



Faculty of Health Sciences

# INTERNATIONAL

Strategic Plan: 2017–2020

## Faculty of Health Sciences International Strategic Plan

### Preamble:

During the winter of 2006, former Dean Jim Weese initiated a number of Faculty-wide task forces that would assist in developing the next (at the time) Faculty Strategic Plan. One of the task forces dealt specifically with “The Best Student Experience” and was mandated to review what the Faculty could do to offer the best experience to our graduate and undergraduate students and how it could be accomplished. The outcome of this particular task force’s extensive review was the identification of three principal themes: Academics, Student Life, and Environment. Under the theme of Academics, the task force provided the following recommendation related to Internationalization: “It is imperative that School and Program curriculums be internationalized in anticipation of an increase in opportunities for international placements, exchanges and/or positions following graduation. This could include courses or course components that:

- Identify how to address global issues (e.g. globalization, refugee experiences, world health issues, etc.),
- Bring more clarity to, and an understanding of how to navigate within the cultural context surrounding the positions, and
- Provide support in acquiring such positions.”

The various task force reports were followed by a Faculty Retreat. Because of the large scope of recommendations made by The Best Student Experience Task Force and the three identified themes, the committee chose one specific recommendation area for each of the three themes and made it the focus of the retreat discussion. Internationalization was identified as the topic for discussion under the theme of Academics with respect to how school and program curricula could be internationalized. A wide variety of suggestions were identified that may be found in Appendix A.

### The FHS International Committee:

Subsequent to the Faculty Retreat in May 2006, and in concert with the emphasis on internationalization in the Western Strategic Plan, FHS made a strong commitment in its own strategic plan to increase the level of activity in the area of international student exchanges/internships at the undergraduate and graduate levels, as well as a commitment to faculty/staff exchanges and international research collaboration. In order to address this strategic initiative, it was announced at the FHS Council meeting on October 24, 2006 that all Schools were invited to submit a nominee to sit on a soon to be created FHS International Committee. This Committee first met in November 2006 and was mandated to oversee existing and new initiatives in the international area. It has been in operation since that date and reports to Faculty Council through the Associate Dean, Academic Programs.

Over the years, the activities of the Committee have included student exchange/internship information and recruitments events, a Faculty-wide event to acknowledge and profile the Faculty’s international activities, School specific initiatives for current and outgoing exchange students (e.g., social outings), the expansion of international student exchange agreements for the Faculty, and the promotion and assessment of FHS Study Abroad Support Fund and FHS Needs-Based Study Abroad Support Fund. When the University began to offer international travel support to students through the Global Opportunities Fund, the Committee stopped the competition for the FHS Study Abroad Support Fund.

### FHS International Initiatives Committee Mission:

The Faculty of Health Sciences’ International Initiatives Committee exists to ensure that the Faculty of Health Sciences provides leadership in the area of existing and emerging international and cross-cultural activities.

## Vision:

FHS will be recognized as a leader across Western's campus in supporting and fostering international and cross-cultural initiatives.

## Current Status of Internationalization in FHS:

- For the year 2015-16, the percentage of FHS undergraduate students studying abroad was 4% (Western average was 6.4%), and for graduate students it was 4.9% (Western average was 13.2%) (see attachment). (While the overall number of graduate students provided with international study abroad experiences may appear low for FHS (4.9 percent across the faculty), variability across Schools is evident. For example, in the last ten years the School of OT enhanced their mission of Internationalization and have surpassed university averages of 13.2 percent. The School of OT provides every student with the opportunity to complete a course or placement abroad. The percentage of students that take part in these offerings and travel abroad typically ranges close to 20%.)
- The most recent statistics indicate that 1.45% of our undergraduate cohort is composed of international students, and 4.01% of our graduate students are international for an average of 1.93% (see attachment).
- At least thirty-two of our faculty members are currently engaged in collaborative research with international partners.
- Historically, we have offered a variety of exchanges, field work, and placement opportunities:
  - *Communication Sciences and Disorders*: Denmark, Peru, and South Africa
  - *Health Studies (coordinated through Western International)*: Australia, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and United Kingdom
  - *Kinesiology*: Australia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, United Kingdom, and Wales
  - *Nursing*: China, Dubai, and Rwanda
  - *Occupational Therapy*: International coursework in Norway, international field placements in Australia, India, Scotland, and South Africa, and Trinidad
  - *Physical Therapy*: International field placements in Australia and South Africa

