

Planning for Success: UBC DENTISTRY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

BY JOHN VIGNA

Over the course of nearly half a century, there have been remarkable changes in the Faculty of Dentistry at UBC. These changes have advanced oral health in British Columbia, Canada and around the world. The Faculty has also served the disadvantaged in BC and abroad, advanced research internationally and prepared to continue making significant contributions to the dental profession's ever expanding body of knowledge.

The Faculty's strong track record to date might lead to questions regarding the need for a strategic plan. Why would the faculty, students, staff, alumni and stakeholders spend nearly two years working on a new strategic plan? Simply put, a strategic plan, which is a guide for the future that includes all stakeholders, will ensure the continuation of the Faculty's role as a world leader in oral health.

The new Strategic Plan establishes priorities for the next five to seven years that will allow a productive focus of the Faculty's specific activities and achievement of identified goals. The Plan builds on the fact that the Faculty is already well prepared to continue making significant contributions to the dental profession's body of knowledge through active faculty research, outstanding curriculum and a commitment to community service.

In order to better appreciate the Strategic Plan and the potential outcomes, it is vital to dig deeper and understand how and why the Plan came into existence.

STRATEGIC GOALS

- 01 Faculty and staff model the Core Values of the Faculty of Dentistry as per our Guiding Principles.
- 02 Accept and graduate students who share Faculty of Dentistry Core Values as per our Guiding Principles.
- 03 All undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate programs meet the highest standards of excellence and reflect community demands.
- 04 Encourage greater connection between UBC and the external community, including the university, organized dentistry and dental hygiene, practising dentists and dental hygienists, and the greater communities of Vancouver and the province.
- 05 Develop multi-site clinical learning environments to optimize learning opportunities, better serve disadvantaged population groups and recruit the best students from all sectors of BC.
- 06 Expand the international presence at UBC and UBC's presence globally.
- 07 Develop and maintain outstanding facilities to support students through their programs in dentistry.
- 08 Increase research capacity.
- 09 Develop graduate programs.
- 10 Develop research support.

A NEW DIRECTION

Planning for the future is an important academic process. UBC president Stephen Toope is leading this process campus-wide so that everyone develops an understanding about the direction in which UBC is heading. It is important that the entire university moves forward in a coordinated way and that the Faculty of Dentistry is aligned with the UBC objectives. Dean Shuler initiated the process in the Faculty of Dentistry soon after becoming dean in April 2007.

“Historically, we’ve always had a strategic plan,” says Dr. Christopher Zed, associate dean for Strategy and External Development. “Every faculty is required to have one to help explain to the public what UBC is doing. But the dean came with a different strategic vision than we had before. He wanted the strategic plan to be more operational.”

One of the challenges Dean Shuler inherited was that the existing strategic plan was composed primarily of a series of different goals that were loosely coordinated, which is not uncommon in most strategic plans. But more importantly, the dean recognized that



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the achievement of these goals needed to be defined by specific benchmarks to clarify explicitly what must be achieved to reach each goal. Benchmarks also require the development of assessment metrics that can be evaluated to measure progress towards the goal.

“The development of a strategic plan often requires an enormous effort on the part of numerous individuals in the faculty,” says Shuler. “Yet, after the plan is completed, it often

sits unused in a drawer because achievement of the goals was not established by developing an operational plan.”

“I went through the strategic plan that had been created before I arrived at UBC and found that the numerous short goals coalesced around three main themes: *enhancing the student experience, amplifying research productivity and increasing community involvement,*” he says. “There’s tremendous overlap between the three themes, but all of them relate to the fundamental goals of the Faculty and university. After identifying these three themes, the four associate deans went through the previous strategic plan, linking the original goals with one or more of the themes. To address the three main themes, overlaps between goals were found and new goals were identified to fill gaps that existed. The result was that some of the previous goals were more clearly emphasized and new ones began to emerge.”

Understandably, the associate deans had many high-level, broad goals after reviewing the former strategic plan. In narrowing their list, they

Eventually, the wide list of goals was narrowed down to ten strategic goals. Each goal consisted of a set of elements, including the specific goal statement, the rationale for the importance of this goal to the Faculty of Dentistry, the enabling activities that would be required to achieve the goal, the resource/budget requirements for the goal, a plan for assessing outcomes, and both interim and ultimate benchmarks. The draft of the ten strategic goals was then presented to the Appointments, Budget and Planning Committee for input and revision. The revised goals were opened up to faculty consultation in the autumn of 2008.

