

Lead. Connect. Transform.

The Faculty of Public Affairs
Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029

The Faculty of Public Affairs acknowledges and respects the Algonquin Anishinaabe, traditional custodians of the land on which the Carleton University campus is located.

Message from the Dean

Strategic planning can be surprising.

One surprise was the amount of feedback we received from our students. A total of 1,677 undergraduates and graduates participated in our survey—25% of our student population.

Students shared excitement about programs, their futures, and their eagerness to be part of a community. They also shared a desire for greater certainty on career outcomes and greater flexibility in course options. As one wrote:

“I really valued the connections and experiences that each of my professors brought to their courses as they...expanded beyond the academic perspective and prepared us for post-graduate employment.”

As we navigate a period of reduced enrollment and discouraging budgetary news, it is important to remember and draw on the hope and enthusiasm shared by our students. They are one of the many strengths of our Faculty, alongside our outstanding leadership in research, our exemplary teaching, and our collaboration with external partners.

This plan, with its three pillars *Lead. Connect. Transform.*, is the result of more than a year’s efforts in consultation, discussion, research, thinking, listening, collating, and writing. From the first day of the process, the planning team was committed to rethinking the status quo, while also honouring the strengths that already exist within our Faculty.


The strategy we adopted appears simple: build on those strengths and strengthen our reputation. With a focus on *Lead. Connect. Transform.*, we ensure that the multiple strengths that already exist in the Faculty are reinforced, and that we prioritize the work required to promote them fully here in Ottawa, across Canada, and internationally.

With that intention, a new Faculty name was proposed alongside the strategic plan, one that provides a clear identifier to potential students, the broader academic community, stakeholders, and the public. That name is: The Faculty of Public and Global Affairs. At the time of writing, the change goes before the Board of Governors for approval in early June and should go into effect on July 1, 2024.

Strategic plans stem from deep thinking about where the organization wants to be in several years’ time, assessing what’s feasible, and then developing a realistic strategy for getting there. They are part science, and a good part art. Importantly, they push us to be more. More purposeful. More creative. More intentional.

While the current climate is not without challenges, this strategic plan will help us navigate an uncertain future with a strong sense of purpose, hope, and excitement. I look forward to working together to make our vision a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda O'Neill".

Brenda O'Neill, Dean

Lead. Connect. Transform.

The Next Five Years

This strategic plan provides a vision of where the Faculty of Public Affairs will be in five years' time and outlines a set of goals designed to get us there. That vision is:

By 2029, we will be a nationally recognized Faculty, the only one of its kind, known for its unique and innovative programming, its commitment to research developed with and for local and global communities, and its commitment to educating students for their future careers and informed citizenship.

Let us achieve this together.

Background

The Faculty of Public Affairs (FPA) is unique in Canada and much of the world. Established in 1997, its founding goal was to “address the structures, processes, policies and interactions of the private, governmental, and non-profit/volunteer sectors of civil society.”¹ FPA includes a total of 12 units, each linked to this original goal. Two are graduate program-only units (Norman Paterson School of International Affairs; School of Public Policy and Administration). Two are disciplinary units (Department of Economics; Department of Political Science) and several others interdisciplinary in their focus (Department of Law and Legal Studies; Institute of Criminology and Criminal Justice; Communication and Media Studies within the School of Journalism and Communication). Two are professionally focused units (Journalism, also within the School of Journalism and Communication; School of Social Work). Three are smaller units devoted to a particular academic focus (Institute of European, Russian & Eurasian Studies; Institute of Political Economy; Institute of African Studies – shared with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences). The final unit is Arthur Kroeger College of Public Affairs, which houses several unique undergraduate and graduate programs.

FPA currently offers a total of nine distinct undergraduate degrees, nine graduate degrees, and six graduate diplomas in over 40 subject areas. Listing over 800 distinct courses in the calendar, FPA offers over 80 unique degree programs to close to 6,000 undergraduate and 1,200 graduate students, making it the second largest faculty in terms of student numbers at Carleton University.