## FHS International Plan 2017-2020:

As noted in the Western International Action Plan 2014-19, Western's strategic plan, *Achieving Excellence on the World Stage*, clearly articulates the importance of Western's International activities, and supports Western's mission and vision in its own document. In keeping with the Western International Action Plan 2014-19, FHS is developing its own International Plan 2017-2020 based on the following beliefs and assertions:

- FHS recognizes and supports the inherent value in promoting global awareness and citizenship for our students, faculty, and staff
- FHS recognizes and supports the inherent value in promoting cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence
- FHS recognizes that Canada is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, which means that many/most of our graduates will work in a culturally diverse environment
- FHS recognizes the value of international development and research initiatives
- FHS is committed to supporting international initiatives through the allocation of appropriate levels of human and financial resources
- FHS is committed to welcoming and supporting students, faculty, and staff of diverse backgrounds

## Overall Objective of the FHS International Plan:

The overall objective of this plan is to facilitate Western's desire to be a university with an international scope and reputation; and a university known for its global leaders, understanding of cultural diversity at home and abroad, appreciation for global issues, as well as its support for national and international citizenship.

## Strategic Priorities of the Three-Year Plan 2017-20:

The FHS International Plan has used as a resource the components of an International Plan (see figure below) contained in the Western International Strategic Plan 2014-19.



Recognizing that it may not be practical nor desirable in a three-year Faculty Plan to emphasize all components of the aforementioned University plan, the FHS International Committee is proposing that we focus on three components:

- A. Opportunities for International Learning and Study Abroad
- B. International Development
- C. Recruitment of International Students

### A. Opportunities for International Learning and Study Abroad

As noted in the Western International Strategic Plan 2014-19, there are a variety of international learning and study abroad activities that include formal exchange programs, studying abroad on a letter of permission (LOP), Alternative Spring Break, internships, embedded study abroad programs, field schools, research placements, etc. As noted previously, FHS offers a number of international opportunities for our undergraduate and graduate students.

**Objective 1.** Increase the participation of FHS undergraduate students in international experiences.

**Objective 2.** Increase the participation of FHS graduate students in international experiences.

**Actions:**

- Hire a Faculty International Program Coordinator (new contract hire currently being proposed in conjunction with Experiential Learning) to assist in the development and ongoing operation of these initiatives. This individual would be involved in the coordination, preparation, and operation of study abroad activities, as well as exploration of new opportunities for our Faculty.
- Ensure that our promotional and recruitment print and digital materials incorporate information about our FHS international experiences
- Explore new strategic international partnerships to facilitate international internships and study abroad opportunities
- Develop and/or join selective national and international consortiums of universities to share international experience programs
- Incorporate an elective international component (e.g., internship) in the new proposed course-based Master's program
- Use our alumni contacts to facilitate development of international internships and study abroad opportunities
- Engage our alumni in promoting our FHS international initiatives
- Investigate the viability of 2+2-degree programming for our Schools

**Objective 3.** Provide opportunities for our faculty, staff, and students to enhance their international and cross-cultural competence through experiences at home and abroad.

**Actions:**

- Develop a suite of 2-3 courses designed to enhance cultural awareness and competence particularly as it relates to health and health care services that are open to Western undergraduate and graduate students, as well as visitors from abroad - FHS to explore the possibility of making one or more of these courses mandatory for all students in the FHS
- Develop a module/course on Multiculturalism and Health in Canada - topics to include Cultural Awareness and Health, Healthcare for Refugees, Aging in a Foreign Culture, Health in Indigenous Cultures , etc. - offer this module/course as a summer course for foreign students – connect with development of course-based MSc degree - involve the new Global Health hire in SHS in discussion
- Organize a series of workshops and/or panels on cross-cultural learning for faculty, staff, and students – topics may include classroom challenges for international students, moving beyond stereotypes and assumptions, integrating non-Western perspective into teaching, communicating with international students, creating a supportive classroom environment, learning styles in different cultures, understanding classroom behavior, inter-culturally competent teaching
- Encourage and promote faculty, staff, and student participation in Alternative Spring Break
- Develop a FHS “Best Practice” team to be used as a resource for faculty, staff, and students
- Promote the current international partnerships and opportunities to our faculty and staff
- Initiate a FHS International Award that recognizes and acknowledges international involvement amongst our faculty and staff
- Develop an international learning certificate that is open to faculty and staff that includes language development opportunities

