

Humber Tomorrow

Strategic Priorities
and Actions

Spring 2021

**WE ARE
FUTURE FOCUSED**

Introduction

“In a rapidly evolving world that often pushes the boundaries of possibility, conventional practices in post-secondary education are not enough. It will take a bold approach, the courage to transcend tradition and a pioneering spirit to reimagine our future.”

As we begin the last two years of our 2018-23 Strategic Plan and continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we return to that plan’s opening words for guidance and inspiration as we look ahead.

This reimagining of our future takes on a different meaning as we reflect on how we and our learners have responded and adapted over the past year. We have accelerated approaches to teaching, learning and service delivery that may have only recently seemed years away from full implementation. We have demonstrated our resilience and imagination in countless ways.

In the early days of the pandemic, we all needed to react and adapt. While we continue to respond to the evolving impacts of COVID-19 on our students, employees and operations, we now have the opportunity to identify what has changed across the college and what we have learned from our experiences. How we want to apply those learnings to strengthen Humber and respond to the changing needs of our diverse learners amidst the rapid social, economic and technological change requires us to assess and reposition our initiatives and activities.

Updating our current strategic plan is timely and provides the opportunity to share a refreshed set of future-focused strategic priorities with the Humber community. They will enable us to maximize new opportunities as we work together to evolve our programs and operations across our physical and digital campuses. They are critical components to our vision of transforming post-secondary education through global, polytechnic leadership, and to ensuring that we maintain a strong organizational culture focused on student success.

Over the coming months, [we will be engaging the college community](#) to talk about what we each think Humber will look like post-pandemic and how we carry our existing vision forward into the ‘new normal.’



Our Current Context

A number of key trends shaping post-secondary education have been amplified or accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic while new ones have also emerged.

Some of these trends include:

- Growing understanding that lifelong learning is required as people move through their careers. The need for reskilling and upskilling continues to increase, compounded by the advent of Industry 4.0 technologies and the shortening of times between changes in roles/employers
- Increased comfort with, and demand for, online delivery and services; not just in education but other sectors, like health and business
- Expansion of the number of people and businesses working remotely and the widespread use of videoconferencing
- Inequities in terms of technology and internet access and levels of digital skills and knowledge
- Heightened awareness of social and racial inequities and expectations of actions to foster diverse, inclusive and sustainable work and learning environments
- Competition in online education and e-learning as schools and institutions across the world adapted programming to virtual and hybrid delivery
- Expectation that programs are directly tied to career development and advancement
- An upsurge in competency-based shorter certificates, skills-training programs and microcredentials
- Rising, but still not widespread, use of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technologies
- Growth in the 15-24 age population to continue over the next few decades
- Growing demand for programs by international students that meet post-graduate work permit requirements
- An unexpected decline in Canadian immigration rates and new ambitious targets set for 2021-23 by the federal government

As we identify our short-term actions and begin conversations about our future state, we need to be aware of their impact on our programs and operations. We will be undertaking research to assess how these trends are impacting Humber's current program mix, resourcing, and enrolment and capital plans.



Our Strategic Priorities

Over the next couple of years, we will be focused on the following five strategic priorities. Our efforts within these areas will bridge our current activities to our next strategic plan and will be critical in our adaptation to a changed post-secondary world post-COVID-19.

- 1. Flexible Learning Strategy**
- 2. The New Polytechnic Approach**
- 3. Remote and Hybrid Work Culture**
- 4. Healthy and Inclusive Community**
- 5. Digital Campus**

We see the first two of these as differentiators, furthering the spirit of ‘Lead, Transform, Differentiate’ that infuses our current strategic plan, and the latter three as foundational to our values-driven approach to teaching, learning and working.