In over a dozen meetings, the Faculty spent time discussing and revising the draft strategic goals to focus the objectives and ensure that the necessary enabling activities were recognized, that appropriate benchmarks were identified and assessment metrics established. In January 2009, the new strategic plan was presented in numerous meetings to the important Faculty stakeholder groups—including students, staff, part-time faculty, alumni and members of the profession—for consultation and critique. The plan has been

considered what could apply today and what could be applied in the future, and in determining the value of the goals, they asked how each goal related to others and whether there were any crossovers.

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refined through nearly 30 face-to-face meetings and through discussion in an online forum.

“Our goal with the strategic plan was to develop a direction for the future that was understood by the people in our Faculty and resulted in intentional progress towards the goals. This will allow us to focus our energy and resources on these goals,” says Shuler. “Unfortunately, with many strategic plans, the review of achievement only occurs after several years, and progress

towards the goals has simply been a coincidence. The result is that resources have not been efficiently allocated and opportunities are missed.”

Shuler adds, “There were two main challenges for all of us involved in completing the strategic plan: the identification of the benchmarks and the establishment of assessment metrics to measure progress towards the benchmarks. These are critical to ensure that we know where we want to be in five to seven years and plan accordingly. Most of us had experienced strategic planning processes that were more

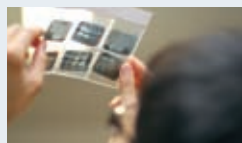
visionary than aiming for specific targets. So we had to come up with clear definitions about what we were going to do and what we were not going to do. In the end, we had to go through an enormous cultural shift to get there.”

The Strategic Plan, which began in autumn 2007, is operational today and will help guide the Faculty in determining how they allocate their resources and set budgets for five to seven years. It will be incorporated as part of the overall UBC Strategic Plan and, in fact, the process followed by the Faculty of Dentistry has been adopted by UBC as

the university’s Strategic Plan is being completed.

“One clear thing emerged from the process: a well-defined strategic plan would be transparent and allow everyone to see how they contribute to the achievement of the goals. The plan would allow us all to be on the same page and would provide us with a touchstone to guide us in all that we do, so we know where we are going,” says Shuler. “That way, everyone can take pride in the Faculty goals and feel as if they are important to their achievement.”

Enhancing THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



“The most important thing we do is teach students,” says Zed. “We want to give them the best possible education. The students have to have an experience above and beyond, relative to other choices. But to provide this, we need to have a strong triad: great educators, leading-edge researchers and highly skilled clinicians. This is what supports ‘enhancing the student experience.’ This is what produces a great learning environment for students. How do we deliver that experience? Through translational research that comes out of the labs, the classroom experience, community work and clinical experiences to name just a few.

For example, if a student works in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside in the morning and then comes to work in the main clinic at our Point Grey campus in the afternoon, they have the rich experience of working with a wide range of community members. That will only enhance their learning experience.”

A major consideration in determining the metrics and benchmarks for the strategic plan revolves around the student experience. Exceptional programs are self-perpetuating—they attract top applicants and faculty, and then offer students an unparalleled experience

during their time in the program. Graduates of top programs are often recognized throughout the professional community, further enhancing the reputation of the Faculty. A strategic plan supports and reinforces the curriculum, patient care, research programs and patterns of behaviour of all students, staff and faculty, creating an environment of collegiality. This enhances the student experience in a myriad of ways, including creating tomorrow’s leaders.

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PHOTO BY BRUCE MCCAUGHEY · PHOTOS BY TERRY WINTONYK

stated standards of the program, but also providing them with constructive feedback about how they are doing,” says Dr. Joanne Walton, associate dean, Academic and Student Affairs.

“We are interested in learning more about assessment best practices and tools. Beginning with a series of faculty ‘teaching suppers’ with eminent educators to guide us, we will reflect on how we are assessing students in the knowledge, clinical skills and professionalism domains, where we might consider development, and how we can match the quality of our student assessment with the quality of our innovative programs.”