## B. International Development

A variety of international development activities currently exist within our Faculty that involve partnerships with other countries. For example, the School of Nursing is involved in a Training, Support and Access Model (TSAM) project to support maternal and child health in Rwanda. Various professional groups will develop sustainable training modules for their areas and training institutions will also be supported by the project.

The Speech Language Pathology (SLP) South Africa Placement Initiative in CSD is another example. SLP students enroll in a semester course that covers social justice in SLP, cultural sensitivity, multicultural practice issues, etc. SLP students and faculty then travel to South Africa to complete a clinical placement in collaboration with local SLPs. The placement includes service delivery by Western students to NPO patients; training is provided to local support workers through in-services. Western faculty provide upgrading of skills to local SLPs and local SLP students as a way of supporting professional development.

**Objective 4.** Continue to explore international development and research opportunities.

### **Actions:**

- Ensure that our promotional and recruitment tools highlight these initiatives
- Engage our student, faculty, and staff alumni as mentors/advisors for international programs, courses, and research initiatives
- Create a FHS Alumni Advisory Group
- Initiate philanthropy and fundraising opportunities at home and abroad
- Enlist the Faculty Experiential Learning/International Coordinator (new contract hire) in exploring new collaborative opportunities (e.g., Global South)

**Objective 5.** The Faculty of Health Sciences International Committee proposes that the University should seek the establishment of a new Tier 2 CRC in International and Cross-Cultural Health.

### **Actions:**

- The focus of this new chair position will be to support Faculty and University initiatives in the area of internationalization and cross-cultural health. It is anticipated that the position would be held by a research scientist with clear potential to become an international leader in the area of the impact of culture on health services delivery and the effectiveness of international interventions to strengthen health care delivery services in emerging economies. The position would be strongly aligned with the Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing and the School of Health Studies, both of which have considerable involvement already with international and cross-cultural health activities. In addition, as the professional health schools are in the process of trying to determine how to best integrate indigenous health care issues into their curricula based on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada committee report, this chair position could also serve to support the integration of the committee's recommendations.
- The Faculty of Health Sciences Strategic Research Plan: Framing our Future (2016-2021) includes two broad signature areas that could be well served by the proposed CRC Tier 2 position. Both the "Social Determinants of Health: Leading Research Aimed at Health Equity and Social Inclusion" and the "Changing Health Services, Systems, and Policy: Leading Research in Transformative Health Care" areas are very well aligned with this position. The core value of "Cultural competence" that was identified in the new Research Plan is clearly a relevant area for support by the chair position. Lastly, the University Strategic Plan identifies Internationalization as one of its major priorities to help it with its overall objective of "Achieving Excellence on the World Stage". A new CRC Tier 2 in International and Cross-Cultural Health could directly help the university take on this important objective.

### C. Recruitment of International Students

We acknowledge the challenges and concerns associated with the recruitment and support of international students. There is a strong belief that international students lack interest in our undergraduate program offerings when compared to other programs across campus, such as Engineering, Business, and Medical Sciences (confirmed by Western International that these programs receive the greatest number of students). Notwithstanding these challenges, we acknowledge that we can and should increase and diversify our student body.

**Objective 6.** Increase and diversify the FHS international undergraduate student body through innovative and creative initiatives.

**Actions:**

- FHS Student Council to consider, through fundraising initiatives, to support a number of international students coming from impoverished countries, students who otherwise would not have an opportunity to be educated at Western
- FHS to develop a comprehensive recruitment plan to bring students to campus from “have” and “have not” countries
- FHS to develop a comprehensive recruitment and admission strategy to bring students from Ontario with diverse cultural backgrounds and SES levels
- Offer an undergraduate Summer School pan-Faculty Introduction to Global Health course (or program) for both Western and international students. This course (or program) would be delivered by our current instructors. Instructors would receive workload credit.
- Enlist the Faculty Experiential Learning/International Coordinator (new contract hire) in servicing the needs of our international students while on campus.

