



University  
of Manitoba

# REIMAGINING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT UM

The Student Affairs Strategic Plan 2025—2030





Student Affairs acknowledges, with humility and gratitude, that the UM campuses are located on the original lands of the Anishinaabeg, Ininewuk, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, and Denesuline peoples, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis. We respect the Treaties that were made on these territories, we acknowledge the harms and mistakes of the past, and we dedicate ourselves to move forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of Reconciliation and collaboration.

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## OUR PATH TO THE PLAN



Student Affairs Professional Development Day

The Student Affairs Strategic Plan is the culmination of a collaborative and intentional process to define our shared priorities and guide our work in support of the University of Manitoba’s strategic plan, Momentum: Leading Change Together. Over several months, we engaged students, staff, faculty, and campus partners in conversations about the needs, aspirations, and experiences of our diverse student community.

We began by gathering insights through focus groups, a survey, and targeted consultations, ensuring voices from across the university were heard. These conversations were complemented by environmental scans, institutional data, and a review of trends in higher education to ground our thinking in evidence and context.

Partnering with Leading4Impact, a non-profit that supports organizations in their strategic planning efforts, we synthesized this input into emerging themes. These themes were refined through iterative feedback from a core committee, a steering committee, senior leadership, academic leaders, students, and colleagues. The result is a plan that is both ambitious and practical, grounded in our values, informed by enduring principles, and aligned with our commitment to student success, well-being, and belonging.

This plan is not the end of the conversation—it is a living framework that will evolve as we continue to listen, learn, and respond to the needs of our students.



## AN EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Delivering an exceptional student experience at the University of Manitoba is not the mandate of Student Affairs alone. It is a shared responsibility—one that unites all members of the university community in support of students' academic goals and aspirations. Together, we champion a holistic, inclusive, and engaging learning environment that amplifies the impact of our academic programs and the value of a University of Manitoba education.

### A University of Manitoba student will:

- Embark upon an exceptional educational journey—from prospective learner to alum—characterized by welcoming, responsive, and knowledgeable staff and faculty; seamless access to services and supports; and an overarching commitment to student success.
- Have access to a transformative, high-quality education that is innovative and research-informed, delivered by faculty and staff dedicated to educating and supporting learners in achieving their academic and professional goals.
- Engage in experiential learning, research, and career development opportunities that equip them with knowledge and competencies to navigate a complex and rapidly changing world with confidence and critical insight.
- Build meaningful connections with peers, faculty, staff, communities, and alumni through collaborative and community engaged learning, grounded in respect, reciprocity, and accountability.
- Be supported holistically through inclusive, responsive, and culturally relevant services and supports that prioritize mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health and well-being.
- Feel a deep sense of belonging and shared responsibility as a member of an inclusive and diverse community that values and honours their voice, identity, and lived experiences.
- Experience a vibrant campus life enriched with engaging events, leadership opportunities, and learning spaces that foster creativity, innovation, and collaboration.
- Graduate prepared to lead, adapt, innovate, and make a meaningful impact in their field and community, equipped with the competencies to think critically, solve complex problems, and contribute to positive change locally and around the globe.



Left: students crafting at the Student Wellness Centre; right: students at Bisons Homecoming football game



Student Affairs Leadership Team

## Student Affairs Vision

Canada's leader in delivering an exceptional student experience.

## Student Affairs Mission

We empower learners to achieve their highest potential.

From recruitment to graduation, we achieve our mission by working collaboratively across Student Affairs departments and in partnership with Faculties, administrative units, and students to identify challenges and opportunities, plan, implement, and evaluate initiatives that contribute to an exceptional student experience.

### We:

- attract and engage prospective students by promoting the value of a UM education and delivering accessible, timely, and student-centred admissions services.
- ensure that those who interact with our policies, processes, systems, and supports have a seamless experience, and gaps or barriers they encounter are addressed.
- develop and implement institutional strategic enrolment management plans that are in alignment with institutional priorities.
- facilitate access to diverse opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning and to make purposeful contributions to campus and community life.
- confront racism, settler colonialism, and systemic inequities, including religion-based hatred, homophobia and transphobia, and ableism that directly impact learners and the learning environment.
- intentionally design opportunities for meaningful connections with faculty, staff, and peers.
- enhance student support and success practices that actively engage learners in their learning, growth, and development.
- empower students to flourish in all areas of health and well-being through evidence-based programs.
- enhance safety by providing sexual violence education and prevention programs and support healing through trauma-informed services and referrals.
- provide a range of opportunities for learners to share their lived experiences, perspectives, ideas, and critiques.