Mentorship is a key part of enhancing the student experience. Mentorship seeks to establish long-term, one-on-one relationships between future graduates and practising dental professionals. For the young graduate, entering the dental profession can be a daunting

experience, and mentors can be a valuable resource. Career guidance, learning about being an associate versus an owner, and coaching in practice management are common themes in mentorship programs. Collaborations with the British Columbia Dental Association and the Study Club Alliance are opening many new opportunities for members of the profession to help mentor dental students and aid them in their transition from dental school to dental practice.

“One of my goals as a clinical instructor is to motivate students,” says Dr. Maria Garcia Fulle de Owen, clinical assistant professor. “As mentors, we can encourage students to meet the highest standards of excellence in their clinical practice while helping them provide patients with the best dental treatment. This connection between instructors and students is the most important factor in our job as

mentors.” Faculty mentoring behaviour also leads students to become peer mentors, further emphasizing this role.

“What motivates me to be a leader is the satisfaction of moving ideas forward and getting things accomplished,” says second-year dental hygiene student Priscilla Ojeda, founding president of the Dental Hygiene Class of 2011. Priscilla also represents her class in the Dental Undergraduate Society, a collaborative society that links dental and dental hygiene students together. “I intend to continue assisting the incoming students in my program by paving the way as the pioneer; by unifying my program with the other programs in the Faculty, as well as connecting them with the broader UBC community,” she says. “I want to contribute to others what hadn’t yet been developed for me.”

Amplifying RESEARCH PRODUCTIVITY



“The Strategic Plan gives the Faculty specific directions that we, and the greater community, see as important,” says Putnins.

The Strategic Plan takes into account that UBC is a major research-intensive university. Therefore, there is an expectation that all faculties will have an emphasis on original research in their portfolio of activities. This expectation, “the generation of new knowledge,” is a critical area of accomplishment for all faculty members who are reviewed for tenure and promotion. Thus it is critical for the Strategic Plan to ensure that a firm foundation for continued excellence in research is recognized and supported by a diversity of research (basic science, population health and clinical trials) being done within the Faculty of Dentistry.

“Research and graduate studies are targeted in the Strategic Plan and are very specific,” says Dr. Edward Putnins, associate dean of Research, Graduate and Postgraduate Studies. “Our challenge in putting the Plan together was to determine what is required to most effectively

support a diverse Faculty. How do we measure it? Increasing research capacity will be assessed by multiple measures that could include more research-active faculty, more research space, more grants, more high-impact publications and greater research eminence.”

The high level of research activity will also help address the recognized shortage of dental and dental hygiene academics. It is critical to prepare the next generation of dental faculty members with training at the PhD, clinical specialty or combined levels. The development of these programs will achieve the long-term goals of dental academic institutions and help students who are interested in developing a balanced academic career of research, service and teaching.

Expansion of specialty programs to encompass all recognized disciplines will also enable more complex delivery of treatment and will support

the clinical educational continuum such that undergraduate students will be able to observe a full range of treatment provided to patients with complex craniofacial disorders. The dental specialty programs represent a critical intersection for new research knowledge and translation of that knowledge to improvements in patient outcomes.

“The Strategic Plan gives the Faculty specific directions that we, and the greater community, see as important,” says Putnins. “The Plan is interrelated and interactive. It helps the community understand how all the pieces fit together so that everyone is more inclined to support it. The biggest challenge in the process was to make sure the final document included the diversity of the research being done in the Faculty. For the Plan to be of lasting, real value, every faculty member should be able to read it and see parts they relate to, parts where they see themselves fitting in.”

Increasing COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Putting together the Strategic Plan involved a significant collegial process, one in which each faculty member, student, staff, alumni and stakeholder found goals that they could relate to and contribute additional comments to. The more feedback there was, the richer the ideas. The richer the ideas, the more inclusive and visionary the strategic plan became.

“From a community perspective, it was wonderful to realize how many economies there are within the Faculty,” says Zed. “We ended up merging some of our goals through this realization. Even though we all work together every day, we don’t always understand what our colleagues do and what significant experiences and skills they all bring to the Faculty. The strategic plan process helped us understand and better appreciate one another. Without a doubt, ‘community’ was the most collaborative part of the plan.”

The Faculty continually expands its offerings, such as a symposium on digital learning that facilitates collaborations among dental personnel throughout Canada and California, and a pediatric dentistry program. Programs such as these provide resources to the community and enhance the Faculty’s reputation as a centre of not only educational and research excellence, but also of clinical excellence throughout BC, Canada and internationally.