**Objective 7.** Increase and diversify the FHS international graduate student body through innovative and creative initiatives.

**Actions:**

- Develop a strategic international graduate student recruitment plan that focuses on countries that have the financial capacity (i.e., scholarship support) for graduate student mobility
- Develop an elective international component in the new course-based Master’s program that could serve as a recruitment tool for international students
- PT, OT, and CSD to set aside two designated spots for international students
- Enlist the Faculty Experiential Learning/International Coordinator (new contract hire) in servicing the needs of these international students while on campus

## Appendix A

### The Best Student Experience Task Force - Faculty Retreat Feedback 2006

#### Academics Theme

International technology-enhanced classrooms (via research collaborations) e.g., OT grade course

- Student exchanges (undergraduate levels) e.g., Kin exchange of students, faculty and teams
- International placements in OT, PT, & CSD – likely many administrative barriers, e.g., accommodations for foreign placements
- Tie research and student projects together internationally, e.g., Centre for Activity and Aging, Centre for Olympic Studies
- Business School presents a model
- Facilitate student involvement in conferences
- Community-based rehabilitation
- Expand internship and exchange program opportunities
- Hire someone to identify a plan for assessing our placement needs and opportunities for each school
- Look at offering innovative internship opportunities, e.g., Vancouver 2010
- Once these programs exist, offer language courses to facilitate success abroad. Also make language prerequisite courses for students coming to Western
- Look into exchange programs within Canada and US or offer a course or courses that supplement an area that we may not offer, e.g., ergonomics at Waterloo
- Bursary or Scholarship for an international student. Attached to this would be a requirement to present information about their university and program.
- Grad courses – videoconference invited with international partner programs: address cross-cultural issues
- Exchanges – faculty, students, sport teams; student immersion programs (exchange where students enroll in international programs)
- International placements (clinical) – housing issues (housing accommodations through campus housing – residences?). Need dedicated affordable housing that is flexible enough to accommodate placement timing.
- Issues/topics that are globally/internationally relevant (e.g., aging) – identify key topics and building courses that include international perspective and invited/visiting faculty
- Opportunities and financial support for students to participate in international conferences
- Look at models developed/used in Business School – have courses offered simultaneously by several partner universities; students participate “electronically” invited via web—requires technology and international partners.
- Pursue sponsors for international student opportunities (to cover costs)
- Canadian organizations (accredited bodies) for PT, OT, CSD, Nursing – work with them to develop opportunities
- At this time it is very difficult to have Nursing as an exchange because the nursing regulations between countries is very different
- Would need to start with the professional organizations/CNO RNAO
- Stronger links with the International Studies Office
- Training the trainers e.g., Russia/Rwanda
- Look to other universities to see what they do or have developed
- Graduate students could go to teach/develop a course – as part of their program; develop a bursary to support costs



- Lack of clinical placement sites makes it difficult to allow in other students
- Could start with one country and develop ties, e.g., Australia
- International health course
- Dedicated undergraduate/graduate streams
- Stream in international health to prepare the grad student to be effective
- Could be in lieu of a thesis and make it a presentation
- Could start in the undergrad program and progress through the grad program
- Kin does have exchange programs but students are confused where to find the info
- Need central area on website where students can find the info
- Clinical practice program – establish some here e.g., CRC
- Attracting international students\*
- Funding exchanges\* \*best practice review
- Understand how other programs do this (U of T, Dal)
- Look at past graduates—location
- Active task force in FHS to spearhead initiatives, exchanges
- Videoconferencing for negotiation of arrangements
- FHS plan for funding
- WebCT international courses on topics or international issues
- FHS-wide courses related to international issues
- Reconcile with FHS Interprofessional Initiatives – how do we do both with limited resources
- Barriers with professional curricula not being at same level internationally
- Courses that address globalization, culture
- Financial support for students on international placements
- Support for faculty that create international placements/international research liaisons
- Support for students to go to international conferences