

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY
**STUDENTS'
UNION**

A stylized hawk logo in purple, positioned to the right of the word 'UNION'. The hawk is depicted in profile, facing right, with its wings spread and tail feathers visible. The logo is integrated with the text, appearing to emerge from the end of the word 'UNION'.

Strategic Plan
2020-2025

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Students' Union Board of Directors

2019-2020

Owen Bourrie, Chair of the Board and Chief Governance Officer

Muhammad Sameed Hussain, Vice-Chair of the Board

Osman Alwi, Director of the Board

Feisal Borjas, Director of the Board

Karneet Chahal, Director of the Board

Andrew Dang, Director of the Board

Thomas Hamilton, Director of the Board

Stephanie Higgs, Director of the Board

Devyn Kelly, Director of the Board

Julia Pereira, Director of the Board

Akshat Shah, Director of the Board

Ty Thomas, Director of the Board

Students' Union Board of Directors

2020-2021

Muhammad Sameed Hussain, Chair of the Board and Chief Governance Officer

Andrew Dang, Vice-Chair of the Board

Osman Alwi, Director of the Board

Ezra Ceniti, Director of the Board

Justin Doolittle, Director of the Board

Christy Francis, Director of the Board

Kayla Han, Director of the Board

Ibrahim Musa, Director of the Board

Lauren Rutherford, Director of the Board

Akshat Shah, Director of the Board

Shane Symington, Director of the Board

Ty Thomas, Director of the Board

Students' Union Strategic Plan Committee

2019-2020

Owen Bourrie, Chair of the Board and Chief Governance Officer (Committee Chair)

Karneet Chahal, Director of the Board

Phil Champagne, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer

Twan Dieker, Vice-President: Programming and Services Waterloo

Zemar Hakim, President and Chief Executive Officer

Muhammad Sameed Hussain, Vice-Chair of the Board

Shannon Leest, Vice-President: Finance and Administration

Ian Muller, Director, Policy Research and Advocacy

Julia Pereira, Director of the Board

Ty Thomas, Director of the Board

Chris Turner, Director, Finance and Administration

Jason Verhoeve, Director, Student Experience

The Ends of the Students' Union

The Students' Union uses the Policy Governance system to define its strategic priorities and establish standards for transparency and accountability. The ultimate purpose of the Students' Union is defined in the Ends policy, a central component of the Policy Governance Model.

The Ends of the Students Union:

The Organization exists to represent, advocate for, and support the primary stakeholders, the students of Wilfrid Laurier University, and to provide them with a holistic university experience and an enhanced student life. The costs of these benefits will be justified by the results.

- In no specific order of priority, students will benefit from:
- An affordable, accessible, and high quality academic experience.
- A safe, sustainable, and empowering environment.
- Diverse and inclusive social interaction.
- Products and services that cater to the financial needs of students.

The Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles, and goals of this strategic plan are intended to further specify and articulate the priorities established in the Ends.

Mission, Vision, Guiding Principles

Mission: Providing the best student experience to our members.

Vision: Members are empowered to achieve.

Guiding Principles:

The Students' Union shall be **Student-Driven** in everything we do. Our activities, efforts, and outputs are driven by the vision and guidance of our students in order to enhance the undergraduate experience.

The Students' Union shall **Provide Opportunities** for holistic growth and personal development to all members. Our members will benefit from access to our wide variety of elected, volunteer, and paid opportunities.

The Students' Union shall be **Accountable** to our student members. We believe that all students have the right to know how their student fees are used, and be confident in the financial management of the organization. Furthermore, we will be responsible for our actions and will look to explain, clarify or justify all decisions that we make.

The Students' Union shall be a **Community-Focused** organization. We will strive to promote and foster a culture of inclusivity, and advocate for a safe, sustainable, and empowering environment within the greater Laurier multi-campus community. We will remain cognizant of our unique Laurier culture and make decisions accordingly.

