

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO  
McMASTER UNIVERSITY'S BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
MARCH 4, 2021**

**McMaster Vision Statement and Strategic Plan**

As Board Members will have seen, we recently launched the new vision statement for McMaster:

**Impact, Ambition and Transformation through Excellence, Inclusion and Community:  
Advancing Human and Societal Health and Well-being**

Following many months of consultations, discussions, and the *Shape the Future* social media campaign, the new vision statement is intended to capture both the depth of our collective aspirations and desire for impact, as well as our commitment to inclusive excellence and serving the global community in all that we do. In referencing the current positioning statement, the vision statement links McMaster's historical and continuing strengths and commitments with our intentions and goals for the future.

The consultation process highlighted the commitment of members of our University to making a positive and transformative impact on the world, focusing on excellence in everything we do, developing the diverse partnerships and collaborations needed to support our scholars and ensure that we are well positioned to tackle the major local and global issues we face, and building a clear sense of community and belonging for everyone. As I said in the letter which accompanied the launch of the vision statement, despite the challenging times in which we all find ourselves, I am extremely optimistic about our University and all that we can achieve together. I look forward to bringing this vision to life and increasing our positive impact locally and globally. To support and underpin this I am currently working with the senior team to finalize our strategic plan, which will focus our collective efforts around five key priorities:

- **Inclusive Excellence** – aspire to embed an inclusive approach that intentionally engages and respects a diversity of peoples, perspectives, and ways of knowing, in everything we do.
- **Learning and Teaching** – further advance and support innovation in learning and teaching, within and beyond the classroom, and across disciplines and Faculties, to elevate teaching as a professional discipline, and equip our students with the knowledge and skills needed to make a transformative impact on our world.
- **Research and Scholarship** – maintain and advance our global leadership and impact across all disciplines and Faculties, working collaboratively across disciplines and borders to develop knowledge, tackle global issues, and advance human understanding.
- **Engaging Local, National, Indigenous, and Global Communities** – further develop and expand our network of longstanding and respectful partnerships with communities, partners, research collaborators, and supporters for the benefit of all.

- **Operational Excellence** – enable the administrative operations of the University to most effectively support the institutional vision and aspirations of our community of researchers, scholars, teachers, and learners.

These priorities are based on the seven priorities I shared with the Board at the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year and comprise the foundational elements of McMaster’s strategic plan, with each priority becoming a strategic goal. The strategic plan is intended to bring together these goals and objectives, with associated activities and metrics. The Board Executive and Governance Committee recently reviewed a draft version of the strategic plan, with the final version to be brought forward to the entire Board for review.

### **Planning for the Future**

As Board Members may have seen, the University recently announced that undergraduate academic activities will be hosted remotely for the 2021 Spring/Summer and Intersession terms, with just a few exceptions for courses where students need access to specialized equipment. A decision has not yet been made about the Fall 2021 term but the University administration is engaged in working through the scenarios and issues, with a view to making a well-informed and thoughtful announcement as soon as we are able to.

Our Provost, Susan Tighe, is leading a cross-campus group, known as the *Return to McMaster* group, consisting of representation from across the campus, to guide this. The evidence-based planning process is being supported by the expertise of leading McMaster researchers, as well as Public Health, and will take account of lessons learned from the previous months of both remote and on-campus activities. The goal is to develop scenarios that will consider ways to allow as much activity on campus as possible in September. In addition to an **Oversight Committee** comprising senior academic and administrative leaders from across University departments and Faculties, the *Return to McMaster* group includes a **COVID-19 Expert Advisory Committee** made up of McMaster researchers with expertise in the areas of vaccine development and distribution, testing, and the spread of infectious diseases, an **Employee Experience Working Committee**, a **Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Working Committee**, and a **Research and Innovation Working Committee**.

Each committee will be guided by the health, safety and well-being of both our University community and our neighbours in the broader Hamilton area. We will continue to provide updates to the campus community throughout the planning process and will share more details as the scenarios are developed.

### **Inclusive Excellence**

At our last Board meeting I highlighted the launch of the University’s Strategic Equity and Excellence Recruitment and Retention (STEERR) program, which is a key priority within McMaster’s EDI Strategy and Action Plan. As part of this, a cohort hiring initiative that will see the appointment of up to 12 emerging and established Black academics and scholars across all six Faculties, is well underway. In addition, the University has recently been able to complete the hiring of three outstanding Indigenous scholars, as part of our ongoing focus on Indigenous education and research guided by the University’s Indigenous Education Council.

Alongside this program of faculty hiring, several Faculties have introduced new scholarships and bursaries to increase the opportunities for Black students, increase diversity, and help address accessibility barriers:

- The Department of Sociology has recently announced the Daniel G. Hill scholarship as part of a wide-ranging effort to increase diversity within the Department, and to provide support for equity-seeking groups after enrolment. The first recipient of the \$5,000 scholarship, available to students enrolled in a graduate program who self-identify as Black, will be announced this spring.
- The Departments of History and Communication Studies & Multimedia have created bursaries for up to \$2,500 per year that can be distributed among one or more Black students based on financial need, as part of broader strategies to better support equity and diversity.
- The Faculty of Engineering has partnered with five other Ontario universities to release new fellowships to expand the pathways for Indigenous and Black students pursuing doctoral degrees in Engineering. The Indigenous and Black Engineering and Technology (IBET) Momentum Fellowships aim to address the urgent need to encourage and support the pursuit of graduate studies by underrepresented groups. Recipients of the IBET Momentum Fellowship will receive \$25,000 a year for four years as they pursue doctoral degrees and specialized engineering research. The goal is also to help prepare students for academic careers as professors and industry researchers and create a pipeline of students who will increase diversity in Canadian technology industries as they enter the workforce with graduate degrees from STEM programs.
- The National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) McMaster Chapter has launched an annual scholarship for Canadian Black students entering the Faculty of Engineering. The NSBE McMaster Chapter Entrance Award will provide \$2,500 a year to first-year Black students who demonstrate strong leadership skills and valuable contributions to their community.

