

Indigenous Initiatives Strategy Report of the Indigenous Student Support Working Group

Endorsed by the President's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Initiatives | January 12, 2021

Background: The University of Guelph's Indigenous Initiatives Strategy

Over the past two decades, the engagement of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, communities, cultures and ways of knowing has grown across campus, creating a need for a more coordinated approach to develop, support and evaluate Indigenous initiatives at the University of Guelph. Responding to this need, the President's Advisory Committee on Indigenous Initiatives (PACII) directed the University to form an Indigenous Initiatives Strategic Task Force tasked with developing an Indigenous Initiatives Strategy made up of a series of recommendations to guide the advancement of indigenization and reconciliation efforts at the University of Guelph (see indigenous.uoguelph.ca). At the heart of the challenge presented by the PACII was the recognition that the responsibility for indigenization and reconciliation at the University of Guelph resides with the whole campus community rather than with First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, staff, faculty and community partners.

The structure for the Task Force was established following a review of educational documents from First Nations, Inuit and Métis organizations and governments, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015), and subsequently revised through engagement of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Knowledge Holders, local community members, students, staff and faculty. The result was the establishment of five Working Groups focused on the themes of *governance*, *Indigenous student support*, *pedagogy and curriculum*, *research and scholarship*, and *campus environment and cultural safety*, supported by an Advisory Circle composed of Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Holders who are engaged at the community level. Each Working Group established their own terms of reference, meeting schedule and membership, which included students, staff, faculty and local community members (Appendix 1). When local representation was not available, Working Groups reach out to provincial and national organizations for information and support.

To facilitate their work, the Working Groups were supported by Graduate Research Assistants, who: examined past and current initiatives at the University of Guelph; compiled peer-reviewed scholarship on the subject of decolonization in the academy; and conducted environmental scans of policies and practices at other post-secondary institutions, organizations, and municipal or provincial governments across Ontario, Canada and internationally. When additional information was needed, direct contact was made by email or phone with subject

matter specialists, individuals engaged directly with the initiatives, and members of the Advisory Circle. The goal of these reviews was to help the Working Groups discover exemplary practices that could inform recommendations for the University of Guelph.

With this background material in hand, the Working Groups discussed and debated options for moving forward with indigenization and reconciliation at the University of Guelph, be it around indigenizing convocation, refining curriculum, or improving our collective research practices with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners. The results of these discussions, including a series of concrete recommendations, have been captured in five stand-alone reports for presentation to the PACII. **This report presents the recommendations of the Indigenous Student Support Working Group.** In addition to outlining the recommendations, organized within thematic areas and categorized as ‘short-, medium- and long-term’, the reports offer context to each thematic area, including the related work that has been done to date at the University of Guelph. Before turning to this, and following this common background section, each report presents a unique introduction to their Working Group focus as conceived by the members of the Working Group and thought to be important for preparing readers for the recommendations that follow.

Introduction: Indigenous Student Support

The Indigenous¹ Student Support Working Group took a Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) approach to their work focusing on outreach, recruitment, support, retention, and graduation of First Nations, Inuit and Métis (Indigenous) undergraduate, graduate and diploma students at the University of Guelph (U of G). In short, we looked at all the activities we undertake to support Indigenous student persistence and success. We undertook an assessment and gap analysis in order to provide recommendations for improvements to our SEM practices for Indigenous students.

SEM has been defined as a “comprehensive process designed to achieve and maintain the optimum recruitment, retention, and attainment of students where “optimum” is defined within the academic context of the institution” (Dolence, 2014). This definition is helpful when considering support for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students and speaks to the value of establishing enrolment targets and strategies to meet those targets. SEM can be represented as a funnel (Appendix 2) which, as a construct, provides an overview of the waypoints where an institution can provide support to students. At its heart, SEM is about student success, which makes it a useful framework for thinking about Indigenous student support at U of G.

