

Strategic Plan 2017–2022

Bringing great to the world

A strategic plan is both directional and aspirational. It charts a high-level course while setting longer-term goals that are navigational beacons on the horizon. At Seneca, students, employees and partners look to the Strategic Plan to understand our journey and for the context of decisions we make.

The plan must be firmly rooted in our enduring values. Those values are important touchstones providing consistency and continuity. However, the increasing pace of change is a reminder that as much as any plan attempts to anticipate and shape the future, we need to be flexible and responsive to adapt to our shifting environment.

For Seneca, operating in a time of intense competition, changing demographics, rapidly evolving technology and restrained government funding, the need to be nimble and innovative has never been greater.

Our core mission – providing a great education for our students – remains our lodestar. That has been fundamental to Seneca since we opened our doors in 1967. A Seneca education is a valuable combination of practical and

sophisticated skills underpinned by theoretical knowledge. It is polytechnic education, enriched by technology-enabled learning.

As much as the high-quality professional and career-based training that we offer matters, our focus is equally on a broad-based education that will help our students navigate the dynamism, even uncertainty, of the future with confidence.

Today, a Seneca education is a global education. Reflecting the diversity of the greater Toronto region, joined by thousands of international students from 140 countries, Seneca's students bring a global perspective to the classroom and the campus. Increasingly, our students and faculty are learning and teaching abroad.

By program's end, our graduates are career-ready, stepping directly from the convocation stage into the world that awaits them. The Seneca graduate is prepared to be the fully participating citizen and, yes, the leader that our communities require whether around the corner or around the world. More than 190,000 Seneca alumni prove that every day. They bring great to the world.

The Consultation Process

The Strategic Plan, with the Academic Plan imbedded in it, is the product of extensive internal and external consultation. Town halls were held at the four largest campuses for students as well as focus groups and meetings with student leaders and class visits. Employees had an opportunity to contribute either through one of more than 30 consultation sessions held across Seneca or online. More than 800 students and employees participated.

As well, the Aboriginal Education Council, chairs of the Program Advisory Committees, secondary school teachers and students, industry partners, thought leaders in education and government representatives shared their perspectives. Before approving the plan in June 2017, the Board of Governors held two strategic planning sessions both to hear the results of the consultations and to add their own perspective to the discussions.

The changing landscape of higher education

Pick up any newsletter or journal about higher education today and you will find at least one article or commentary about major changes underway in postsecondary education. Although it is sometimes difficult to separate trend from fad, and fact from hyperbole, higher education is indisputably evolving at an accelerating rate. Where there can be less consensus is why that change is happening and how the drivers of change in the rest of the world are affecting higher education in Ontario.

Highlighted below are four areas of significant change influencing Seneca's direction. What unites all of them is the thread of internationalization, a reminder that both directly and indirectly, sometimes positively and other times negatively, we are living in a shrinking world.

The world of work

Much has been written about the skills mismatch in Canada – the challenge of connecting the educational experience gained by postsecondary students to the requirements of the labour market. Yet that is precisely where colleges have always excelled. We use the insights and experience of our Program Advisory Committees and our expert faculty to create curriculum and learning experiences that meet the needs of employers, reflect the reality of today's workplaces and anticipate where tomorrow's careers will be made. A large majority of our students benefit from work-integrated learning opportunities from cooperative work terms to internships and placements to applied research projects.

A bigger challenge is trying to anticipate the shifts in the kind of skills in demand at any given time, and the changing nature of work itself as relentless automation and unstoppable globalization continues to reshape the essence of many occupations. As well, in many areas of the labour market demand for contractors and the self-employed continues to grow, leading to the rise of the "gig" economy. That is not just a lifestyle issue: it drives changes in curriculum and other learning opportunities to reflect the reality that our graduates will need entrepreneurial skills to be successful in virtually every occupation. We see signs of growing demand for shorter-term credentials with more focus on skills needed immediately in the work force. Seneca's response: constant vigilance

about changes in the labour market, continued innovation in program delivery and credential options, and ongoing program review and renewal.

As an employer, Seneca is experiencing the same wave of baby boomer retirements that is affecting all workplaces. We continue to focus on fostering a high level of employee engagement, meeting the challenge of renewing our own workforce by recruiting, developing and retaining employees.

A changing student population

The number of students graduating from Ontario high schools will continue to decline, bringing to a halt the steady growth that drove the expansion of postsecondary education in the province for decades. At the same time, continued strong demand for Canadian education from around the world, combined with a favourable climate in this country for immigrants, has led to a surge in international student enrolment, particularly in the large urban areas.