Universities are very different institutions from what they were when FPA was established over 25 years ago. We find ourselves at a pivotal moment in which the status quo is not an option.

¹ Constitution of the Faculty of Public Affairs of Carleton University.

Students demand a more comprehensive preparation for their careers. Online teaching during the pandemic has forced us to rethink modalities in individual courses and within programs. Financial uncertainties and staffing issues challenge us to prioritize and to rethink our understanding of the work week. Artificial intelligence is creating its own unique challenges. The world is more complicated and new issues have emerged that we must be prepared to address. An increasingly competitive recruitment landscape demands attention to program development and renewal.

Unchanged, however, is our commitment to working closely with communities, to strengthening democracy and society, to improving governance and public policy, and to fostering informed citizenship. Also unchanged is our commitment to the highest quality teaching, to mounting highly valued academic and professional programs, and to educating our graduates to work in governments, the private sector, media, international organizations, and civil society, in Canada and around the world.

One of our Faculty's greatest strengths is rooted in the quality and success of its research. Over the past decade the Faculty has been awarded over 100 million dollars in research funding.² This is truly remarkable, and points to the expertise of the outstanding researchers throughout our Faculty, as well as FPA's excellent research support team.

These are strong building blocks for the future.

To positively position the Faculty over the next five years, a strategic planning process was launched in February of 2023. For several months, the strategic planning committee and several group leads launched the consultation phase, consisting of 21 sessions with units, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community stakeholders, speaking with over 170 individuals. The Faculty's students completed 1,672 surveys that offered a window into their beliefs and opinions.

We heard about positive student experiences, often echoed by alumni. Discussions with units, faculty and staff revealed our strengths and many opportunities. Stakeholders reinforced the importance of our relationships beyond the campus. We heard about the many elements and achievements that make the Faculty, its programs, and its research successful.

We also heard that we can and must continually strive to improve and to respond to the challenges facing higher education. And about the need to embrace innovation and be risk takers.

We heard that students are more concerned than ever about being adequately prepared for and finding jobs post-graduation. They underscored the importance of practical knowledge in addition to the theoretical.

² Cash plus in-kind.

We heard from staff about the importance of providing required supports – psychological and others – to Carleton staff and students alike. They also highlighted the need for increased collaboration to meet similar needs across units.

We heard from faculty members about wanting to enhance collaboration and overcome unnecessary internal competition. Faculty members spoke of the need to support civil society, as well as reconciliation, and to ground diversity, equity, and inclusion in our daily activities. They stressed the importance of spaces for critical thinking and respectful debate. Lastly, they emphasized the essential role of support for sustaining our research successes, to adapt to continued technological advancement, and to meet the challenges of artificial intelligence. An additional phase of extensive feedback gathering took place in February and March of 2024.

We heard from community partners about the need to serve community and to strengthen meaningful and reciprocal relationships. Alumni told us of the value of the practical and real-world experiences provided to them as students – given our location in Ottawa – and of the need to expand and enrich these opportunities.

The Faculty's distinctiveness is the core of our future strategy. We examine leading issues of the day from political, economic, policy, legal, social justice, communications, and global perspectives. We contribute to leading debates and identify strategies for addressing local and global challenges. We educate students and professionals to take on a range of civic, professional, administrative, public, and leadership roles, especially here in Ottawa, who are recognized for the quality of the educational experience and knowledge that they received.

Our strengths include our robust research profile; a longstanding commitment to serving local communities; academic programs with prominent national and international profiles; a commitment to inter-, trans- and multi-disciplinarity in our research and programs; and a role in contributing to debates and solutions on the leading societal challenges of the day. Our research, teaching and service are all geared towards serving communities, both local and further afield. We will continue to excel in these areas, but these alone will neither distinguish us from our many competitors nor draw students to our programs. They do, however, provide a solid foundation on which to build a strategy to:

- Clearly identify where to focus our energies, what to develop further, and what to conclude and wrap up.
- Provide a focused lens to successfully navigate the next five years.