According to Smith & Varghese (2016), dedicated spaces like the Indigenous Student Centre (ISC; formerly, the Aboriginal Resource Centre) offer Indigenous students a safe(r) place on post-secondary campuses, where they can build a shared sense of community and practice their specific cultural practices. The ISC has been the source of Indigenous student support since its creation in 2003 by the Indigenous Student Society (ISS; formerly, the Aboriginal Student Association), a Central Student Association club established in 2001. With soft dollars

¹ Used as a collective phrase to refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples

from U of G, the ASA hired the first Indigenous Student Advisor and then worked collaboratively with the department of Student Experience (then Student Life) to shift the management of the ISC to the institution. Since that time, the ISC staff team, programs and services, and visibility has grown significantly, seeing a large increase in the successful application and receipt of the Indigenous Student Success Fund envelope (previously the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training, and Post-Secondary Education Fund for Aboriginal Learners) from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) in 2009.

The ISC currently houses and supports: targeted Indigenous outreach and student recruitment initiatives through the Indigenous Liaison position; a variety of transition-, cultural-, educational-, and employment-related programming through the Coordinator, Indigenous Programs; and Indigenous student advising (e.g. academic, financial, personal, cultural, employment), counselling and supports through the Indigenous Student Advisor position. The ISC has a long history of working collaboratively with on- and off-campus partners, departments and units, in order to provide a wide range of programs, supports and opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners from recruitment to post-graduation.

The ISC, as the only Indigenous-specific space and staff team on campus, also receives an abundance of inquiries from faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students, and community members on a variety of Indigenous related topics including but not limited to: research, training, curriculum and course content development; Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI); Elders & Knowledge Holders; guest lectures and speakers; conferences; etc. These many requests, including many that extend beyond the specific mandate of the ISC, speak to the need for a larger Indigenization strategy at U of G.

During the Indigenous Initiatives Strategy process, and driven by a targeted consultation process, a decision was reached by the University to preferentially use 'Indigenous peoples' rather than 'Aboriginal peoples'. As a result, this precipitated the Aboriginal Resource Centre to be renamed the Indigenous Student Centre (ISC) in Winter 2020. Moving forward, the hope is that this name change will make the mission of the Centre - to provide a culturally supportive environment that promotes academic excellence and the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students - clearer to Indigenous students and their families, the campus, and community.

Thematic Areas

The Indigenous Student Support Working Group reviewed the following thematic areas, many of which are referenced in a SEM model: identification of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students; youth and community outreach; recruitment and admissions; student transition; personal and cultural development and support; financial support; the student experience on campus; and career development. Each of these themes is addressed in turn, with specific recommendations.

Identification of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Students

In order to fully support First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, and to assess our efforts, we need to be able to identify them in some type of database. While identification is fraught with challenges and understandable consternation from Indigenous students, their families and communities, it is nevertheless essential.

Our current approach is self-identification² at the application and post-acceptance stages. At the application stage, applicants are invited to self-identify when they apply through the Ontario Universities Application Centre (OUAC). Given past experiences, we know that participation rates are lower, and that the data are not always reliable. We feel that participation rates are low due to a lack of understanding and trust with how the data will be used. We also have clear cases where non-Indigenous students, or Indigenous students from other lands, are self-identifying. As a secondary measure, students who choose to attend U of G are invited to self-identify through WebAdvisor, the portal for our student information system, when they first register for classes. Due to an increase in students identified through this process, we believe that participation rates may improve at this stage, given that admission decisions are completed, and perhaps the data are more reliable, but cannot know for sure. As part of the institutional self-identification process, First Nations, Inuit and Métis students are given the option to have their contact information shared with the ISC for outreach and information about programs and services. This information is only shared in the middle of the Fall semester, which may result in a lag in promotion of supports and services.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-Term

- Create an institutional webpage with more information about U of G's self-identification process, reasoning, and data usage.
- Establish a process for the ISC to have access to the list of Indigenous applicants to support early outreach.

Medium-term

- Explore the need for an ancestry verification³ process to ensure that students are eligible for student supports as well as to ensure the integrity of the data.

² Self-Identification is defined as the process where an individual declares their own ancestral and cultural identity.

³ Ancestry verification is defined as the process where an individual utilizes documentation and/or community and cultural relationships to validate their ancestry.