While growth in high school graduates is predicted to resume in the greater Toronto region in a few years, most other parts of the province will continue to see a decline, challenging the sustainability of public sector institutions in those regions and intensifying the competition for students. At Seneca, we have seen a rise in the number of mature students and expect that trend will continue. This reinforces the need for more flexibility, and delivering programs in ways and at times that meet the needs of learners who might be working, or have demanding family responsibilities, while they are returning to school.

Another reality affecting all of postsecondary education is the increase in students reporting mental health issues. Providing appropriate supports through counselling and other assistance is challenging in the absence of sufficient funding and available community services, yet we are committed to offering those supports that are vital to help all of our students achieve success.

Technology

The impact of fast-changing technology is all-pervasive in postsecondary education, as it is in most facets of our working and personal lives.

Technology consumes an ever-greater share of budgets and mindshare – from the challenge of maintaining currency in applications and hardware to meeting the expectations of globally connected students and employees, from harnessing the power of data analytics to anticipating how artificial intelligence will change education. At Seneca, we are meeting that challenge with an unmatched cluster of information technology and engineering programs, and with sophisticated facilities and infrastructure throughout our campuses.

Online education continues to grow as both a standalone option and blended with more traditional approaches to teaching and learning. It is particularly attractive for mature students, including those returning to postsecondary education to update their skills, retrain or continue their professional development while they are still working. While Seneca is a leader in continuing and online education, both are areas of increasing competition from established and new market entrants from every part of the world.

Evolving government policy

The balance of Seneca's revenue, between funding provided by public grants and funding generated by tuition fees, has swung dramatically in recent years. The direct operating grants from the Ontario government received by Seneca now represent roughly one-third of our total revenue, far outpaced by tuition from domestic and international students. The provincial government also recently overhauled

the funding formula for all publicly assisted postsecondary institutions – a recognition that the public funding for education can no longer be based on the assumption that domestic enrolment would continue to grow unabated. Nonetheless, the long-term sustainability of the postsecondary system continues to be a challenge as feeder populations shrink in rural and northern Ontario.

Partly as a response, the provincial government has started to nudge the system towards greater differentiation among institutions through the signing of Strategic Mandate Agreements with all publicly assisted postsecondary institutions. For its part, Seneca's differentiation can be measured in several ways. We are among a handful of polytechnic institutions that offer a considerable number of honours bachelor degrees and graduate certificates that are applied education at its best. We are maintaining our leadership in pathways by expanding partnerships with colleges to offer degree and diploma completion to their students, building a hub-and-spoke model that benefits students from across the province. Seneca has a highly diversified approach to international education, including growing our global educational consulting services in addition to our significant international student population and many international institutional partnerships. Finally, we have a strong focus on helping our graduates develop the skills and competencies to be engaged and contributing citizens through Seneca's core literacies, the essential skill set required for success today.

Values

Seneca's values start with centering all aspects of our operations, inside and outside the classroom, on student success. While that may seem obvious, and is a starting point broadly shared in the education system at all levels, we affirm being student-centered, and focused on the success of our students and our graduates, as the foundation of our values.

We also highlight these as our core values: Respect, Excellence, Innovating, Community, Diversity.

Respect

It is a simple axiom: in everything we do, in all ways, we treat each other with respect.

Excellence

While we will always be flexible in our approach, we never compromise on quality and standards.

Innovating

From the day our first students walked through our doors in 1967, we understood that the world is in constant evolution. We are always improving, innovating and looking ahead.

Community

We build bridges and networks within our institution, to our community and across the world. And, we give back, building and strengthening the communities where we live and work.

Diversity

Seneca celebrates its extraordinary diversity as an enriching strength and a competitive advantage in today's global economy.

Defining Tomorrow

In this Strategic Plan, we took the advice of our students, employees and partners to develop a comprehensive set of objectives. As reflected in our values, everything we do at Seneca starts with our students: how we help them achieve their goals, support them inside and outside the classroom, provide a teaching and learning environment that helps them develop the skills they will use in their careers and in life.

Through our extensive internal and external consultations, common themes emerged that have shaped this plan.

Leading through excellence

There is a strong pride in the leadership role Seneca plays in the postsecondary system. The focus on quality, the innovation in teaching and learning, the determination to improve continuously ... Seneca is known for the excellence of both our experienced and connected faculty and our programs, rooted in the needs of industry and communities. We proudly say that the proof of that excellence is in our graduates. This will continue.