Strategic Objectives

This strategy starts with two central objectives: **build on strengths** and **strengthen our reputation**. Our consultations underscored our many strengths. Yet alongside those strengths were suggestions for enhancing them in several relatively simple and effective ways. Also clear

is that we need to take concrete steps to promote our research accomplishments and the reputation of our programs beyond the Ottawa region.

We face several new challenges. One is the current budgetary climate facing universities in Ontario. Another is the set of restrictions on international student enrolment. And finally, FPA enrolment has dropped significantly since a high point in 2018, a drop that cannot be attributed to the pandemic given that it both pre- and post-dates it. The need to act, and decisively, is imperative to turn this around. Fortunately, we have several faculty and unit-level mechanisms available to us to implement a solid strategy for building on our strengths and strengthening our reputation.

BUILD ON STRENGTHS

The coming period requires a look back as well as forward. Let us recommit to our vision, mission, and the Faculty's goals. Let us review what we already do well with an eye to enhancing these successes. Let us eliminate what has been less successful, to free up resources for innovation. Let us create efficiencies by reducing overlap. Once-successful programs, concentrations, and specializations can become less attractive to students in the face of competition that strives to address changing student complements and shifting economies. We have a responsibility to use resources effectively. The focus must be on identifying our strengths and building on them.

STRENGTHEN OUR REPUTATION

We need to continue to foster our scholarly excellence, community impact and policy leadership, and tell these stories proudly. We must enhance how we communicate our excellence to reach a wider audience. We can no longer assume that quality programs will automatically attract students. Ever-increasing competition in Canadian higher education for both domestic and international students is evident. Reaching the appropriate audiences to convey our many strengths, our unique and successful programs, and the amazing quality of our researchers is imperative.

Our Mission Statement

The Faculty of Public Affairs is a research-intensive Faculty at Carleton University committed to ground-breaking research, innovative programming, and offerings, serving local and global communities, and preparing today's students for convocation, careers, and communities.

This mission statement embodies what we do, and what we strive to achieve. What distinguishes us is our commitment to innovative (including interdisciplinary) programming, and to educating and preparing students for their futures.

Faculty Purpose

The Faculty's purpose, founded in our original constitution and developed in subsequent strategic plans, remains steadfast: building stronger democracies and better societies, improving governance and public policy, fostering informed citizenship, and addressing regional and global challenges.

Strategic Pillars

Adopting a strategy of building on strengths requires that we identify where we provide a distinct and valued contribution. This is necessary to strengthen our reputation, to focus our efforts, and to avoid spreading ourselves too thin. Our efforts have not been developed in a vacuum and, as such, our plan aligns with Carleton University's Strategic Integrated Plan (2020-2025).

We have identified three pillars to accomplish our vision:

Lead. Connect. Transform.

These pillars are grounded in our mission statement and purpose. They will guide where we focus our efforts in the next five years. A set of goals is identified for each pillar, and we offer several examples for advancing each (see examples in Appendix I). We envisage that individual units in the Faculty will identify their own innovative mechanisms for advancing them as well. We accept that the best strategic plans are ones that offer the flexibility that allows units to identify their mechanisms for moving the plan forward, while simultaneously encouraging a sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes.

Lead

The first pillar in our strategy is a commitment to **leadership**, in its broadest sense, grounded in the values of *innovation*, *accountability*, and *responsibility* (find value definitions in Appendix II).

Our academic programs produce leaders in diverse fields in Ottawa, in Canada and around the globe. Our world-class researchers produce and advance knowledge on key issues of the day, serve as public intellectuals, and advise governments on policy and process.

And yet we can do more.