Youth and Community Outreach

The first stages in the SEM funnel are “suspects”, “prospects”, and “respondents”. That is, converting students who we suspect are interested in attending U of G from prospective students to respondents of our outreach activities. The prevalent approach among Ontario universities is to wait until students are in Grade 12 to begin engaging with them. Progressive institutions realize that it may be too late to wait until Grade 12, as choices may have already been made by prospective students and their families. Reaching out to students earlier serves two important purposes. The first is to heighten awareness of post-secondary opportunities and to instill confidence in students to pursue these opportunities. This is especially important for groups, such as First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, for whom opportunities to attend post-secondary institutions have historically been few. In this regard, we are serving a higher purpose in seeking to increase post-secondary participation rates for Indigenous peoples. The second purpose is a more self-serving one in that we want to encourage Indigenous students to choose U of G.

The ISC has a long history of engaging with youth before high school. The ‘Establishing an Aboriginal Gateway to Education & Learning’ (EAGLE) youth camp ran annually from 2010-2017 and was coordinated by the ISC with funding from the Indigenous Student Success Fund. This program, in partnership with two First Nation communities, brought grade seven and eight First Nations youth to U of G for two nights, in May, so that they could experience being on a post-secondary campus with the hope that they could see themselves applying and attending university in the future. The program curriculum focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) -based learning, as requested by the communities, and included Learning Circles with a variety of Elders and Knowledge Holders. There were also employment opportunities for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students at U of G to support the planning and facilitation of the program. The program ended after 2017 due to funding instability. The Athletics department has also co-hosted a variety of youth-focused sport and leadership camps in collaboration with Indigenous organizations.

In addition, the Indigenous Liaison works directly with local elementary and secondary school boards and Indigenous leads, participates in youth-focused events, and engages in youth and community outreach while on the Aboriginal Post-Secondary Information Program (APSIP) recruitment tour. There is a history of the ISC collaborating with, or coordinating events for, First Nation education offices and school boards, and we believe there is potential for future growth in this area.

The completion of an environmental scan of Indigenous youth outreach and camps at other post-secondary institutions has consistently demonstrated a focus on both Indigenous culture and STEM. With the age of participants ranging from elementary to high school, there is a lot of variety in terms of the lengths of the camps, but all articulate the intention of introducing youth to post-secondary environments prior to applying. This research, as well as the on-going work on and off campus, informed recommendations as to how U of G could move forward in engaging with Indigenous youth and communities.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-Term

- Provide financial support for local First Nations, Inuit and Métis families to access existing youth opportunities on campus, including the Junior Gryphon sports summer camps.

Medium-term

- Establish a program for local First Nations, Inuit and Métis high school students to spend a day on campus with an Indigenous student mentor.
- Create a developmental opportunity for elementary and secondary educators, which includes highlights of Indigenous student experiences, dismantling stereotypes and providing information about supports available at university.
- Create a developmental opportunity for Indigenous Post-Secondary Counsellors and Education Leads to promote U of G as a viable and supportive option for their students.
- Establish an Indigenous-specific youth camp for skill development and to promote post-secondary education.
- Explore opportunities to continue to co-host an Indigenous hockey camp at U of G.

Recruitment & Admissions

The focus of SEM efforts at most institutions has historically been on recruitment and admissions; getting students in the door. While this is an incomplete approach to SEM, it is no doubt an essential one. The more applicants you can recruit, the more selective you can be in the admissions process in meeting your targets in terms of both quantity and quality of applicants. Quality indicates academic ability but also the specific characteristics of the students. In this case, it would mean that if we wish to admit and register more First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, we will need to attract more of them. Admission Services at U of G takes a general approach to student recruitment, visiting hundreds of secondary schools and providing information about all academic programs. There is clearly a need for more specific recruitment for different types of students and into specific academic programs.

In addition to recruiting more students, there are several admission strategies that can be pursued in order to meet our goals of increasing enrolments of certain types of students and into certain programs. One strategy is to admit priority groups of students just below the established cut-offs for programs. This is currently done, for varsity athletes as an example, with the understanding that these students will be offered additional supports to enable success but also because registering these students is a priority for the institution.

The Indigenous Liaison position with the ISC was created in 2009 and focuses on the outreach and targeted recruitment of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students to U of G. Recruitment activities include participation in the APSIP tour (Appendix 3), promoting U of G Indigenous

student supports at on-campus recruitment events, as well as at First Nations, Inuit and Métis community events such as pow wows, employment fairs, and youth summits. New in Winter 2019, this included transfer and pathway-specific recruitment from other post-secondary institutions in collaboration with U of G recruitment (Appendix 4). The Indigenous Liaison also undertakes personalized follow-up with prospective students, admissions support for those students who are in the process of applying, and the development of Indigenous-specific recruitment and promotional materials. Due to fiscal constraints, Indigenous-specific recruitment has been limited to Ontario.