The Students' Union shall be **Adaptable** to change. The organization will react to all emerging trends within the post-secondary environment and advocate for an affordable, accessible, and high quality academic experience. We will prioritize ongoing and comprehensive outreach within our membership to understand the evolving needs of undergraduate students.

The Students' Union strives to be **Approachable and Accessible** to all Laurier students. We will work to eliminate systemic barriers that prevent members from considering volunteer and paid positions. The organization will constantly work to assess and improve the quality of services and programs provided to students.

As a collaborative partner in the development of Laurier's **Statement on Freedom of Expression**, the Students' Union believes that freedom of thought, association, and expression are fundamental principles of an open, fair, and

inclusive campus, and are core to the discovery, critical assessment, and effective dissemination of knowledge. We recognize our collective responsibility as members of the Laurier community to build, maintain, and continuously protect an inclusive and respectful institutional culture that champions free expression in the pursuit of knowledge.

Areas of Strategic Focus

Based on both general and targeted feedback from our undergraduate student members, and discussions amongst volunteers, staff, and the Board of Directors, we have identified four areas of strategic focus:

- 1. Engagement and Volunteerism**
- 2. Communication and Outreach**
- 3. Financial Accountability**
- 4. Advocacy and Representation**

Each thematic emphasis contains a series of goals that represent either current projects, initiatives in development, or bold visioning. This strategic plan is not an inventory of Students' Union activity, it is a partial set of coordinates directing us to a future destination. Throughout the course of this strategic plan we will seek to surpass our goals and embrace further challenges.

1. Engagement and Volunteerism

Students are the membership, ownership, customer base, and driving force behind the Students' Union, and it is vital that the organization provide them with the best possible experience. The Students' Union must strive to engage all students, whether through experiences or opportunities in paid or volunteer roles.

GOAL: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

In order to properly represent, advocate for, and support the undergraduate students of Wilfrid Laurier University, the Students' Union must maintain a high level of operational excellence. Whether through a student's very first interaction, a seasoned volunteer's newest role, or an employee's ongoing experience, we aspire to high levels of professionalism and customer service.

The Students' Union Competency Model

In both paid and volunteer roles, the Students' Union is implementing a comprehensive competency model to establish key skills outcomes and evaluate performance on an ongoing basis. Competency goals are:

- **Results Driven** and include functional knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, technological ability, and creativity and innovation;
- **Performance Management**, which includes leadership, adaptability and resiliency, collaboration and teamwork, and professional attributes;
- And, **Build Relationships** through self-awareness, diversity and intercultural understanding, and communication.

Professional Development and Training

The Students' Union commits to rigorous role training and facilitating access to a range of professional development and training opportunities.

- Transition for the incoming Student Executive team is organizationally-led, leveraging the expertise of the full-time staff to facilitate a meaningful transfer of knowledge and begin a yearlong program of professional development.
- Volunteer and staff position are provided the opportunities to participate in role-specific and goal oriented training and professional development throughout their tenure with the Students' Union.

Customer Service

The Students' Union is committed to serving all undergraduate students at Wilfrid Laurier University with humility, respect, inclusivity, and intentionality. Our customer service priorities include:

- A focus on input demonstrated by our online Customer Service Feedback forms that direct individual inquiries to the Student Union staff member best situated to provide prompt and informed answers.
- Our U-Desk operations provide in-person support for the health and dental plan, the tech-share program, a variety of other service offerings, and also facilitates ticket sales.
- Our Hospitality Services department is committed to providing diverse food offerings and facilitating event operations that enable a safe environment for socializing, while also providing employment opportunities for undergraduate students.
- A commitment from the Board of Directors to continually seek input and opinions from undergraduate students so that our organizational goals remain consistent with the needs of the membership.