Empowering Research: To fully enable our faculty members in their research activities, we will provide the required supports and recognition for them to lead in their fields. We will identify the core needs of, and key challenges faced by, our researchers. We will prioritize their success.

Student Learning: To fully ensure that our students are equipped to lead in their chosen careers, we will provide comprehensive preparation for the workplace alongside the comprehensive theoretical and conceptual education that we already offer. We will identify at the individual course level the skills development that serves students in their chosen careers, and advance experiential learning opportunities. We will make this an explicit strategic advantage for those earning a degree from our Faculty.

Research Strengths: To fully celebrate our research excellence, we will work together with FPA researchers to identify how best to articulate and disseminate the range and depth of our research strengths beyond academic communities.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility: To fully advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility, we commit to developing processes for enhancing inclusion, identifying, and removing systemic barriers, and fostering conversations.

Connect

The second pillar in our strategy embraces **connections** of various types, grounded in the values of *openness, collaboration* and *understanding*.

We have developed strong links to many organizations in our local, national, and global communities which support student learning through our placements, internships, and co-op experiences. Many of our faculty are linked to communities and organizations both here and abroad through their research. We have many diverse student groups who strengthen the student experience through a multitude of programs and activities.

And yet we can do more.

Community Engagement: To fully engage with community partners, we will strengthen our links to them and commit to reciprocity in our interactions with them. This includes communities both within and outside of Carleton.

Experiential Education: To fully prepare our students for their careers, we will provide them with practical learning experiences in local, national, and global communities. We will create spaces for students to foster their own links to these communities.

Collaboration: To fully encourage collaboration across the Faculty, we will create space for identifying, and incentives for implementing, joint and shared opportunities.

Transform

The third pillar in our strategy embraces the **transformative** potential of academic inquiry and higher learning, grounded in the values of *curiosity, accessibility, and empowerment*.

Our programs and research transform students, issues, policies, governance, and communities through collaboration, innovation, and respectful disruption. We need to share these strengths with a wider audience.

And yet we can do more.

Enrolment Enhancement: To fully communicate our core strengths and unique programming, we need to underscore our unique place within the Canadian higher education landscape and commit to developing this awareness beyond Ottawa to the rest of Canada and internationally.

Program Innovations: To fully embrace the changing technological landscape, we will approach teaching with new lenses, timelines, and pedagogical tools. We will address the desire and need for innovation, especially for increasing the accessibility of university to students for whom a face-to-face education, in the traditional timeline, is not an option. We will take risks in developing these new flexible forms and modalities of instruction.

Reconciliation: To fully commit to reconciliation and repair, we will transform our courses, processes, and structures to include previously excluded ways of knowing and imagine new approaches to being in community with each other. For some, this will mean retooling and retraining, a challenge we gladly accept. As noted in the Kinàmàgawin Report, credibility on this issue requires courageous action.

Global Outreach: To fully address the global nature of problems, we will create global classrooms by continuing to bring scholars and researchers from around the world into our classroom – in part by embracing new technologies – and to send our students around the world. These global experiences are central to fostering leadership and enhancing public life.

Public Discourse: To fully foster free and open discussion, we will encourage a culture of respectful dialogue amongst our students, staff and faculty through public events and initiatives.

Moving Forward

The challenges that we face are difficult ones, but there is a role for both the Faculty and units in implementing this strategy to tackle them.

To ensure transparency and accountability, we will work together to develop acceptable measures for evaluating how well our strategy is working over time. To ensure capacity, funds

have been set aside to incentivize action and support initiatives that directly advance the plan's goals. The Office of the Dean will work with Chairs and Directors to identify how best to incentivize action and achieve these goals through a collective effort while recognizing the distinctive character of individual units in the Faculty.

Summary

So much has changed since we last produced a strategic plan. It is time for us to become a more distinctive, collaborative, and ambitious Faculty. This is an opportunity not just for the Office of the Dean, but for each unit to build on its strengths and strengthen its reputation. The pillars put forth in this plan will guide and support us as we move purposefully toward achieving our objectives. . . Believing that we can do more.