The environmental scan and subject matter specialists focused on recruitment and admission initiatives showed that many post-secondary institutions are engaging in similar initiatives to U of G, however, there were some inspiring ideas that are reflected in the recommendations below.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Establish a strategy for early outreach for First Nations, Inuit and Métis applicants.
- Develop an on-going strategy for reviewing recruitment and admissions data for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.
- Establish a process between the ISC and Admissions for advocacy and support of First Nations, Inuit and Métis applicants.
- Develop a communication strategy to ensure that Native American students are aware of domestic tuition rates at U of G.
- Stabilize funding for Indigenous Liaison position.

Medium-term

- Advocate for changes with and for APSIP including a more central and identifiable room location and greater promotion at the Ontario Universities Fair.
- Develop a program to increase First Nations, Inuit and Métis student and family visits to campus and provide virtual visits for students from remote areas.
- Establish an Indigenous Open House event along with other on-campus Admissions events.
- Establish a travel bursary to subsidize costs for First Nations, Inuit and Métis prospective students and applicants from afar to visit campus.
- Investigate the potential for an Indigenous Liaison position with roles that overlap in admissions and recruitment for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students.
- Explore creation of facilitated admissions process for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students.

Student Transition

Student transition and orientation is a key stage in supporting student success at the post-secondary level. Purposeful and impactful programming prepares students academically and personally for a major transition in their life. The literature shows that there are both short and long-term advantages to transition and orientation programming. Short-term benefits include a positive emotional change for students, an opportunity to network, and practical knowledge of registration and payment procedures (Davis, 2018). Black and Murphy (2017) reported positive impacts on grade point average and retention for students who participate in orientation programming versus those who do not, showing that there are longer-term benefits of student success from orientation. The design of orientation programming is particularly important and should be tailored to different types of students in order to support their social, emotional and academic needs. Beyond orientation, transitional support is key throughout the first year and into second year, as students who make it to second year have a higher probability of graduating.

OUAC self-identification data are used by the Indigenous Student Advisor to provide support to incoming First Nations, Inuit and Métis students through email, mailouts, and personal phone calls, as well as to promote START Indigenous, a pre-orientation program offered by ISC. The Advisor also promotes U of G's wealth of transition and orientation supports for all incoming students (e.g. STARTonline, STARTonTrack, Orientation Week and Bounce Back). As part of the institutional self-identification process, First Nations, Inuit and Métis students are given the option to have their contact information shared with the ISC for outreach and information about Indigenous-specific and other campus programs, services and opportunities. A limitation with this process is that ISC only receives the student information once per year, in the fall semester, resulting in a delay in outreach to some students.

Recently, the ISC and Student Housing Services have collaborated on a fall 2020 pilot to establish Indigenous House, a living-learning community in residence. This initiative fulfills a recommendation of relevance to both the *Indigenous Student Support* and *Campus Environment and Cultural Safety Working Groups*.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Establish a process to ensure ISC has timely access to the list of self-Identified First Nations, Inuit and Métis student contacts in order to support their transition.

Personal and Cultural Development and Support

Having access to personal and cultural development and supports is a key aspect of student success. It is also important to note that student success manifests in more than just

graduation and employment rates. For example, Seifert (2018) identifies a willingness to take risks, becoming contributing members of society, and engaging in lifelong learning as measures of student success. Supporting students in culturally responsive and appropriate ways is especially important for under-represented groups, such as First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. As Seifert (2018) notes, “a student-focused approach to student-success programming and an organizational culture that views student success as a shared commitment across departments is more effective than an institution-focused approach.” The central concept of the Tinto model (te Wierik, Mark, Beishuizen & van Os, 2014) is that the level of a student's integration into the social and academic systems of the university determines persistence or dropout.