Left: 2024 Pride Parade; right: Drumming Circle hosted by Spiritual Care and Multi-Faith Centre

## Student Affair Values

Rooted in the University of Manitoba's values, every member of the Student Affairs team strives to be:

### Accountable

We take responsibility for our actions, decisions, and impact—individually and collectively. We are transparent in our processes, ethical in our conduct, and committed to continual learning and improvement to serve students, prospective students, and the broader university community with integrity.

### Collaborative

We work together with faculties, departments, units, students, and communities, fostering partnerships that support student success. Through shared goals, open communication, and mutual support, we strengthen our collective impact and create an environment where everyone contributes to and benefits from our shared mission.

### Inclusive

We embrace equity, accessibility, and diversity in all its forms. We strive to create spaces where every student feels welcomed, valued, and empowered to succeed. We actively address barriers and challenge systems of exclusion to ensure a just and supportive environment.

### Innovative

We are forward-thinking and adaptable, continually seeking creative and financially sustainable approaches to enhance the student experience. Through curiosity, reflection, and evidence-informed practice, we respond to evolving needs with courage and imagination.

### Respectful

We treat every individual with dignity, kindness, and consideration. We honour the perspectives, lived experiences, and contributions of all members of our community and those who engage with our programs and services, and are committed to promoting a culture of respect, empathy, and mutual understanding.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Inspired and propelled by our vision and mission, all that we do is grounded in our values and informed by these enduring principles:

### **Student-Centred**

We acknowledge that there is no single, homogenous student journey. Our work is shaped by, honours, and reflects the diversity of our learners, their lived experiences, and complex identities. We are fiercely committed to delivering an exceptional student experience and supporting students through direct service, and through systems, policies, and practices that place students at the centre of everything we do.

### **Advancing Truth and Reconciliation**

We are dedicated to learning and understanding the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism and oppression faced by Indigenous peoples. We actively work toward Truth and Reconciliation by ensuring that our programs, services, resources, policies, and practices are informed by Indigenous knowledge systems, lived experiences, and ways of being. We work in partnership with the Office of the Vice-President, Indigenous to promote the vision of *mino-bimaadiziwin* and to advance the objectives and Reconciliation themes articulated in UM's Truth and Reconciliation Framework. We provide Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff with culturally responsive education and training to support their own learning and development journey, and are committed to walking together in our Reconciliation efforts.

### **Fostering A Vibrant Community**

We are committed to fostering an inclusive and accessible environment where all students are valued, supported, and empowered to succeed. We actively work to address systemic inequities and all forms of oppression through equity-based approaches that shape our policies, programs, services, and practices. Ultimately, we strive to ensure that every student—regardless of background, identity, or lived experience—has an opportunity to thrive.

### **Staff Well-Being, Learning, and Development**

We recognize that the well-being, continuous learning, and growth of our staff are essential to fostering a thriving student community. We are committed to creating a supportive work environment that prioritizes wellness, promotes lifelong learning, and empowers staff through meaningful development opportunities. Through equitable policies, resources, and a culture of collaboration, we ensure that all staff feel valued, engaged, and equipped to make a lasting impact.





Clockwise from top left: three colourful Bison illustrations; Honour Song performed at Bannatyne convocation ceremony; two Ivan Flett Memorial Dancers performing at the Welcome Day Pep Rally; students and families gathered at outdoor orientation Info Fair with the historical Administration Building in the background; first year students at the Welcome Day Pep Rally; one colourful Bison illustration

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

As the university boldly moves forward under Momentum: Leading Change Together, Student Affairs will actively contribute to its strategic themes and goals, particularly those noted under “Empowering Learners” and “Reimagining Engagement”. Over the next five years, the following five strategic priorities will guide our collective efforts. Together, they reflect our role as collaborative changemakers—shaping transformative student experiences and driving institutional impact through a culture of innovation and excellence.







Career workshop at the Student Counselling Centre

## 1. Student Engagement and Belonging

*Fostering a welcoming, inclusive environment where all students feel connected, supported, and empowered to thrive throughout their academic journey.*

1. Deliver holistic and culturally relevant services, programs, and supports that promote mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial well-being.
2. Optimize the benefits of peer-to-peer support across the university through the enhancement of existing programming and the establishment of a centrally coordinated program.
3. Enhance opportunities for students to engage actively in their learning through formal and informal instruction and by expanding career development, involvement, and experiential learning opportunities within the co-curriculum locally and globally.
4. Expand inclusive programming, events, and activities that foster Bison pride and a strong sense of community within a highly diverse commuter population.
5. Create culturally affirming spaces, programs, and services that reflect and support Indigenous identities, languages, and ways of knowing, in collaboration with Indigenous students, employees, communities, and leaders.
6. Deliver timely and responsive accessibility services that meet increasing student needs, while advancing a campus-wide commitment to anti-ableism, accessibility, and universal design in all aspects of university life.



