



THE UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE
STUDENTS' UNION

STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 - 2025



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Created between September 2019 and April 2020 by the Strategic Planning Committee, this version of the University of Lethbridge Students' Union strategic plan follows an extended period of no organizational strategic direction. The previous plan ran from 2010 – 2015 and covered a wide range of strategic directions meant to be a focus of the organization over that period. Since the creation of that document, we have come to realize the constraints of our organization a little better, as well as the liberty each year's governing composition holds.

We have done our best to take both these points into consideration for this document and want to encourage the General Assembly of each following year to do so. This as a working document. You're encouraged to grow priorities, find out what does and doesn't work, and keep this document as a reference for the areas in which we thought the organization could do better in. Add and edit this document as the organization changes and evolves. We hope this document proves to be a useful guide for large decisions and potential future projects for executives and council members to consider.

Respectfully submitted,

The Strategic Planning Committee (2019/20)

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The mission of the Students' Union is to provide our students, as well as faculty, staff, and alumni a portal to the unique University of Lethbridge experience. The Students' Union compliments the academic programs and enhances the overall educational experience and quality of campus life for all students and other members of the University of Lethbridge family.

As the heart of the student community, we are committed to student success by delivering a diverse program of cultural, educational, social and recreational services. We strive to surpass the needs of our multi-cultural student community, create a positive learning experience, and maintain a healthy balance between academic and leisure activities.

Vision Statement

The University of Lethbridge Students' Union will deliver extraordinary services, facilities, programs, and opportunities that exceed the expectations of our students. The Students' Union will be recognized locally, provincially, and nationally as a dynamic and innovative leader in the Canadian University Community.

The University of Lethbridge Students' Union exists to build a better student experience in all aspects of student life. We are a student centered and student driven organization which continuously pursues the best interest of our students. We ensure that our students' lives are affordable, enjoyable, and most of all that the quality of their education remains high.

We do this in five essential ways:

1. We offer high quality services.
2. We offer a dynamic range of outstanding events.
3. We advocate on behalf of our students to all levels of government.
4. We play a key role in the governance of our University.
5. We facilitate clubs and are a central part of student life.

To continue to be able to provide what is outlined in our vision and mission as an organization, we feel as though we need to take proactive steps at this stage to grow alongside a diverse university population and remain relevant in an ever-complicating post-secondary environment.

We plan to achieve this long-term growth and sustainability through a variety of measures:

1. Expanding the brand of the ULSU for greater recognition within both internal and external communities.
2. Taking steps to ensure a continued organizational strategic direction across multiple years.
3. Reducing our dependence on student levy fees through the diversification of our revenue.

Effectively, these measures become our strategic priorities. Following our explanation of why this plan is important to our organization, these elements are all expanded upon in greater detail later in the Strategic Plan.

The University of Lethbridge Students' Union is unlike most non-profit organizations. While we represent a clear vision, are a self-governed body, and represent a key public interest; we are separated through our turnover with respect to our governing board. This makes continued initiatives and long-term goals challenging, however; it also gives us the unique advantage of having fresh ideas and inputs into our organization every few years.

This document is, in part, our attempt to bridge the disadvantages of the aforementioned high turnover of the governing composition. The ULSU Strategic Plan (2020 – 2025) is a working document representing the broad organizational goals we believe critical to the health and growth of this organization. We have taken great care to craft a strong framework capable of providing guidance to future executives of the organization while leaving it open to encourage frequent and thoughtful additions/revisions.

Many hours of research, discussion, and consultation have gone into the development of this document. With that being said, we recognize certain events simply cannot be predicted. To combat this, we encourage an annual review of this document to benchmark progress, relevance, and likelihood of our outlined priorities.

This plan is centered around three main priorities which are broad in focus and comprehensive in scale. Together these priorities encompass the necessary direction we feel we must take as an organization to grow alongside our diverse student body while staying relevant in the current and projected political atmosphere.

Strategic Plan Priorities

Building Brand Recognition

The University of Lethbridge Students' Union (ULSU) strives to be recognized locally, provincially, and nationally as a leader in the Canadian university community. To accomplish this, we must work on developing a more robust brand. We encourage a more personal take on social media, highlighting the talents of the staff, executives, and the General Assembly, in an attempt to make our largest communication channels more personal. Additionally, we encourage the active development of staff members to help in this regard. Professional development around social media, new media, and general marketing are highly encouraged and to be sought after with the intention of furthering the ULSU brand.