Many of the mental health issues and well-being concerns faced by First Nations, Inuit and Métis students are not adequately addressed through mainstream student counselling and support services (Morrisette, 2003). The ISC and Counselling Services at U of G have been working collaboratively since 2009 to establish and maintain an Indigenous-specific model that focuses on the wholistic support of First Nations, Métis and Inuit learners. By building a flexible and culturally responsive ‘bridge’ between the two units that integrates aspects of First Nations, Inuit and Métis wisdom and worldviews with Western-based therapeutic approaches, they can more effectively engage and support Indigenous learners. From 2014-2017, U of G, in partnership with Mohawk College and Six Nations Polytechnic, completed a Mental Health Innovation Fund research project, entitled “Enhancing Mental Health and Wellbeing Outcomes for Aboriginal Learners”. This project resulted in the creation of more support-based programming for First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners at U of G, as well as the development of a more universal Indigenous student well-being handbook, available in print and digitally as a resource for students, staff, faculty, Elders and Knowledge Holders to use.

The existing supports for First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners include: the Indigenous Student Advisor who provides academic, financial, personal, cultural, employment advising and support; counselling supports in the ISC and at Counselling Services; peer-based support in collaboration with the Student Support Network in Wellness Services; and a growing diversity of Visiting Elders and Knowledge Holders available for cultural advising, ceremonial support and guidance. Also prioritized are referrals to, and promotion of, U of G student support programs and social, cultural and ceremonial supports in the community.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Stabilize funding for Indigenous Student Advisor position, including advisement and counselling.
- Establish Ceremonial Fire space on campus, and a process for fire keepers.

Medium-term

- Establish a full-time, or full-time equivalent Elder and/or Knowledge Holder position (in addition to existing Visiting Elders and Knowledge Holders).
- Establish a lunch & learn program to increase education, understanding and cultural safety for staff and faculty across all departments.
- Provide a 'sandbox account' in WebAdvisor for the Indigenous Student Advisor to support students in navigating the system.

Financial Support

One of the biggest barriers to university enrolment and graduation is the cost, both real and opportunity. This is particularly true for certain groups including first-generation and First Nations, Inuit and Métis students. The first hurdle for institutions to overcome is convincing students that university is worth the investment and more affordable than they realize. The second hurdle is ensuring financial support is in place to ensure that it is indeed affordable. Merit-based financial aid is primarily used to attract students of a certain academic standing but can be targeted as well. Needs-based awards allow institutions to focus on those who are at risk of non-attendance and completion.

First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners often experience economic challenges related to post-secondary attainment, which are often misunderstood across the sector and their campuses, and among their peers. The prevailing incorrect assumption that Indigenous students receive free education, as well as the assumption that they gained entry based on their Indigenous identity or being unaware of what supports are available, adds to First Nations, Inuit and Métis students' feelings of stress and shame regarding accessing financial supports (Currie, 2012). There has been an increase in the number of awards available specifically for Indigenous students at U of G in recent years, however, there continues to be significant barriers to accessing that financial support. One example includes the institutional requirement to have applied for Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) or the Out-of-Province Assistance (OoPA) to access any financial needs-based bursaries and awards. We have encountered many First Nations, Inuit and Métis students who have been advised to avoid applying for OSAP/OoPA by families or education advisors, not knowing that, once they arrive at U of G, they will not be eligible for financial assistance without a complete and error free OSAP/OoPA application on file. For some students who do apply, the new requirement by OSAP for Indigenous students to verify their identity is an additional barrier. For many of these students, this is where they suspend their application due to a lack of proof (e.g. identity card, affidavit, etc.), concerns about how that information will be stored or used or simply frustration with the process.

The requirement for identity verification for financial support and awards is a significant barrier. We estimate that greater than 50% of self-identified First Nations, Inuit and Métis students at the University of Guelph in 2019 may not have federal, provincial or territorial-issued identification. The instability of some awards, specifically the Indigenous Student Bursary (funded by the MTCU) and the Aboriginal Student Association Engagement Scholarship, is

concerning. An additional concern is the prevailing assumption of the public and reinforced in well-intentioned fundraising efforts by Alumni Affairs and Development that Indigenous students only need bursaries because they are not eligible or competitive for scholarships. This has led to the creation of several bursaries for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students but adds to the inability of Indigenous students to access existing awards, linking back to the requirement for an OSAP/OoPA application.