Student Affairs representatives assisting new students and supporters during orientation and recruitment events

## 2. The Future is Now

*Shaping an accessible, student-centered educational journey that prioritizes early engagement, strong enrolment, and improved retention and graduation outcomes.*

1. Strengthen domestic and international recruitment strategies to attract and enrol a diverse, high-potential student body aligned with UM's academic strengths, values, and excellence.
2. Deliver seamless, responsive, and student-centred admissions experiences that reflect UM's commitment to accessibility, personalized support, and to maintaining our competitive edge.
3. Enhance collaboration with academic and administrative partners to deliver coordinated, high impact recruitment events, activities, and marketing materials.
4. Expand transition supports throughout the student life cycle in collaboration with academic partners to ensure early and sustained engagement and improved retention by fourth year, particularly in non-cohort-based programs.
5. Establish the systems and processes necessary to identify and support students who are at risk of not persisting.
6. Strengthen financial aid and awards systems and processes to reduce barriers, address disbursement challenges, and support enrolment and retention goals.
7. Align enrolment planning and forecasting with institutional priorities through integrated data, collaboration, and shared accountability.





Left: Student Homecoming event, right: Orientation event

### 3. The Next Generation of Leaders

*Empowering students to lead with purpose, courage, and compassion in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.*

1. Expand leadership development opportunities across the student lifecycle—from recruitment and orientation through graduation and alumni engagement.
2. Value and incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into co-curricular programming, orientation, and mentorship initiatives.
3. Ensure equitable access to leadership development through culturally responsive programming and financial supports.
4. Increase access to scholarships, bursaries, and emergency funding that recognize merit, reduce financial barriers, and empower students to pursue their academic goals.
5. Recognize and amplify student leadership through awards, storytelling, and formal recognition.
6. Strengthen pathways for active participation in civic life (the public life of the citizen concerned with the affairs of the community or nation) on campus, locally, and globally.



Left: Connection Desk at the Fort Garry campus, right: ASE (Agriculture, Science, Engineering and Environment) Career Fair coordinated by Student Affairs units, the Faculty of Agriculture Student Organization (FASO) and the University of Manitoba Engineering Society (UMES)

## 4. Extending Our Impact

*Amplifying the reach and relevance of Student Affairs across campus and in the broader community.*

1. Strengthen campus partnerships to deliver seamless, student-centered supports and programming.
2. Deepen collaboration with community-based organizations to enhance community engaged learning, civic engagement, and volunteerism.
3. Leverage technology, data and analytics to better understand student demographics, needs, and trends to inform strategic decision-making.
4. Co-design initiatives with academic partners, employers, and community leaders to support student development, career readiness, and lifelong connections.
5. Expand outreach and transition programming for youth and prospective students to build early connections to UM.
6. Increase the visibility of Student Affairs' contributions to UM's academic mission, institutional priorities, and student success.



Left: Jeff Adams (University Registrar and Executive Director, Enrolment Services) speaking at a Student Affairs professional development event; right: Staff and Student Mentors at the Charge Ahead lounge opening, 2025

## 5. A Culture of Excellence

*Advancing a high-performing, values-driven, and student-centered team.*

1. Foster a workplace culture of inclusion, well-being, and continuous professional growth for all Student Affairs employees.
2. Establish a coordinated data collection process, assessment and reporting framework to measure impact, guide decision-making, and ensure accountability to students and stakeholders.
3. Embed belonging and engagement metrics into service and program evaluations to inform continuous improvement.
4. Enhance onboarding, leadership, and professional development opportunities for Student Affairs staff across all departments.
5. Celebrate innovation, collaboration, and excellence through internal recognition and communities of practice.
6. Develop a comprehensive communication and engagement strategy to highlight priorities, celebrate progress, and build shared ownership across the division and campus community.



## DELIVERING ON OUR PROMISE



Indigenous Mini Career Fair held within Migizii Agamik (Indigenous Student Centre)

To realize our vision and achieve the goals outlined in this plan, Student Affairs will focus on four foundational tactics that ensure we stay connected, accountable, and responsive to the evolving needs of students and the university community.