Business Operations

Gathering as a community and building relationships is a significant aspect of the undergraduate experience. We are committed to pairing excellent food and beverage service with innovative programming on both campuses. The Students' Union will:

- Continue to offer a fully comprehensive food & beverage portfolio for both take-out and dine-in meal options at Wilf's on the Waterloo campus.
- Enhance the multifaceted use of our facilities on all campuses, balancing the consistent need for valuable student study spaces with the multi-use potential for event operations.
- Commit to pursuing the food and beverage portfolio on the Brantford campus beyond Golden Grounds, and explore the much desired "Wilf's experience" in a manner specific to that unique community.
- Continue to optimize a positive customer service approach through the operation of the U-Desk, tailoring services and business hours that match the needs of undergraduate students.

GOAL: ENHANCING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Volunteer Recruitment

Volunteers are the backbone of the Students' Union. On an annual basis, the Students' Union hires over a thousand volunteers across both the Brantford and Waterloo campuses. We do recognize, however, that the growing financial

burden of post-secondary puts a strain on the capacity of undergraduate students to set time aside for volunteering. The need for part-time or even full-time work in addition to academic commitments is more common than ever. In order to enhance the perceived value of volunteerism, the Students' Union strives to provide meaningful and professionally relevant volunteer opportunities.

- The Students' Union is committed to identifying the financial and social barriers that prevent undergraduate students from volunteering, and working to eliminate those obstacles.
 - This includes ensuring that equity, diversity, inclusion, and accountability are embedded within our recruitment philosophy.
- With the expansion of the Students' Union Competency Model, key volunteer roles will be structured to build and develop specific job ready skills while facilitating experiential learning.
- Attracting volunteers includes accurately communicating the value of the volunteer experience, and succinctly identifying the transferable and employable skills that will be gained.

Volunteer Retention

For the same reasons that recruitment is a priority, volunteer retention similarly depends on undergraduate students understanding the continued significance and value of their participation.

- The Students' Union will continue to explore methods of recognition beyond the Laurier Experience Record that communicate the skills and competencies of our volunteers to future employers and professional networks.
- Specific retention strategies need to be targeted to upper year students, where we quite often see a drop-off in engagement and participation.

Volunteer Appreciation

The Students' Union is committed to recognizing the incredibly valuable contribution of all of our volunteers.

- Through innovative recognition initiatives, we seek to demonstrate our appreciation and highlight the excellent work of our volunteers.

GOAL: PRIORITIZE MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS

Clubs & Associations

The Students' Union supports opportunities, resources, and financial funding for clubs and associations. An integral part of Wilfrid Laurier University's renowned student experience, clubs and associations provide distinct leadership

opportunities and foster friendships that promote a sense of belonging on campus.

- Clubs and associations provide a unique opportunity to explore the connection between academics and extracurricular interests, support personal interests, and promote professional development.
- Active student clubs include those focused on academics, charitable pursuits, culture, entrepreneurship, mental health, music, politics, personal faith, and social justice.
- Vital to a well-rounded university experience, clubs and associations facilitate fun, inclusive, and engaging student-driven activities, while also providing leadership intensive experiential learning opportunities that support career development and networking.

Programming

The Students' Union is committed to supporting diverse and inclusive social interaction.

- Campus-wide community events and programming for undergraduate students prioritizes an enhanced student experience at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Orientation Week

Orientation Week is a critical initial point of contact for undergraduate students to learn about the programming and services of the Students' Union. In conjunction with our university partners, this flagship program acclimates incoming undergraduate students to their new campus communities. The Students' Union will continue to prioritize Orientation Week as an opportunity to:

- Offer innovative programming that balances academic requirements and social interests.
- Introduce undergraduate students to our wide variety of opportunities and campus support services.
- Tailor orientation events to incoming undergraduate students.
- As part of an ongoing emphasis on facilitating the transition to post-secondary education, year-long targeted programming will be directed at mature and transfer undergraduate students.

Services

The Students' Union seeks to supplement institutionally-provided programs and fill identified service gaps with initiatives that build safe and affirming campus

communities. As a student-driven organization, we aim to continually adapt our services as the needs of undergraduate students evolve.

