



# WUSA's Long Range Plan 2020-2025

# A Letter from the President

Hello Warriors!

A long-range plan brings clarity to an organization by setting future priorities. It outlines the major initiatives that the staff and student leaders of WUSA will work together to achieve. It casts a vision for the future and helps to ensure the strategic use of resources to meet key goals.

A long-range plan paints in broad strokes. It does not highlight every detail, nor does it account for everything an organization does. Projects or other areas not included in the long-range will still see forward motion within WUSA.

The themes of this plan are intended to be flexible. Each goal and accompanying core objectives provide WUSA with high-level, organizational direction, while leaving enough flexibility for leadership to adapt to new circumstances. Each year, the Board of Directors will revisit the Long-Term Strategic Plan to help guide the Executive's annual plan, with progress reported through Students' Council.

Over the last year and a half, I met with our members, staff, and constituency societies to discuss WUSA's next five years. I heard many thoughts about what's best for our students, this organization, and the campus community.

Change is inevitable. COVID-19 was unpredictable. As best we can, we must respond to change with a willingness to adapt. Alongside the rest of the world, we've had to change the way we communicate, how we connect, the services we offer, and the ways we advocate. The way we build communities across campus and across the world has entirely changed.

Before looking ahead to the next five years, we must reflect on our last five. This document highlights where we've come from and where we hope to move toward.



It will guide how we communicate, operate, and adapt to better support our membership.

This plan would not be possible without the hard work of Michael Beauchemin. When speaking about the long-range plan, he had this to say:

When I engaged in the planning for the Long-Range Plan in spring term 2019, I had no idea what was coming in the following 8 months, let alone 3-5 years. It was a wild time and I remember balking a little at the enormity of the task ahead of me. The University had just come off a multi-year planning and debating and finagling of their Strategic Plan, managing to get it approved in the second half of 2020. When I looked at what we needed to do, and the expectations placed upon me to create a Long-Range Plan in a period less than 8 months, it was all quite daunting. Above all, I never would have predicted that a global pandemic would knock me off my feet in the later half of my term.

In the time since I have stepped down and stepped back from the project, it has come a wonderful distance. I'm beyond glad that Abbie was the one to take it over – she has done an incredible job to bring it to fruition - during a pandemic, no less!

The Long-Range Plan needed to be a document that people would reference in board meetings or by staff and exec to remove the guesswork from decisions. A document that can sit on desks and in meeting rooms without being out of place, and to which we can point every so often and say, "We are achieving our goals." To my knowledge, no other Long-Range Plan at this institution has managed to do this, so we needed to build consensus with staff and students alike – students, for their democratic support and because students make any decision worth making in our organization, and staff, because nothing in the organization can happen without the staff, who dedicate many years at a time to supporting and advancing our organizational goals.

I believe that Abbie has succeeded in delivering on this tall order, but only time will tell for sure. We cannot say for sure what tomorrow will bring, but we do what we can to prepare ourselves in advance with consistency of purpose and conviction in action.

Former President, Michael Beauchemin

Thank you to all who contributed – those who shared their voice, their vision, their suggested improvements. And special thank you to Michael for laying the ground work for the next five years. We hope to continue to create opportunities to connect with you and build a strong community together.

*Abbie Simpson*

Abbie Simpson  
President & CEO  
FY 2021



# WUSA's Last 5 Years

Since 2015, WUSA has been working under its previous strategic plan. As we depart from our old plan and press forward on a new path, we wish to reflect upon the last five years to guide our forward motion.

In our last long-range plan, we identified six thematic areas, and we wish to briefly report on activities in each, few of which were specified by the previous strategic plan, but all of which fall within its goals:

1

**Enhancing school pride-** We recognize this as an area that could have seen more development. We have redesigned the President's Leadership Awards to showcase our volunteers to the entire university community, have co-operated with the university on upgrades and expansions to Athletics infrastructure, and provide popular Welcome Week events that expose students to the wide range of ways they can embody the Warrior spirit.