Actions

Each strategic priority has a set of actions that reflects important activity underway or planned to support their full implementation. Their status is indicated by the following symbols:

- Underway actions
- Planned actions



Strategic Priorities - Differentiators

1. Flexible Learning Strategy

Humber offers a broad range of programs and credentials through a variety of delivery modes to enhance choice and access to education. The pandemic has accelerated the demand for part-time studies, flexible delivery and for access to shorter-term training and reskilling programs and microcredentials.

With a recent shift to marketing our non-full-time options under the new Continuous Professional Learning banner, and with work underway to implement an enterprise software system to support registration for continuing education and corporate training offerings, we have taken critical steps to operationalize a more coordinated flexible learning approach.

Prioritizing our flexible learning strategy will enable us to achieve a number of goals such as: increasing access and responding to student demand; creating new pathways; growing the number of credentials and offerings; creating more open enrolment opportunities; driving local economic development; and, supporting government priorities for retraining and upskilling.

As we work to meet the expectations for a more flexible approach to lifelong learning, we will need to use our knowledge and relationships to ensure our programming continues to support career development and the evolution of multiple sectors. Engaging with employers to encourage and support their professional development and training initiatives and using institutional data and learner preferences to inform our delivery modalities will ensure we are positioned to meet labour market demand.

Actions:

- Create new micro-credentials and micro-certifications as well as new completion opportunities by more effectively using Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition (PLAR) processes.
- Implement a unified, comprehensive Continuous Professional Learning strategy, with a focus on growing our market share through part-time and corporate training programs delivered in virtual or hybrid formats.
- Support teaching and learning excellence through a coordinated approach led by the new Centre for Innovative Learning, engaging leaders, faculty members and staff.
- Leverage the digital and e-learning strategies to deliver more of our post-secondary credentials in flexible formats such as hybrid, part-time, or accelerated, with a particular focus on graduate certificates and bachelor's degrees.
- Understand what data we have now, and what we need to collect for evidence-based decision-making around types and timing of offerings.

What is flexible learning?

A set of new ways to structure Humber's offerings to increase access and improve the satisfaction and success rates of students, partners, and clients. Flexible learning can include adaptations to delivery modalities (e.g. online, hybrid, or face-to-face), curriculum structures and delivery patterns (e.g. modularized, synchronous, asynchronous, stackable, etc.), and program content (e.g. through the use of Open Learning Resources).

2. The New Polytechnic Approach

At Humber, we define polytechnic education as the in-demand combination of career-focused theory and hands-on learning. Our wide range of credentials are taught by expert faculty plugged into the latest industry and technology trends. By combining our innovative approaches to helping students gain practical experience with our online teaching and learning experience, we are redefining polytechnic education with an eye to engaging a wider set of learners.



- a) Redefining “practice”: Hands-on and work-integrated learning is in the Humber DNA. Much of our programming will always take place on campus in learning spaces and labs outfitted with specialized equipment and onsite with employers. In a “physically distanced, hands-off” COVID-19 world, we have found new ways for our learners to gain practical, career-related experience while studying online or in a hybrid format. Now, we have the opportunity to combine the best of on-campus and online learning to create a unique polytechnic experience.

Whether through virtual work placements, applied research projects or skills development challenges, we are helping students connect to industry and community partners while gaining the practical experience they need to succeed. We need to see these new approaches as an evolution of hands-on learning and collaborate with our partners to bring more of these opportunities to learners.

Actions:

- Refresh our Academic Plan to support high-quality and innovative learning experiences in-person and online.
- Continue to invest in specialized learning labs and classrooms at our campuses and build new spaces to support creative industry collaboration and performing arts instruction within the Humber Cultural Hub.
- Deepen integration of the Program Planning, Development and Renewal, Teaching and Learning, and Applied Research and Innovation teams to foster more collaboration and support capacity building for faculty members.
- Learn from virtual experiential learning opportunities created during the pandemic to strengthen our ability to maximize these for students and partners going forward.
- Work with our partner employers to improve the quantity, quality, and career-relevance of virtual and in-person work-integrated learning experiences.
- Launch the Industry and Community Connector Hub at the International Graduate School.