Work also continues in response to the report of the Task Force that reviewed the Black Student-Athlete Experience and the McMaster Athletics Climate. As mentioned in the detailed action plan released last year, the University's response includes establishing a Black graduate assistant coaching program, increasing the representation of Black staff within the Department of Athletics and Recreation, establishing a Black Student-Athlete Council, developing additional Financial Aid awards, a mentoring program, and establishing a dedicated physical space for a Black student services office. The critically important new role of Senior Advisor, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism, has recently been filled and this individual will lead many of the other action items arising from the review in time for the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

As mentioned in previous updates, we are also focused on ensuring that all appropriate resources and services are available to support our students and create a safe and inclusive environment for all. To enable us to better assess this, and to help shape the future of student-centred programs and services, the McMaster Student Census and Experience Survey was launched on February 3, 2021. The survey is open until March 5, 2021 and is intended to help McMaster identify, and ultimately address, important differences in the ways in which diverse students experience campus life. The survey serves as a climate study aimed at improving services for all students, and in particular understanding and enhancing the experience of racialized and marginalized

students. It is confidential and contains demographic questions surrounding gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ability, and socioeconomic status, as well as questions about students' experiences both within and outside the classroom, including the areas of student wellness and success; food security and financial health; personal security and physical safety; social connection and belonging; emotional and spiritual well-being; mental and physical health; career development; and academic success.

## **CAMPUS UPDATE**

### **McMaster Ranked among the most International Universities in the World**

McMaster has placed 38<sup>th</sup> out of 172 institutions on Times Higher Education's list of the world's most international universities – one of only four Canadian universities on the list. This ranking is based on the proportion of international students, staff and faculty, publications with international co-authors, and worldwide reputation scores. Thirteen per cent of McMaster's undergraduates are international students. In graduate studies, international students make up 28 per cent of the student population. Overall, international students, staff, and faculty represent more than 90 different countries.

## **Research**

### **McMaster Researchers Developing Vaccines to fight COVID-19, using Specialized Campus Production Facility**

A team of virologists, infectious disease experts, and immunologists at McMaster is developing two new second-generation COVID-19 vaccine candidates, and is designing and producing them in a specialized facility on campus. This critical work, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, is being conducted in the Robert E. Fitzhenry Vector Laboratory, the first facility of its kind in Canada and one of only a few with the capacity to develop and produce viral-vectored vaccines for clinical testing. Although the Vector lab has limited capacity, researchers are manufacturing tens of thousands of vaccine candidate doses there, with the potential to manufacture hundreds of thousands more. With Health Canada approval, they hope to begin human trials with healthy volunteers in Hamilton in the Spring and, if successful, will expand to the second phase of clinical testing next Fall. The research forms part of Canada's Global Nexus for Pandemics and Biological Threats, the international network based at McMaster, which has scientists, clinicians, engineers, social scientists and other experts working collaboratively over the longer-term to prevent future pandemics and mitigate global health threats.

### **New Study Examines Students' Mental-Health and COVID-19**

Sociologist Marisa Young is leading new research at McMaster, in partnership with the World Health Organization, to understand students' experience and needs, and develop better mental health solutions. The study, which is the first of its kind in Canada, has now been launched at 21 universities across 15 countries, allowing for regional and cross-cultural comparisons. The study will help inform and shape supports for students, such as McMaster's Student Wellness Centre, and will help students find the resources and support they need throughout their time at university.

**McMaster receives \$1M to lead COVID-19 Evidence Network**

To ensure decision-makers have timely access to the best COVID-19 science, the federal government is investing \$1M to support the COVID-19 Evidence Network to support Decision-makers (COVID-END), hosted at McMaster. The Network, led by John Lavis, Director of the McMaster Health Forum, will bring together experts to collaborate and rapidly synthesize the best available evidence across the full breadth of Canada's COVID-19 pandemic response. The project will maintain a publicly available inventory of the best evidence syntheses for COVID-19 decisions to ensure that Canadian decision-makers have the most up-to-date science available when needed, and will establish a Canadian panel to complement its existing global horizon-scanning panel that monitors emerging issues where evidence syntheses are needed.

**Community Engagement**

**McMaster to provide Tuition-Free Access for current and former Foster Children**

Working in collaboration with the Child Welfare Political Action Committee Canada, McMaster will be offering up to 20 current and former foster children free tuition, regardless of their age, so long as eligibility requirements are met. This supports McMaster's Access Strategy, launched in 2019, which assists students from a variety of underrepresented groups in accessing university education. McMaster has developed programs and supports to help academically qualified students from underrepresented groups in Hamilton and surrounding communities access university education at the undergraduate level.

**McMaster to make Residence Rooms available for frontline Health-Care Workers**

The University is making private accommodations in residence, as well as meals, available for single-person stays between three and 14 days, to Hamilton healthcare workers who are seeking a safe, affordable place to self-isolate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Working in collaboration with the Thrive Group, a community-based non-profit, charitable organization, the program is similar to one the University first offered in the spring of 2020, and is open to frontline workers who are directly involved in providing healthcare to those with, or at risk of acquiring, COVID-19. The program will open with 20 rooms being made available, with more rooms to be opened up if required.