We also recognize the strength that comes with strong community ties and therefore, want to make noticeable efforts to support groups on campus with ties to marginalized communities. We recommend this is achieved through a consistent and strong effort to reach out to those groups on campus and ask how we could better support what they do. As relationships should be at the foundation of this goal, taking extra care to develop and maintain these ties will be critical in ensuring the meaningful representation of the entirety of the campus population. Recognizing the diversity present throughout our campus community should provide us with an opportunity to better represent the needs of our campus through ties which reinforce our support of a diverse and holistic student body.

Recommended Action Items

- Develop a more personal direction for our social media through the promotion of GA members, staff, and the activities of the ULSU
- Develop and monitor KPI (Key Performance Indicators) with ULSU social media to grow in terms of both followers and engagement
- Consult with staff to outline areas for improvement and identify meaningful professional development opportunities to encourage this
- Develop stronger bonds with groups on campus through the offering of support and through meaningful partnerships with:
 - The Pride Center
 - The Women's Center
 - Iikaisskini: Indigenous Student Centre
 - Mature students
 - Students with dependents
 - Lethbridge Public Interest Research Group
 - The Meliorist
 - CKXU

Institutional Continuity

Addressing the high turnover rate of governance for the ULSU is a critical part in ensuring that we holistically improve over several years. The strategic plan is a large part of this, however; it still leaves room for more to be done to ensure beneficial continuity. This section mainly has to do with passing on elements of good governance, organizational knowledge, and best practices. This is supplemented heavily through a meaningful transition, both with regards to the Executive Council (EC) and the General Assembly (GA). The development of which needs to be a priority every year, with great care being taken to ensure it grows each year to meet the ever-developing needs of both individual GA members and the organization as a whole.

Significant efforts must be taken by the EC to pass along these elements from year to year. This onus comes from an understanding of the differential work hours between the EC and the GA. Involving the GA is crucial but requires effort on the part of the EC to actively engage with the governing body of the ULSU. This is done through a robust transition, beneficial bonding activities, and strategic professional development opportunities.

An accurate and recommended benchmark to use for this priority would be the transition practices in place at other post-secondary student associations in Alberta. By comparing the practices in place at our institution with that of practices engrained in the transition of other institutions, we can accurately hold ourselves to a level which has succeeded in the past. To achieve this, significant efforts to study and adapt other practices must be made.

Recommended Action Items

- Continually work to better meet the growing needs of our organization through meaningful executive and GA transition
- Work to institutionalize bonding activities and professional development opportunities for the GA into the role of what the EC does
- Consult with other Alberta Student Associations to best develop practices which compound on relevant skills for student leaders while benefiting the overall growth of the organization

Diversifying Revenue

As of the creation of this document, the operational budget of the ULSU is 44% supported by student levy fees. The sole intention of this section of the strategic plan is to move that number down and, ultimately, reduce our dependence on student fees. This can be done in several ways; all of which we encourage are approached diligently, with the understanding adaptation will likely have to happen depending on the success or failure of each endeavor. Approaching outside consultation is also encouraged, with a neutral third party being able to evaluate which approaches returned the most success and how to continue that into the future.

As of the year 2020, we recommend several approaches to this strategic priority. Examining areas in which we can acquire more of a personal stake into the food court upstairs would serve to increase revenue while encouraging our active promotion of the food court to better off the businesses operating within it. Consultation with the vendors will be necessary for this, as we do not want to implement anything which makes it unrealistic for the businesses to operate in our facilities. On a similar note, expanding the businesses we currently own could also serve as an opportunity for diversifying our revenue streams. Considerable attention must be paid to the management if this option is pursued, as turning a profit has proved to be difficult in the past. Finally, and as a note across all operations, promotion should be more seriously pursued to bring attention to what we offer as an organization. The strength and effectiveness of this goal plays off the first strategic priority, with a stronger brand supplementing the effectiveness of stronger marketing.

Recommended Action Items

- Consider amending the food court contracts to include a percentage of sales model
 - Consult with vendors before implementing this; communicate how promotion of the food court to students would increase alongside this deal
- Consider expanding the businesses we currently own
 - Pay close attention to management of these businesses; if it not profitable, it is not working
- Pursue more aggressive marketing tactics across all operations (i.e. Zoo catering, Rockermans, Union Eats, etc.)
 - Be careful not to oversaturate our communications with students – this promotion should be made alongside regular content about events, services, operations, etc.

The Appendix is included to comply with Section 4.1. of Policy XXV – The Students’ Union Strategic Plan which reads as follows:

4.1 No old or achieved items may be removed from the current Students’ Union Strategic Plan. Instead, they must be moved to an appendix