- b) Breaking down barriers to further education: Humber is a leader in the college system in developing new pathways and institutional collaborations to enhance student mobility. With more than 80 honours baccalaureate degrees and Ontario graduate certificates, Humber is well positioned to help more learners build on their education through a receiving institution model, in which learners come to Humber to complete or upgrade credentials.

We have learned a lot through the recent shift of most programs to online delivery as a result of COVID-19. Finding the right mix of in-person, hybrid and online approaches will enable us to provide high quality, industry-connected experiences to an even greater number of learners. A focus on expanding online and hybrid degree completion opportunities will uniquely position the college while increasing access to high quality undergraduate education across the province.

What is the receiving institution model?

In this model, Humber will focus on enrolling more students through pathways and prior learning recognition to enable them to complete or upgrade their credentials. This would see an increase in students beginning their studies at Humber in upper semesters.

Actions:

- Better showcase 'transfer in', advanced standing and PLAR options to prospective learners.
- Build and develop new partnerships with polytechnics and colleges to create opportunities for learners to gain credentials not currently available in their home communities.
- Assess how in-person components of hybrid programs could be bundled to create more choice and flexibility for learners who prefer to limit the duration of time required on campus.
- Identify degree completion and graduate certificate completion pathways for which programming should continue to be offered online and those that should be permanently adapted to an online or hybrid delivery mode.



Foundational

3. Remote and Hybrid Work Culture

The majority of Humber employees continue to work offsite as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Humber at Home pledge was developed early on to reflect the principles that ground our approach to supporting each other while we do our best to offer our critical programs, services and supports online. Informed by the experiences to date with the shift to a digital campus, a comprehensive remote work policy was developed and implemented at the end of 2020.

In the short term, our focus will continue to be on ensuring employees are supported in their work; feel connected to colleagues and the college; and, have access to the right tools and equipment for collaboration and communication. In particular, faculty members and technologists along with teams delivering online services and supports to students will continue to need technology support and related professional development.



We will continue to build on our successes in using virtual platforms for information sharing and town hall discussions. Recruitment and advising activities as well as student services will provide engagement opportunities both in person and virtually.

In planning for the future, we will need to identify what the required approaches, resources, and supports will be for ongoing remote and hybrid work. Enabling remote work and balancing in-person interactions within and across teams and campuses will pose new challenges and bring new opportunities.

Actions:

- Continue implementation of the remote work policy.
- Ensure digital campus plan priorities support remote/hybrid work.
- Review how we conduct meetings and use technology to support our interactions to ensure those working remotely feel both engaged and able to balance work with personal priorities and wellness.
- Assess what additional/new data we are generating as a result of the shift to remote learning and service delivery and how they can inform decision-making.

4. Healthy and Inclusive Community

Humber's culture is expressed through a community that prioritizes health, well-being, sustainable approaches and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

As part of our current strategic plan, we have launched our second Sustainability Plan and made significant progress towards the creation of the inaugural college-wide EDI framework and an Indigenous Education Plan. Our Humber Learning Outcomes include a focus on helping learners develop mindsets related to both sustainability and EDI, preparing them for complex situations and interactions in workplaces and communities.



With the goal of becoming Canada's healthiest campus, we want to make well-being a part of everything we do at Humber. We are all experiencing different degrees of isolation and anxiety as COVID-19 continues to impact our ability to connect in person and partake in regular activities. Helping employees and students prioritize their own health and wellness has never been more important.

Actions:

- Engage students and employees through strategies that promote personal and work well-being.
- Complete and launch Humber's institutional EDI framework and strategy.
- Finalize a Climate Action Plan as part of our commitment to sustainability and to meet our energy reduction targets.
- Establish and weave sustained practices for EDI and Indigenous Ways of Being, Knowing and Doing into our daily work.
- Conduct an employment systems review and develop an employment equity plan.
- Develop and launch a Humber community ambassador program that will strengthen relationships with local organizations.