A Polytechnic Education

In partnership with similar institutions in the province, Seneca has approached the provincial government to formally recognize polytechnic institutions as part of the postsecondary system in Ontario. Similar recognition of the differentiation in higher education has already happened in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Polytechnics Canada, the national association of polytechnics representing 13 institutions across Canada including six in Ontario, defines polytechnics this way:

“A polytechnic education combines the practical approach of a college education and the depth of study usually associated with a university program. Polytechnic graduates obtain degree-level programming, certificate, diploma, apprenticeship and post-graduate credentials. The competitive advantage of a polytechnic education is the seamless transition from education to employment,

Leading by example

From all groups we consulted came a consistent message: we need to model the behaviour we want and expect of our students. That starts with our insistence on a climate of respect in all that we do. It goes further. Our faculty were especially articulate about the need to be exemplars for the skills our graduates will need to forge successful careers, and productive lives. Connecting with the community, giving back, encouraging a culture of philanthropy, imbedding respect for our environment in all we do: our work is not just about enabling our graduates to make a living, but also to make a life.

Leading in collaboration

We lead the postsecondary system in pathways for our students and in partnerships. We are building on that leadership in the communities we serve by forging even stronger partnerships with our students, employees, industry, community organizations and other educational institutions. In an increasingly transparent and connected world, the ability to work and communicate seamlessly across boundaries, whether those are inside or external to Seneca, is no longer optional.

fostered through both apprenticeships in the skilled trades and work-integrated learning opportunities – these are hallmarks of polytechnic education.”

Seneca believes polytechnics are playing a leadership role in the evolution of higher education in Ontario: the expansion of career-based degrees, the growth in graduate certificates and the superior work-integrated learning opportunities are all evidence of the importance of these unique institutions.

We are also ready to play a larger role as the postsecondary system continues to respond to demographic and financial realities. As we have already started to do with Cambrian and Canadore colleges, two great institutions based in Sudbury and North Bay respectively, we are working with our colleagues in small, northern, and rural colleges to offer degree and diploma completion opportunities to students. Seneca takes great pride in being the leader in college-university transfer options, and is committed to building college-college partnerships of equal and enduring value to students.

Our Objectives

Our consultations yielded rich insights, drawing on the experiences of hundreds of students, employees and partners to construct a plan right for the times. In the spirit of the consultations, where we posed questions to engage the participants in conversations about our strategic purpose and direction, here are three questions about our strategic direction and our responses.

How can we prepare Seneca students for successful futures in a rapidly evolving world and economy?

Our work starts with an enduring commitment to our students: Whatever your educational aspirations or entrepreneurial ambitions, however far along you are in your search for a career that you can be passionate about, Seneca will help you define your future. We do that through high-quality programs delivered by outstanding faculty working with outstanding, supportive staff. We prepare you for the accelerating pace of change and tomorrow's world of work by offering programs with a wide range of experiential learning opportunities, a cross-disciplinary approach and our key core literacies underpinning the curriculum. We have a broad range of support services including tutoring, mentoring and leadership development available to our students. We will help you get ready.

- **High-quality programs providing relevant career and life skills**

Deliverables:

- New and renewed programs to meet the demand for a highly skilled workforce and fill emerging labour market needs
- Rigorous curriculum design, quality assurance and program review processes

- **Teaching excellence**

Deliverables:

- Current and connected faculty who are active in their academic and professional communities
- A commitment to Seneca's Teaching Standards, authentic assessments, contextual learning activities, and the thoughtful use of technology tools

- **Great student experiences**

Deliverables:

- Opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning, entrepreneurial skill development, and work integrated learning
- A comprehensive range of connected student support services

What does engaged citizenship look like in the 21st century, and how can Seneca make sure its graduates are ready to participate and lead in their communities?

Our consultations underscored the importance of equipping our students with a broad set of skills and experiences to be successful. Whether it was employers describing the ideal graduate, or faculty emphasizing the importance of ethics, professionalism and the core literacies, the words of our founding president Dr. William T. Newnham ring as true today as they were 50 years ago: "The Seneca graduate will make an informed and perceptive citizen."

In virtually every conversation we had there was emphatic support for continuing to stress Seneca's core literacies, a group of 10 key areas of knowledge that comprise the essential skill set for the successful graduate. It is part of the tool kit that will help our students not simply navigate but thrive in a world of change.

- **Exemplify Seneca's core literacies**

Deliverables:

- Evidence of core literacies being taught, practised and assessed in our programs
- Opportunities for students and faculty to develop the core literacies in context

- **Provide opportunities to develop professionalism, confidence and character**

Deliverables:

- Broaden the opportunities for students to develop leadership skills
- Expand international and volunteer learning opportunities for students and employees

- **Reflect in all we do a deep respect for the diversity of our community and each other**

Deliverables:

- Embrace an inclusive and supportive environment for students and employees
- Ensure our curriculum, academic community, and language reflect diverse ways of thinking and being

How can Seneca provide leadership in postsecondary education that benefits our students, our employees, our communities and our partners?