2

**Advocating on student needs to the university and government-** We have seen significant achievements in university advocacy, including listening to the voices of our members and implementing a fall reading week, advocating for the creation of Waterloo's international student fee guidelines, and the co-op fee review. We have also seen unprecedented government investments stemming from WUSA's direct advocacy and advocacy in conjunction with OUSA and UCRU. Examples include advocacy through two years of expanded OSAP funding, expanded experiential learning funding, expanded funding for Indigenous students, and eight billion dollars in COVID-19 relief.

3

**Building community and mental health resiliency-** WUSA was a driving force behind expansions to the mental health, the launch of the President's Advisory Committee on Student Mental Health (CoSMH) panel, the Mental Health collaborative, and our new EmpowerMe program. Our advocacy has also complemented this, with publication of OUSA's In It Together report, and WUSA securing government funding for the 1st and 2nd rounds of the Mental Health Services Grant. We have also built community through launching a new service, better funding our existing services to provide support, and are moving towards the addition of thousands of new square feet of student space.



4

**Improved access to and communication with university administration-** We have never had more access to university administration. We serve on more university committees than ever, and have been included on multiple hiring committees for members of Waterloo's senior administration. We have used this influence to facilitate some of our advocacy achievements, and have received proactively student-focused decisions as a result of administrator goodwill, including CEE's initiative to provide more flexibility and autonomy for students during the co-op process and invitations to represent the university during government visits.

5

**A proactive and efficient mindset-** WUSA has proactively monitored the business environment, opening our new in-house food preparation facility to provide expanded options at International News and launching the Bomber renovation project. We have also reacted to changes in our fiscal environment, identifying a gap and creating a new capital projects fund, expanding our endowment fund, and expanding funding to advocacy areas, while expecting efficiency in all areas such as through closing some services, building an efficient in-house elections system, cutting costs related to OUSA general assemblies, and negotiating favourable fee arrangements with OUSA, as well as negotiating another strong expansion to the Universal Bus Pass agreement. These efficiencies have allowed us to continue a full complement of service offerings with minimal increases to fees. Internally, we have also streamlined managerial decisions by creating a smaller Senior Leadership Team and expanded Board of Directors terms to two years to increase experience and continuity at the highest end of our managerial structure.

6

**Developing leaders-** Leadership development in WUSA has improved from 2015, with the institution of a new, leaner Students' Council transition, a more formalized Board transition, and increased communication from our marketing department to prospective student leaders. Our Executive leadership in recent years has come from all areas of the organization, from our student employees, clubs and services leaders, from the Orientation world, as well as more typical governance pathways. Outside of the governance portfolio, we have decreased economic barriers to participation as a Services Coordinator by establishing coordinators as paid part-time employees.



# WUSA's Next 5 Years

Below we've highlighted WUSA's thematic commitments for the next five years. We believe there's clarity in keeping them short, but hope you'll also find them both meaningful and achievable. Together, they'll show us what students most value, allow them the opportunity to engage with our decision-making processes, access high-value goods and services, and be part of a student community that is vibrant and supportive.

## 1

We will make it easier and more accessible for students to engage with WUSA and our constituency societies. To accomplish this, we will

- A)** Create a member management system to improve our connection with students, and allow members to document their experiences within WUSA
- B)** Review and implement recommendations from equity and governance audits to ensure WUSA is a place where every student can safely engage
- C)** Continue to engage and partner with our constituency societies and satellite campuses to support student-run programming
- D)** Implement a Student Research Program to provide meaningful roles for students and increase capacity for data collection to better understand our membership base.