The Indigenous Student Advisor is the primary contact for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students looking for financial support. The Advisor works to connect Indigenous students to Student Financial Services and to support them in navigating application processes, as well as advocating for and supporting students who are third-party sponsored. The Advisor also ensures that Indigenous students are made aware of, and supported in applying for, third-party sponsorship, external bursaries, scholarships and awards. The Advisor supports students in finding awards based on degree or program, areas of research or interest, and Indigenous identity, which are a combination of self-identification and verification based.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Investigate connections to commissioners of oaths locally or establishment of one on campus who can sign affidavits required for OSAP ancestry verification.
- Establish one or two bursaries that are not linked to the OSAP/OoPA or OSAP restricted Need Assessment Forms.

Medium-term

- Re-examine the need for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students to apply for OSAP/OoPA assistance in order to receive bursary support.
- Explore opportunities to provide lowered tuition for particular groups of Indigenous students, such as members of the Mississaugas of the Credit as an acknowledgment of their treaty territory.
- Establish more entrance and in-course scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate, graduate and diploma Indigenous students.

Student Experience on Campus

Student experience correlates positively to the broader definition of student success, which includes not only graduation and employment rates, but personal development and life-long learning. An openness to experiences has been shown to positively correlate to effort in academic activities (Bauer & Lang, 2003). And furthermore, students who set goals for their undergraduate experience have a higher probability of maintaining a full load and graduating.

Notwithstanding healthy and inclusive campus environments, First Nations, Inuit and Métis students are still faced with race-based discrimination in public spaces and on post-secondary campuses. First, Indigenous students at U of G report experiences of discrimination and racism, both on campus and in the city of Guelph, as well as experiences of being tokenized or expected to educate their professors and classmates about First Nations, Inuit and Métis histories, affairs and worldviews (Smith & Varghese, 2016). These incidences of discrimination have been linked to feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, difficulty concentrating and a decreased desire to succeed (Currie, 2012). By building environments where First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners feel welcome, respected, valued and confident in their cultural identity, post-secondary institutions can foster connectedness and resilience. This can be done by challenging mainstream support services to incorporate cultural resilience factors such as identity, family strength, Elders, support networks, ceremony, traditions, and spirituality which are not given holistic consideration in many mainstream support services (HeavyRunner and Marshall, 2003).

As discussed previously, the ISC provides a variety of transition, cultural, educational and support based programming and services for Indigenous students, as well as for the campus community. The ISC is also seen as a safe(r) space on campus for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students, however this is limited by space constraints and the physical inaccessibility of the building in which the ISC is located. In addition to these programs and supports, ISC provides training, education and development opportunities in Indigenous cultural competency for students, staff and faculty upon request, with the intention of creating additional safe(r) spaces for Indigenous students across campus. However, these training opportunities are limited due funding constraints, staff resources and time.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Short-term

- Stabilize funding for Indigenous Program Coordinator position.

Medium-term

- Explore and remove barriers to participation in study abroad, field study and experiential learning opportunities.
- Establish an administrative support position for Indigenous Initiatives, including support for the ISC.
- Establish a position focused on developing and facilitating ongoing First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultural competency training for students, staff and faculty.

Long-term

- Establish a plan for the development of a new Indigenous Student Centre that accommodates academic, personal, cultural, social and physical needs of Indigenous students.
- Establish First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultural competency training for any staff in direct support of students.
- Task each department to complete an internal review of programming and training to address gaps in support of a positive Indigenous student experience on campus.

Career Development

The end of the SEM funnel for many students is graduation and employment. While there are other measures of student success, employment is clearly a key one as evidenced by its proliferation in performance-based funding approaches across North America. Aside from the valued outcome of employment, career guidance is shown to have a positive influence on persistence (te Wierik, Mark, Beishuizen, & van Os, 2015). Experiential learning has become a focus at many institutions, including the University of Guelph.

U of G offers a variety of supports for students to develop their careers. Examples include the Peer Helper Program, Catalyst (previously Project Serve), the ExperienceGuelph portal, Career Advising and Cooperative Education. For Indigenous students, there are two Indigenous Undergraduate Research Assistantships and ISC brings in employers and representatives from graduate programs to promote and support students with applications. The Indigenous Student Advisor provides direct support to students navigating applications, deciding where to apply and connecting students with Career or Faculty Advisors on campus.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends the following:

Medium-term

- Establish enhanced programming and supports for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students in third and fourth years, and the transition onwards.