“One of the things I’m most excited about in the Plan is that I’ve been able to strike a community advisory committee with members from across the community,” says Zed. “We are looking at community programs and how we may serve as a resource the community goes to for oral health care. By working as a committee, we are able to have a better around-the-table discussion and work more effectively, more broadly. We owe this to the strategic plan process.”

Service learning and cultural competency are rapidly emerging and developing concepts in dental and dental hygiene education. Important outcomes from these experiences include student recognition of their responsibility to provide care to people in need, social awareness and professional responsibility. More off-campus sites for current and future students will increase the diversity of patients treated by the students and enhance students’ understanding of the range of oral health needs presented by individuals with limited access to care.

“One goal is to be of service to families and individuals who work or attend school on weekdays,” says professor Bonnie Craig, director of the Dental Hygiene Degree Program at UBC Dentistry.

“We want students to develop increased social responsibility and a commitment to community service, and to do so they need to experience a diverse patient population. One way to achieve this is by reaching out to address some of the unmet needs of the community—those whose life circumstances may prevent them from coming during regular business hours.”

Trevor Lake, a member of the Class of 2009, had an opportunity to complete an externship in Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands) last summer. “This experience felt like we were finally putting the things we had learned at UBC into action,” he says.

Lake felt his externship was a natural continuation of his education; one that he says has ultimately shaped the way he intends to practise in the future. “One of the main reasons I got into dentistry is that I wanted to be able to provide health care to people in need. My experience confirmed that it is always important to stay true to your values and remember that the core goal of our profession is to improve the oral health of all members of our society. My time in Haida Gwaii also reinforced my plans to practise dentistry in a rural community.”

Looking TO THE FUTURE



“Through the intensive collaborative process, the Faculty has undergone a cultural shift to the point where the Strategic Plan is now linked to our activities in recruitment, renovation, budget allocation and new program development,” says Shuler.

“The Strategic Plan is now in effect,” says Dean Shuler. “We can point back to the Plan and rely on it as support for our goals and objectives, and in doing so, we can see where and how we fit into the whole.”

During the last two years, the process of strategic planning has further strengthened the ties between the Faculty and their alumni, external partners, current and future students.

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“We all have ownership and responsibility in it, and we should be held accountable for those responsibilities.”

By presenting shared beliefs about where they are headed, the Faculty has created a collaborative road map that is conceptual, directional and, most importantly, operational, to lead them into the next decade.

The complete Faculty of Dentistry Strategic Plan and its Guiding Principles are available online at www.dentistry.ubc.ca/strategicplan.

Guiding PRINCIPLES

MISSION

To advance oral health through outstanding education, research and community service.

OPERATIONAL GOAL

To develop an exceptional Faculty of Dentistry at UBC worthy of enthusiastic support by our customers and partners.

**ESSENTIAL CUSTOMERS
AND PARTNERS**

- Students
- Faculty and Staff
- UBC Community
- Alumni
- Patients, Public, Community
- Funders, Donors
- Related Health Organizations
- Teaching Agencies
- Research Agencies
- Related Professional Organizations
- Related Industry

ULTIMATE RESULTS SOUGHT

- Well-educated graduates who are ably prepared to meet the oral health and science needs of their communities.
- Innovative research that has a positive impact on oral health science, education and patient care.
- Enthusiastic customers and partners who want to join and support our efforts.

CORE IDEAS

*for the successful achievement of
Ultimate Results Sought*

- Provide exceptional undergraduate education.
- Offer high-quality graduate and post-graduate programs.
- Develop research capacity through collaboration, concentration and career development.
- Offer relevant continuing dental education.
- Conduct timely and effective communication with all of our customer groups.
- Cultivate a diversified funding base to support the Faculty.
- Define and monitor results.
- Support individual enterprise while fostering collaboration.



CORE VALUES

that support our Core Ideas

- Exemplary professionalism (teaching, clinical care, research, administration).
- Mindful service to our customers and partners.
- Shared responsibility for the faculty's welfare and financial health.
- Thoughtful, timely communication.
- High degree of collaboration, partnership and dialogue.
- Results-oriented efforts (appropriate planning, methodology and evaluation).