## 2

We will continue our commitment from our last strategic plan to build belonging and campus engagement. To accomplish this, we will:

- A)** Identify and address barriers to democratic participation and employment for marginalized students and staff to ensure greater accessibility of full-time, part-time, and volunteer roles
- B)** Continue to expand and improve our Clubs Administration System by adjusting to the ongoing and changing needs of student clubs
- C)** Continue to expand WUSA services and operations beyond the Student Life Centre to meet students where they are, whether online or on campus



## 3

We will support the continued personal and professional growth of our students and staff by offering worthwhile roles and new opportunities. To accomplish this, we will:

- A)** Engage full-time staff to support student initiatives and student professional development, including through mentorship and training
- B)** Invest in genuine and frequent volunteer/staff appreciation and recognition
- C)** Recognize our staff as a limited but valuable resource in serving students; uphold their health and wellbeing by committing to reasonable workloads, and offering support from leadership when needed
- D)** Commit to organization-wide anti-racism efforts and training to ensure equity relationships with staff and students and overall, within our culture

## 4

We will continue to serve students with efficiency through our commercial services and operation of the Student Life Centre. To accomplish this, we will:

- A)** Prioritize the Lounge Plan
- B)** Provide quality, student-funded spaces by reviewing space agreements with a student focus
- C)** Build infrastructure that supports successful student papers on campus and online
- D)** Maintain a sustainable financial position through improved Board oversight

## 5

We will increase student supports. To accomplish this, we will:

- A)** Continue to support constituency societies and student-run services organizing events and supports for students in their communities
- B)** Evaluate services and programs to best support the needs of the student population, emphasizing supports for racialized, marginalized, and international students
- C)** Engage alumni to support student-run funds and projects, and contribute to our community



# WUSA's Advocacy Priorities

We know our members expect us to put our vision front and center. While there are meaningful improvements to be made in-house, we will also push for the university and all forms of government to prioritize students in their decision making. We cannot promise success, but we can commit our effort. While below we highlight only six advocacy themes, this is by no means an exhaustive list. These are among the most frequent we hear, which for us makes them some of the most meaningful to address.

1

**Housing** | The last five years have seen unfinished buildings and poor living conditions. We have begun work on a housing report that will launch a new era in our advocacy on building more and better housing to increase competition among landlords and deliver safer more affordable housing to Waterloo students.

2

**International Students** | International student tuition remains unregulated in Ontario. We will continue to ask the provincial government to introduce a separate tuition regulation scheme for international students. We will also identify educational barriers unique to international students and highlight them to the university; whether that be increased health and mental health support in preferred languages, addressing xenophobia. We will work with our partners at UCRU to push for better paths to permanent residency for students wishing to stay in Canada, including placing greater emphasis on co-operative education terms during the application process.

3

**COVID-19** | COVID-19 is not finished and neither are we. Our organization delivered recommendations that led to increases in student grants and the Canada Emergency Student Benefit. We will continue our advocacy to the provincial and federal governments, as well as to the university to deliver high-quality online learning.





4

**Equity and Accessibility of Education** | Our commitment to equity and accessibility includes identifying barriers to access for all students to ensure full and safe participation in post-secondary education. We will identify these barriers through listening and proactive study. We will address them by working with decision-makers to communicate, identify and implement solutions, all while upholding ongoing consultation every step of the way.

5

**Affordability** | Students are concerned about their finances, and for good reason. Universities continue to expand service offerings and deliver innovative teaching, but government funding to universities remains stagnant in real dollars, and provincial financial aid has been cut. We will continue to be a bold voice at the provincial table to push for financial support for the University of Waterloo. We will also identify and push for pragmatic steps the university can take to increase efficiency, increase value, and where possible, decrease fees.

6

**Educational Quality** | As student societies continue their good work in advocating for faculty specific policies, WUSA will continue to support them where they ask. WUSA will also continue to identify campus-wide policy changes and investments that could benefit students, and bring them to administration, making clear that what is good for student educational outcomes are also good for the university.



# About WUSA

The Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) is a not-for-profit organization which serves as the official collective voice and legal representative of undergraduate students at the University of Waterloo. Since 1967, our student-led organization has provided undergrads with the services and support they need to reach their academic goals and make the most of their university experience.

# Acknowledgements

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