Conclusions

We strongly believe that U of G has a social and moral obligation to enhance access to, and supports for, First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners so that they may attain their personal and educational goals. There is also a positive socio-economic impact for Ontario and Canada in supporting Indigenous people and communities in education. The above recommendations will lead U of G in doing this work in a good way. The recommendations in this report focus on ensuring that the needs and the safety of First Nations, Inuit and Métis students are supported

at all points in the SEM funnel. It is essential that outreach and dialogue with Indigenous students, their families and communities occur during the establishment and implementation of these recommendations.

By focusing on key thematic areas, we were able to highlight the ways that U of G can build on the strong foundation created by the ISC. U of G is positioned to become a leader in ensuring that First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners are not only recruited and admitted, but fully supported through the entirety of their post-secondary journey and beyond, so that they can not only learn, but thrive on our campus.

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Aboriginal Student Support Working Group Terms of Reference

Purpose

The role of the Aboriginal Initiatives Strategic Task Force is to provide strategic direction and leadership guiding the advancement of reconciliation and decolonization efforts at the University of Guelph. The *Aboriginal Student Support Working Group* will provide focused attention and work on the outreach, recruitment, retention and support of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students including:

- Youth and community outreach;
- Recruitment and admissions;
- Transition;
- Personal and cultural development and support;
- Financial support;
- Student experiences on campus; and
- Career development

The Working Group will be committed to the following responsibilities:

- Review past and current campus initiatives, programs and services;
- Engage and facilitate forums for learning and reflection with campus, community and relevant partners;
- Recommend review and revisions to existing University policies, practices and procedures relating to the Working Group's area of focus;
- Identify goals and expected outcomes that will allow the university to accelerate progress towards indigenization and decolonization; and
- Formulate final recommendations towards the development of the Aboriginal Initiatives Strategy.

Term

Completion of the development of the Aboriginal Initiatives Strategy.

Membership

The membership of the Working Group will include students, faculty, staff and community members including Aboriginal individuals. Members will have expertise and experience in a range of areas.

Other University of Guelph staff, faculty or students, as well as Aboriginal community and professionals external to the University, may be added as needed.

Meetings

The Working Group will determine their own schedule but will normally meet once a month.

Roles and Responsibilities

The *Chair(s)* of the Working Group are responsible for:

- Championing and leading the work of the Working Group;
- Serving as the interface between the Steering Committee and the Working Group;
- Calling monthly meetings, approving meeting agendas and chairing the meetings;
- Coordinating additional meetings, as required; and
- Ensuring action and follow-up is taken on initiatives approved by the Steering Committee or Working Group.

The *Members* of the Working Group are responsible for:

- Being champions and change agents to support the move towards an Aboriginal Initiatives Strategy;
- Contributing knowledge, perspective, experience, creativity and subject-matter expertise;
- Being accountable for their contribution and coming to meetings prepared;
- Completing assigned task(s) as planned or making alternate arrangements; and
- Following up on action items between meetings, providing support to advance items, as required.

Decision-making

The Working Group will use a consensus model for decision-making. In the event consensus cannot be achieved, the Chair may invoke a vote through a show of hands. In the event of a tie vote, the Chair shall seek the advice for reconsideration at the next meeting.

Review and Approval of Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference will be finalized by the Working Group and reviewed on an as needed basis.

Membership

- Stephanie Bryenton, Graduate Student
- Natasha Cook, Research Associate, Institutional Analysis and Research
- Ray Darling, University Registrar, Office of Registrarial Services
- Amanda Di Blasi, Undergraduate Student (Former Member)
- Scott McRoberts, Director, Athletics, Student Affairs
- Paige Saunders, Undergraduate Student
- Natasha Young, Aboriginal Student Advisor, Student Experience