- Recognizing that many undergraduate students deal with food insecurity, we are committed to supporting this critical need on campus with a variety of services and programming.
- To ensure the physical safety of our learning communities, our emergency and student safety programs are designed to adapt to the needs of each Laurier campus and provide tangible opportunities for undergraduates to uphold the wellbeing of their peers.
- Our commitment to the off-campus wellbeing of undergraduate students informs our consultation services for landlord-tenant issues.
- To supplement the guidance provided by the University, the Students' Union remains a resource for those individuals navigating academic appeals, misconduct allegations, or other institutional processes.

2. Communication and Outreach

The Students' Union is committed to a multifaceted marketing and communications strategy that emphasizes the full extent of our organizational value. Our engagement is student-driven and designed to reach as many undergraduate students as possible. Whether through advertising programming and services or soliciting feedback, the Students' Union will continually utilize the communications platforms best situated to capture the attention of undergraduate students.

GOAL: ENSURE EVERY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT KNOWS WHAT THE STUDENTS' UNION DOES

Targeted Marketing Campaigns

Historically, the Students' Union has struggled to communicate the full extent of our services, programming, and initiatives to a majority of undergraduate students. Annual marketing campaigns are purposefully designed with a blunt message to inform undergraduate students in a straightforward manner.

- The current #SUDOESTHAT campaign emphasizes Students' Union ownership of services and entities that previously operated with more independent and decentralized branding.
 - The #SUDOESTHAT marketing imagery will continue to be a central emphasis as we communicate our value to undergraduate students.
 - The #SUDOESTHAT ethos will be adopted for use in Students' Union alumni relations and charitable initiatives as part of this comprehensive strategy.

GOAL: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH STRATEGIES

Student-Driven

The Students' Union marketing and communications efforts must be designed to reach undergraduate students with relevance and impact. This will involve intentionally reaching out to students in the digital spaces and social media platforms that they frequent, and emphasizing the student voice with peer-to-peer messaging.

- The use of Marketing Associates, a dedicated role that allows for current feedback on effective strategies and leverages the technical skills necessary for emergent cultural mediums and social media platforms, including video content.
- The Marketing and Communications Department will continue to explore new ways to reach the undergraduate student population.
- Utilizing the student voice to inform undergraduate students about specific initiatives using social media “take-over” campaigns and other cross-promotional techniques.

Data-Driven

As our most effective communications tool continue to be digital in nature, we have the ability to evaluate analytics and adapt our strategy accordingly.

- The Marketing and Communications Annual Plan will reflect insights and strategies informed by the collection of data.
- The Students' Union will routinely evaluate the usage and engagement with our email communications and social media platforms to define when and how to target our messaging.
- As new technological preferences emerge and social media preferences evolve, we will remain agile in utilize the platforms that best resonate with undergraduate students.
- The Students' Union will continue to use a variety of digital tools, including customer service feedback forms, to monitor and evaluate real-time data.
- Data analysis will be used to determine underserved student communities and gaps in service.

Personal Outreach

While digital tools and social media platforms evolve, we know that what truly enriches the Laurier student experience is community building and personal relationships. Connecting with each other is incredibly valuable, and we rely on our vast network of committees, clubs, and other service groups to facilitate connections with each other.

- We recognize the value of soliciting feedback in person, and using our various networks to increase engagement with the Students' Union.
- Formalized outreach committees, and the Board of Directors' Ownership Linkage Committee are critical groups for connecting with undergraduate students to facilitate feedback and encourage participation.

- We will ensure the distribution of accurate information to undergraduate students through accessible content on www.yourstudentsunion.com, and by maintaining consistency with core service and emergent University messaging.
- Targeted study is needed to understand why certain undergraduate students choose not to engage, and which barriers may be eliminated to encourage more involvement.
 - We acknowledge that in the past those barriers have included financial concerns, experiences of racism on campus, cultural insensitivity, and a lack of organizational diversity.

3. Financial Accountability

The Students' Union strives to become completely transparent with every dollar of student money that is used in its operations.

GOAL: TRANSPARENT AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

High-level Financial Oversight

The Students' Union uses a Policy Governance system which includes rigorous standards of financial transparency and accountability. This governance model requires continual fiscal monitoring by a Board of Directors elected by undergraduate students.