### 1. Co-Creation and Collaboration

We will centre students as partners in this work, ensuring their voices are reflected in our planning, design, and evaluation processes. Through intentional engagement and consultation, we will co-create inclusive, relevant, and student-informed programs and services that respond to their lived experiences and aspirations. We will strengthen collaboration with academic partners to align and integrate efforts across the student experience, fostering a more connected, holistic approach to student success.

### 2. Strategic Communications and Storytelling

We will develop and implement a comprehensive communications plan to engage internal and external audiences, celebrate our impact, and build shared ownership of our strategic direction. By amplifying the voices and experiences of students and staff, we will foster a deeper connection to our mission and increase awareness of the supports and opportunities we provide.

### 3. Integrated Planning, Assessment, and Accountability

We will embed a culture of evidence-informed decision-making across all Student Affairs units. This includes the development of shared frameworks for data collection, service evaluation, and outcomes reporting. Our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement will guide how we measure success and ensure our work aligns with institutional priorities and student outcomes.

### 4. Professional Development and Capacity Building

We will invest in the learning, growth, and development of our staff through meaningful learning opportunities, mentorship, and communities of practice. By fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture, we will cultivate the talent, innovation, and leadership required to achieve our goals and deliver exceptional services.



## MOVING FORWARD

The launch of the Student Affairs Strategic Plan marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in our work to deliver an exceptional student experience at the University of Manitoba. While the plan defines our shared vision, priorities, and commitments, its true impact will come from coordinated action, thoughtful collaboration, and a willingness to adapt as needs evolve.

In the coming months, each Student Affairs department will develop an operational plan that aligns its goals, objectives, and measures of success with the strategic priorities outlined here. This will ensure our efforts are cohesive and mutually reinforcing. We will also establish cross-unit working groups to address key priorities that span portfolios, and play a leadership role in institutional efforts to strengthen enrolment, retention, and post-graduation success.

Progress will be monitored through clear performance indicators, and we will report annually on outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned. To remain responsive, we will invite ongoing input from students, staff, and faculty through Town Halls, visits to Faculty Council meetings, surveys, and regular dialogue to ensure our strategies remain relevant and impactful.

Finally, we will celebrate milestones—both large and small—recognizing the individuals and teams whose work advances our shared vision. It is our intention to keep this plan active, visible, and central to our daily work. In so doing, we will ensure that Student Affairs continues to play a vital role in advancing the University’s mission, and in empowering students to apply their learning with purpose, courage, and compassion for the betterment of communities, our nation, and the world.



REIMAGINING  
THE STUDENT  
**EXPERIENCE**

Top: Welcome Day attendees pose for a picture with Billy the Bison; bottom: three colourful Bison illustrations

## CORE COMMITTEE

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**Laurie Schnarr**, Chair  
Vice-Provost (Students)

**Jeff Adams**  
University Registrar and Executive Director, Enrolment Services

**Makenna Coldwell**  
Graduate student representative

**Kookum Karen Courchene**  
Grandmother-in-Residence, Indigenous Student Centre

**Michaela de Hoop**  
Undergraduate student representative

**Leah Deane**  
Executive Director, Student Support

**Brandy Usick**  
Executive Director, Student Engagement and Success

## STEERING COMMITTEE

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**Laurie Schnarr**, Chair  
Vice-Provost (Students)

**Susan Angus**  
Clinical Administrator, University Health Services

**Sharon Bannatyne**  
Associate Registrar and Director, Technology and Academic Support

**Rebecca Brooks**  
Director, Career, Community and Experiential Learning Centre

**Carolyn Christie**  
Director, Student Accessibility Services

**Monique Dumontet**  
Director, Academic Learning Centre

**Alicia Franco Espinosa**  
Director, English Language Centre

**Edgar French**  
Coordinator, Spiritual Care and Multi-faith Centre

**Gayle Gordon**  
Associate Registrar and Director, Systems

**Lisa Kachulak-Babey**  
Associate Registrar and Director, Student Recruitment

**Cyndi Kindret**  
Director, Student Services at Bannatyne Campus

**Jane Lastra**  
Associate Registrar and Director, Financial Aid and Awards

**Fanny Levy**  
Director, International Centre

**Heather Morris**  
Director, Student Advocacy and Case Management

**David Ness**  
Director, Student Counselling and Wellness

**Sarah Saunders**  
Manager, Assessment, Communications and Outreach

**Elfie Smith**  
Associate Registrar and Director, Service and Records

**Erin Stone**  
Deputy Registrar and Director, Admissions

**Bre Woligroski**  
Director, Sexual Violence Resource Centre

**Ali Wood-Warren**  
Director, Student Transitions and Success Centre



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