of mathematics courses to all degree programs.
- Complete the new program review for a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Environmental Science.
- Reduce all minors to 18 credits and, where possible, follow the format of 3-6
 credits of required courses followed by a list of courses from which students may
 choose.
- Where possible, reduce the number of core credits in all undergraduate programs to 54.
- Adopt new standard Senate-approved terminology for minors and specializations
 based on understanding minors as a secondary program of study outside the
 discipline and specializations as a major area of study within a discipline.
- Propose interdisciplinary programming that spans departments and faculties.
- Conduct a review of its programs with a view to strengthening interdisciplinarity and academic quality.







MOVING FORWARD

Each of the items for follow-up and action requires institutional support and a coordinated approach to academic and overall student engagement. The core of the Academic Plan will require new ways of thinking to support program reform and innovation. Transformative education requires administrative and pedagogical support for faculty and departments. It also implies a much deeper engagement with students. Work-integrated learning, for example, will challenge us to better understand the local and global labour markets into which our students emerge.

Crucially, this Academic Plan implies an underlying notion of institutional integration; in other words, the increased integration of marketing, communications, recruitment, registration, academic advising, student services, and employment services with academic units is a primary goal of this plan. This increased integration has been shown to enhance the overall student experience as it shifts the emphasis from a single student in a classroom setting to a holistic student experience that incorporates academic and personal development. All members of the university community – administration, staff, and faculty – have a shared responsibility to look beyond traditional divisions and work in partnership in ways that create a seamless experience for students. This learner-centred approach recognizes that the academic and co-curricular aspects of the student experience are inextricably intertwined.

This Academic Plan sets an academic vision that articulates the aspirations and hopes for Algoma University in the near future. Graduates of Algoma University face a complex and multifaceted world in which knowledge and skills acquired at university must keep pace with technological change and a dynamic labour market. This Academic Plan lays the foundation for systematic and coordinated efforts across all of Algoma University's program areas.