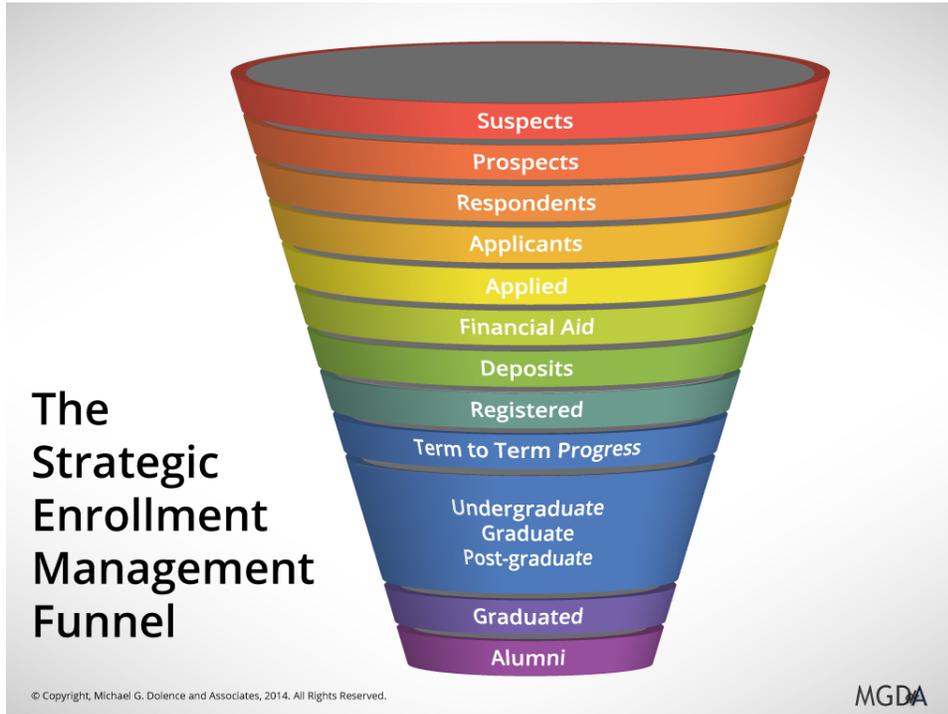
Research Support

- Kendra Cheeseman, Graduate Research Assistant

Meeting Schedule

- May 1, 2019: Opening, Terms of Reference & Self-Identification
- July 8, 2019: Youth & Community Outreach
- August 28, 2019: Recruitment & Admissions
- September 26, 2019: Transition Supports & Self-Identification
- October 16, 2019: Personal & Cultural Development and Support
- October 30, 2019: Financial Support
- November 18, 2019: Student Experiences on Campus
- December 13, 2019: Career Development & Finalize Recommendations

Appendix 2: Strategic Enrolment Management Funnel



(Dolence, M and Associates 2014)

Appendix 3: Aboriginal Post-Secondary Information Program (APSIP) - U of G Participation

Week 4: October 7-11, 2019

M'Chigeeng First Nation, Wikwemikong First Nation and Sudbury

Week 5: October 14-18, 2019

Oshawa, Port Perry, East York, Scarborough and Toronto

Week 6: October 21-25, 2019

Warton, Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation, Owen Sound, Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nations, Orillia and Midland

Week 7: October 28-November 1, 2019

Parry Sound, North Bay, Timmins, Cochrane, New Liskeard, Nipissing First Nation and Sturgeon Falls

Week 8: November 4-8, 2019

Pembroke, Douglas, Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, Gatineau and Ottawa

Week 9: November 11-15, 2019

Cornwall, Akwesasne First Nation, Kemptville, Napanee, Belleville, Curve Lake First Nations, Cobourg and Peterborough

Week 10: November 18-22, 2019

London, Forest, Sarnia, Walpole Island First Nation, Wallaceburg, Ridgetown, Delawares of Moraviantown and Windsor

Week 11: November 25-29, 2019

Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River, Mississaugas of the Credit, Hagersville, Hamilton and Welland

Appendix 4: U of G Pathways 2019 Recruitment Tour

January 16, 2019

Canadore College and Nipissing University, North Bay

January 23, 2019

Humber College and University of Guelph-Humber, Toronto

February 5, 2019

Cambrian College, Sudbury

February 7, 2019

St Clair College, Windsor

February 8, 2019

Durham College, Oshawa

February 14, 2019

Niagara College campuses in Niagara on the Lake and Welland

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