Lead. Connect. Transform.

APPENDIX I: Examples of Concrete Action for Advancing Goals

Pillar: *LEAD*

Faculty: Provide researchers with time to undertake research by prioritizing the Research Time Awards program in the face of significant budget cuts.

Faculty: Establish co-curricular programming focussed on developing the skills required in today's careers and demanded by students.

Faculty: Establish a public leadership certificate program for undergraduate and graduate students who want to develop skills to enhance their post-graduate career prospects and experiences.

Pillar: *CONNECT*

Faculty: Prioritize the establishment of a research & development hub for Canada's charitable/philanthropic sector to work in collaboration with and support sector organizations in local and global communities.

Units: Revisit unit standards to possibly recognize the contribution of research, teaching and service that advances equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation.

Faculty and Units: Launch an annual "Communities Open House" day in which community groups are invited to campus to identify opportunities for placements and course-based experiential learning, for them to learn about the Faculty and its focus, and to thank community groups with which we have connections.

Faculty: Provide a centralized structure to assist with and support the development of experiential learning opportunities, leadership programming, academic support, community linkages, and space for groups to connect.

Pillar: *TRANSFORM*

Faculty: Incentivize the creation of hands-on research experiences – preferably linked to funded research projects – for undergraduate as well as graduate students.

Faculty: Rethink FPA's organizational structure to limit silos, strengthen connections, and eliminate duplication.

Faculty and Units: Investigate the feasibility of moving away from single-use offices towards more open, communal, or shared workspaces that directly enhance cross-disciplinary and cross-departmental collaboration.

Faculty and Units: Revisit less than successful activities, committees, and projects with a view to freeing up resources for innovation and risk-taking.

Appendix II: Value Definitions

Pillar: LEAD

Innovation: we value the willingness to take reasonable risks even if we sometimes fail.

Accountability: we accept that as a public institution, we are responsible to others – both individually and collectively – for our actions, decisions, performance, and choices.

Responsibility: we are entrusted with the duty to teach and conduct research for the betterment of our students, communities, and the world.

Pillar: CONNECT

Openness: we believe a vibrant public life requires the ability to question, confront, and respect a diversity of views and beliefs.

Collaboration: we believe that working together and reducing isolation can improve pedagogical, scholarly, and other outcomes.

Understanding: we commit to the intelligent and compassionate use of knowledge in the treatment of others and in the academic mission.

Pillar: TRANSFORM

Curiosity: we commit to the importance of curiosity for sparking inquiry and the desire for knowledge.

Accessibility: we commit to reducing the barriers that prevent individuals from fully participating and thriving in all aspects of campus life.

Empowerment: we commit to enabling individuals to develop confidence in themselves, in addition to the skills, knowledge and humility required to engage with and learn from each other.

Acknowledgments

The 2024-2029 FPA Strategic Planning Committee included Brenda O'Neill (Dean), Hashmat Khan (Department of Economics), Sarah Todd (School of Social Work), Laurie Jaeger (Executive Assistant to the Dean FPA) and Karen Kelly (Team Lead, Communications, FPA).

The Committee acknowledges the essential support provided by the Office of Quality Initiatives, especially Laura Kelly and Jaymie Koroluk, throughout the planning process.

We wish to thank those FPA members who stepped forward to serve as consultation leads and assumed responsibility for consulting with specific groups:

- Randy Boswell (Community stakeholders)
- Sandra Fahy (Faculty and Instructors)
- Alexandra Mallett (Alumni)
- Kristi Wells (Staff)
- Paul Wilson (Students)

And finally, we also wish to thank all the FPA individuals who contributed their time and thoughts with us during the launch, consultation sessions, feedback sessions, online, and during the Faculty Board meeting. Your participation in this process made the plan much stronger than it would have been otherwise.