At Seneca, we believe in collaboration. Even in a highly competitive higher education market, we are proud to be the leader in transfer agreements and pathways with colleges and universities because they help students achieve their goals, whether locally or abroad. Partnerships with employers are important to creating expanded experiential learning opportunities and developing applied research projects, equally benefitting the communities we serve. Collaboration with our students is vital to understanding how we can enhance the learning and campus community experience. And, it is the collaboration among our employees, within departments and across the institution, that creates the respectful teaching and learning environment that enables us to achieve our shared goal of supporting our students' success.

All of this rests on a solid financial base where our approach to enrolment and revenue growth create opportunities to invest in our people, services and facilities. That is how we lead – by working with

others, by bringing true value to our partnerships – both inside and outside of Seneca – and by always continuing to improve what we do.

- **Lead in credit transfer and pathway options to, from and within Seneca**

Deliverables:

- Play a leadership role in the evolution of the system by creating a hub-and-spoke model to improve student mobility
- Expand partnerships, articulation agreements and pathways with colleges and universities in Canada and abroad

- **Build and strengthen student-centered partnerships with employers, communities, academic institutions and people**

Deliverables:

- Increase the participation of industry in applied research and entrepreneurial activities
- Expand international partnerships to increase opportunities for both students and employees

- **Provide our employees an outstanding place to learn and work**

Deliverables:

- Enhance opportunities for cross-department collaboration, communication and innovation
- Increase learning and development options for employees

- **Maintain a solid and sustainable financial foundation for the future**

Deliverables:

- Smart growth in enrolment, revenues and assets
- Increasing self-sufficiency in capital projects

Indigenous Education

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report has challenged all Canadians, and all Canadian institutions, to respond to generations of discrimination and abuse of Indigenous people with a positive and urgent response to the TRC's calls to action. The national system of colleges, polytechnics and institutes has drawn up an Indigenous Educational Protocol that Seneca signed in a 2015 ceremony at our Newnham Campus, located on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

We have taken inspiration from the Indigenous community in the design of our new Centre for Innovation, Technology and Entrepreneurship (CITE). We thank our Aboriginal Education Council

for its support and ideas in the conception of the building. Seneca is committed to supporting the TRC's calls of action to the postsecondary community, and is actively working on expanding our Indigenous focused curriculum in our nursing, early childhood education and journalism programs.

Our First Peoples@Seneca office supports hundreds of Indigenous students at Seneca with a variety of services and activities, including counselling, financial aid, social activities, an elder and opportunities to engage in traditional ceremonies.

Seneca is working with colleges and universities across Ontario and Canada to share lessons and learnings on incorporating Indigenous teachings into our programs, and reflecting Indigenous culture and history at our campuses.

Aiming for the Horizon

Our last Strategic Plan was founded on great teaching and learning, great student experiences and great foundations. Building on the accomplishments of the intensely productive and successful 2012-17 period, we enter our second half-century with a new 'great' underpinning our work: bringing great to the world. It is a simple statement that recognizes a fundamental truth: our ambitions have no boundaries, and when our students aim for the horizon, great things happen.

We are excited by a future where Seneca is:

- The acknowledged leader in sophisticated career-based and professional polytechnic education, whose graduates are sought by employers

- An international institution embracing and reflecting globalism, citizenship and pluralism
- Building a stronger future for postsecondary students by being the preferred partner for colleges, universities and industry
- Known for innovation to meet the dynamic needs of students, employers and the economy
- Focused on renewing and strengthening our talent and infrastructure.

While the core of our work will always be offering a great teaching and learning experience rooted in an advanced applied, broad-based education, we continue to evolve in exciting ways to serve new markets, a changing world of work and an expanding definition of student. That is how we are defining tomorrow.

Measuring Success

An institution of the complexity and size of Seneca could have literally hundreds of metrics or measures that would be indications of progress or achievement of our goals, big and small. As gauges of our success in meeting our goals, the Board of Governors has selected these five key areas to track:

1. Academic Quality:

Ensuring that Seneca's strong reputation for high-quality academic programs continues

2. Student Satisfaction:

Meeting student needs both inside and outside the classroom

3. Employee Engagement:

Continuing to build a dedicated and committed workforce

4. Enrolment Health:

Smart growth in enrolment during a time of demographic challenge

5. Financial Sustainability:

Operating results that provide the necessary resources to continue to offer great teaching and learning