



Long-Range Plan 2015 – 2020

Federation of Students,
University of Waterloo

March 25th, 2015

Overview

The long-range plan outlines Federation of Students (Feds) organizational goals for the next five years at the University of Waterloo. The Long-Range Planning Committee approached the design of this plan with one primary belief: that the goals of the Federation of Students should align with the goals of undergraduate students. The Committee was comprised of students, Feds Executive and Staff, and an external third party company.

To ensure that Feds' long-term goals aligned with those of students, this long-range planning process began with an extensive student engagement phase. During this phase, Feds engaged with over 1400 students over four months to learn about their experiences, needs and challenges. Through adapted focus group sessions, in-person surveys across campus, and an online short-answer survey, the Committee worked to understand the goals of students and what they needed to achieve them. Based on the belief that Feds' goals should align with the goals of students, members of the Feds Executive, Board and staff then collaboratively crafted this plan by exploring how Feds could help students reach their goals.

Approaching the long-range plan in this way ensured that Feds' long-term goals were represented by the voices and needs of students. In this way, the long-term goals identified in this plan should be relevant, regardless of annually evolving leadership.

An ongoing challenge for Feds is managing the transition between the incoming and outgoing Executive, Board and Council. This long-range plan is an essential tool for managing this transition by formalizing organizational focus and managing long-term goals. It is therefore critical that this plan is used to guide and develop shorter-term goals and action plans of Feds leadership and throughout the organization.

The Federation of Students

Over time, Feds' mission and core values remain foundational to the organization. While these may eventually evolve as the organization and its members evolve, they describe the core beliefs and purpose that will remain constant for future years. Feds serves as the voice and representation of students regarding any student issues, and will provide valuable support and assistance to the student body. Currently, and going forward, Feds will, at all times, maintain a student-centric member-driven focus.

Mission

"To serve, empower and represent the undergraduate students of the University of Waterloo."

Core Values

- We respect that students are the stakeholders of the Federation of Students and the primary reason for our existence.
- We enhance the quality of life for students by promoting a safe, secure and environmentally conscious campus.
- We strive for innovation and continuous improvement in all that we do to increase the level of service offered to students.
- We seek to maintain a fair and reasonable academic environment conducive to student discussion on all issues.
- We strive for unity in our campus community by promoting diversity and equity in all aspects of campus life.
- We demonstrate an accountable Feds through transparency, communication and responsiveness to ensure sound financial management.
- We work with students to help them discover their potential, determine future goals, and allow for personal reflection.

Core Student Needs

These core student needs were developed after extensive consultation with students from all over campus in person and through the use of surveys. The survey data and written component of the in person consultation was compiled and common themes arose. These various themes were grouped by current student needs, the current student’s future needs, and then the commonalities between the two groups.

Current Needs	Common Needs	Future Needs
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear and honest information about their options; 2. Self-awareness: the ability to identify what they are interested in, and to determine and re-evaluate their goals; 3. The ability to cope with risk and failure. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support: emotional, academic, and financial; 2. Self-awareness; 3. A sense of community and belonging. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Networking opportunities and skills: connecting with people who will help them achieve their goals; 2. Realistic information about their options and what they are getting themselves into; 3. Self-awareness: the ability to determine and re-evaluate their goals.

Strategic Directions

The following Strategic Directions outline the Federation of Students' high-level organizational goals for the next five years, which set long-term priorities for the organization.

>> Feds will cater its organizational identity to better encourage UWaterloo spirit.

Rationale

At the University of Waterloo (UWaterloo) school pride is rooted in students' academic rigour and innovative spirit. Feds will strive to understand this unique phenomenon and support school spirit through this lens. By building opportunities for school spirit through academia, competition and entrepreneurial spirit, Feds will build a brand that prospective students, current students, and alumni can support.

Commitment

Feds will support school spirit and enhance school pride. It is important that students recognize that they are a part of an organization that values student life. At the organizational level, Feds needs to be clear on its long-term priorities and business plan so that it can work together toward a common vision across departments year after year.

Action Strategies

- Expand the breadth and depth of student engagement based on the unique student profile as well as improving the relationship Feds has with its alumni network;
- Work on understanding the membership identity in order to support students' academic and entrepreneurial spirit;
- Communicate membership successes more effectively to the community;
- Build a brand that unites the student body.

»» Feds will proactively improve relations external to the UWaterloo community.

Rationale

There is a need for Feds to build and deepen relations with external decision makers to the University of Waterloo. Taking the time to build relationships with local, provincial and federal communities will provide new opportunities and support for our students. Feds' ability to support students relies heavily on its ability to negotiate and advocate on behalf of students with the University and other external stakeholders.

Commitment

Locally, Feds will advocate for student needs at the university and community level. Provincially and federally, Feds will connect students to opportunities and advocate for student needs with influential and key policy makers.

Action Strategies

- Develop and improve relationships with external decision-makers;
- Advocate for accessible, affordable, and high quality education;
- Expand off-campus presence and allow students the opportunity to give feedback on Feds' progress;
- Foster Feds' outreach potential by connecting current and prospective students to leaders in the community;
- Create advocacy solutions that are student friendly and can be implemented by external decision makers.

»» Feds will increase the relevancy of services and programs to reach a broader base of students.