Humber Learning Outcomes (HLOs)

The HLOs highlight mindsets and skills that deeply engage students in their learning and empower them to take on real-world challenges. The Humber Learning Outcomes framework includes three interconnected parts:

1. Key Mindsets: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainability, and Systems Thinking.
2. A Meta-Skill: Critical Thinking.
3. Skills in Action: Collaboration, Communication, Digital Fluency, Innovation, Leadership, Professionalism, and Strategic Problem-Solving.

5. Digital Campus

Technology continues to rapidly change the way we live, work and interact. Building on our current digital campus plan and experiences of operating during the pandemic, we have continued to look for new ways to enhance teaching, learning and discovery and to improve the workplace experience for staff and faculty through new tools and platforms. Like all large organizations, we are also faced with ongoing challenges related to technology currency and lifecycle renewal, cybersecurity and risk management.

Our current reality has also shone light on the digital divide within Humber's learners, demonstrating that online learning has its own set of equity issues that must be addressed. When it comes to both employees and students, levels of digital fluency vary, as do technology and reliable internet access.

It's time for us to refresh our digital campus plan priorities, with a focus on transforming the student experience and ensuring integration with the priorities outlined in the above sections.

Actions:

- Prioritize initiatives that support a range of future program delivery options: on-campus/online/hybrid.
- Support the development and delivery of exceptional online student services and engagement tools and an enhanced website experience.
- Develop the digital fluency of faculty and staff to support adoption of digital capabilities and to stimulate use of innovative practices and technology.
- Improve the employee experience in both on-campus and remote work arrangements to streamline workflow, enhance communication, reduce manual work and support community connection.
- Build competencies to improve the management of Humber data and create additional value through skill development and advanced tools to aggregate, analyze and visualize data.
- Implement new capabilities and tools to support prospect engagement, marketing and growth of flexible and continuous professional learning offerings.



Looking Ahead

Our staff, students and partners are the foundation of our community. We know there is a wealth of individual and institutional knowledge that will help Humber emerge stronger than ever, and to position us to continue to lead the way forward in polytechnic education.

This spring, there will be a number of opportunities for Humber employees to share their experiences and perspectives to help us achieve our action items.

We'll be asking the following questions:

- Through your observations and experiences over the last year, what do you see as critical to the future of post-secondary education? What do you think the key features of the Humber experience will be post-pandemic?
- How has education and the needs of learners changed? What do you think Humber needs to do to continue to successfully support its learners?
- How do we leverage our recent investments in online learning, digital resources, and employee training (in areas like: online teaching; EDI; Indigenous Ways of Being, Knowing and Doing; and, Sustainability)?
- How can we best support our people in achieving our strategic goals?

Some of the discussions will take place in small groups within departments and Faculties and in larger, cross-functional forums, like College Council and town halls. We will also be providing engagement opportunities via social media and online. The feedback we receive will provide a foundation for the refresh of our academic, digital campus and capital development plans.

While we continue this unprecedented journey together through the global pandemic, we remain committed to our students and employees. We also remain committed to our mandate and to putting our values into action. At Humber, these commitments don't change during challenging times; in fact, they guide us in all that we do.

We will continue to rely on the courage and innovation of our employees to take risks and push forward into new, unfamiliar and at times uncomfortable spaces. We will be open to hearing from our students, employees and partners about their needs and experiences. We will examine long-held assumptions about what is possible through the lens of what we have achieved this past year. And while our collective vision for the future is still to be shaped, we know it will be rooted in our dedication to keeping equity, health and wellbeing, and sustainability at the core of all that we do.

We invite you to join the conversation this spring.

The Humber Executive Team

We want to hear from you!

Visit <http://humber.ca/wearehumber> to share your responses to the Looking Ahead questions or be a part of the conversation on social media using **#HumberTomorrow**.