- Disclosure of any budgeted expenses in excess of \$10,000
- Detailed financial controls on responsible purchasing through the use of policy and procedures
- Annual review of audited financial statements
- The Board of Directors is responsible for approving the annual operating budget.

Day-to-Day Financial Oversight

The ongoing financial operations of the Students' Union rely on a series of policies, procedures, and approvals directed by budget leaders and the professional staff of our Finance and Administration department. Important practices include:

- Budget tracking
- Expense reconciliations
- Multiple signatory approvals
- Operational policy oversight

Long-Term Financial Stability

In all budget and business operations planning the Students' Union is committed to improving the financial health of the organization. Important considerations include:

- Continuing a diligent plan to repay and eliminate the Students' Union debt holdings, and develop a financial strategy for newly available operational funding.
- Maintaining prudent and constant cash flows, with very little or no need to utilize the operational line of credit.
- Continue to budget based on actuals and evidence-based projections to avoid overextending the organization.

4. Advocacy and Representation

The Students' Union is the primary representative and advocate for Wilfrid Laurier University undergraduate students. We are committed to evidence-based advocacy and constructive stakeholder relations with our University partners, the broader community, and all three levels of government. Our representation of undergraduate students is focused on the pursuit of an accessible, affordable, and quality post-secondary education in Ontario.

GOAL: PURPOSEFUL REPRESENTATION

Undergraduate Student Representation

As established in the operating procedures agreement with Wilfrid Laurier University, the Students' Union is the official representative of all undergraduate students. Through the leadership of the President and Chief Executive Officer, the Students' Union Student Executive bring the undergraduate student perspective to:

- University-led committees, including but not limited to:
 - Committee on Non-Tuition Fee Assessment
 - Food Services Management
 - ICT Teaching and Learning Committee
 - Student Affairs Advisory Committee
 - Library Council
- University-led hiring panels.
- Third-party community and municipal organizations, such as the Town & Gown Association.

GOAL: PROACTIVE STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

University Affairs Department

The Students' Union University Affairs Department coordinates a sustained advocacy agenda and stakeholder relations initiatives. We are dedicated to promoting an accessible and affordable postsecondary education institutionally, in the community, and to all three levels of government.

- Municipally, the Students' Union maintain strong connections with representatives from the City of Brantford and City of Waterloo.

- As Wilfrid Laurier University continues to evolve the Milton site, the University Affairs department will increase its stakeholder relations presence in that city.
- Provincially, the Students' Union maintains a membership with **the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance**, and coordinates much of our advocacy to the Government of Ontario through this partnership.
- Federally, the Students' Union meets routinely with local Members of Parliament, and when pertinent issues necessitate increased advocacy efforts, the University Affairs department will travel to Ottawa for more intensive stakeholder relations consultations.
- Our annual **Local Advocacy Weeks** on both campuses provide an opportunity to reiterate the Students' Union's priorities, and affords volunteers a stakeholder relations experiential learning opportunity.
- The Students' Union is also committed to supporting a variety of student-led advocacy efforts developed either individually or with the assistance of other campus partners.

GOAL: INTENTIONAL ADVOCACY

Advocacy Priorities

The Students' Union concentrates on evidence-based policy proposals that enhance undergraduate student life and strive for a safe, sustainable, affordable, accessible, and high quality academic experience. The Students' Advocates for:

- Campus safety, including the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Student mental health and wellness
- Needs-based financial aid, financial literacy, and the expansion of the Ontario Student Assistance Plan.
- Safe and affordable student housing
- Food insecurity
- A non-tuition fee framework that recognizes student organization autonomy.
- Increased accessibility to open educational resources.
- Opportunities for all students to have an experiential learning opportunity during the course of their degree.
- Pedagogical excellence in academic delivery
- Greater federal-provincial-institutional partnerships concerning deferred maintenance and capital expansion on campus to ensure a proactive

approach to campus space becomes standard operating procedure across the country.