Rationale

The skills, experience, and training gained through Feds services and programs impacts future opportunities and builds a balanced lifestyle for students. It is imperative that Feds strive to actively and positively enhance the student experience through services and programs that are relevant to students.

Commitment

Feds will continue to provide services and programs that support students in areas including mental health support, skill development opportunities, and a platform for community building and activities. Feds will work with student societies and other groups to support students.

Action Strategies

- Foster peer-to-peer communication to build a sense of organizational interest and community;
- Increase support and representation to marginalized groups;
- Target a broader range of people and interests through event planning and entertainment offerings;
- Increase relevance through initiatives, clubs, student groups, and societies on campus;

- Bring the different employees, representatives and volunteers together and review long term and foundational goals.

»» Feds will improve collaboration with the University and hold them accountable to students

Rationale

Feds exists within the larger University of Waterloo community. It is imperative that Feds is able to use strong relationships with university decision-makers to advocate for students' needs when negotiating at the university level. It is important that Feds leadership meets regularly with administrators and other departments, offers support wherever possible, works together toward common goals, and demonstrates Feds' value as an equal.

Commitment

Feds will be clear about its priorities and communicate them clearly across the organization and to UWaterloo Administration. Feds will strive to influence the decisions and plans of others in the UWaterloo system in order to work consistently and efficiently to address real student needs and priorities. Feds will continue to critically evaluate the impact UWaterloo has on the student experience.

Action Strategies

- Formalize any agreements with the intent to increase stability for students;
- Collaborate with UWaterloo to offer beneficial food and catering options to students;
- Ensure that UWaterloo has established a sound budgeting process to work with student needs;
- Create mechanisms for student feedback and student influence when reviewing and evolving university policy, and clarify roles and responsibilities for those in the UWaterloo system;
- Hold a student senator caucus and a government caucus;
- Explore mediation methods for negotiating agreements with UWaterloo;
- Meet regularly with senior administration to improve Feds' relationship with UWaterloo on student issues;
- Advocate to have Feds and student goals in the next UWaterloo strategic plan.



Feds will become a more efficient organization to improve the member experience

Rationale

Becoming a more efficient organization will help Feds serve students better by maximizing resources, providing opportunities for student involvement, and improving communication and collaboration with others in the UWaterloo system.

Commitment

Feds will strive to be highly efficient in dealing with current issues, but also proactive in identifying problems and opportunities on the horizon. Feds will be clear on its long-term priorities and business plan so that it can work toward a common sustainable vision across departments. This will allow Feds leadership to increase continuity and stability during transitions and become more consistent and efficient as a whole.

Action Strategies

- Take a predictive and proactive approach to problem solving and establish a sound budget process;
- Improve student engagement, sense of community, and involvement by increasing marketing and communications resources to reach more students;
- Develop a process for student opinion intake and action;
- Increase digital media output and presence to celebrate and clarify Feds' brand;
- Prioritize open communication and relationship building between Feds Executive, Board, Council, staff, students, and volunteers;
- Bring the different levels of Feds including employees, representatives and volunteers together and review long term and foundational goals;
- Prioritize open communication and relationship building between Feds Executive, Board, Council, staff, students, and volunteers;
- Establish organizational plans and priorities through staff orientations that will integrate Executive goals with Feds.

>> Feds will empower and support students as leaders

Rationale

As an integral part of the UWaterloo community, Feds is in a unique position to foster student leadership. This adds value to their student experience and ensures a future for the Federation of Students. The purpose and importance of the Executive, Council and Board positions should be communicated effectively and student leaders should hold Feds accountable for doing its job the best they can.

Commitment

Students will receive the resources and support they need to develop leadership skills and make the most of the opportunities available through Feds. Getting involved within Feds is an opportunity for students to challenge themselves, gain experience, and have an impact on their fellow students.

Action Strategies

- Communicate volunteer opportunities clearly in order to attract motivated students;
- Develop a path for students to gain more responsibility and opportunity over time;
- Offer training for part-time staff and volunteers and include the positions purpose in all leadership job descriptions;
- Champion student talent and student-run companies, where possible, to initiate new projects or ideas;
- Expand the definition of student success by integrating Feds throughout the student life cycle, and building and supporting a strong and vibrant community along the way;
- Show students the value of their skills and experiences and how it will impact their future opportunities;
- Help students grow as people and build character through opportunities and ambassador programs.

Annual Implementation Timeline

This long-range plan outlines Feds' organizational goals for the next five years. As such, this document should be treated as the starting point on which Executive and Council candidates could develop their termly goals.

Winter Term

- Candidates should utilize the long-range plan to develop their platform's strategic plan.
- An annual progress report must be drafted each year by the President of Feds to evaluate progress versus the strategic goals in the long-term plan, and the deliverables articulated in the annual strategic plan. The progress report will be presented to the general membership at the March General Meeting.
- Executive and management will create work plans based on the long-range plan and preliminary executive strategic plans.

Spring Term

- Board and Council will evaluate if budget decisions align with priorities and mandates within the long-range plan, and the Executive strategic plan.

Fall Term

- Executive and management will present updates to Board and Council on year-to-date progress on budgets and mandates.

Annual General Meeting Review

To ensure that the core values, objectives and strategic goals continue to meet the needs of the membership, the Executive and Board will undergo a formal review of the long-range plan every year after consulting with students-at-large. The progress measured will be formalized and presented at an Annual General Meeting in order to measure success annually.