**Faculty of Social Sciences**

**Strategic Plan**

2014-2019

**VISION**
To open minds and improve the world through innovative and creative education and research

**MISSION**
To be the pre-eminent Faculty of Social Sciences in Canada

**OUR VALUES**
Diversity, Equity, Community, Global Citizenship, Excellence

**OUR STRENGTHS**
Research Excellence, Community Engagement, Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary Education, and Empirical Social Sciences Research and Innovative Teaching

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**
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SHAPING OUR WORLD THROUGH RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The important challenges facing humanity and our planet have at their core social, economic and individual dimensions – political and religious conflict, access to clean water, healthy aging, democracy amidst diversity, economic sustainability, and myriad others. Social Sciences lie at the heart of understanding and addressing these challenges and engaging with our world.

We provide students, citizens, and decision makers with the tools to better understand society’s big problems, critically evaluate information, formulate solutions for problems and communicate their ideas to the world. Through collaborative practices, research creativity, experiential learning opportunities and the teaching of 21st century skills suitable for the conditions of globalization, we prepare students and improve government and community capacity to succeed in and transform the world.

This document articulates McMaster Faculty of Social Sciences’ Strategic plan for 2014-2019. This plan has been based on broad consultation with faculty, students and staff that included faculty retreats, meetings with staff and students, written input from faculty, discussion in faculty meetings, and feedback on drafts of the document from Chairs and Directors of Departments/Schools.

OUR VISION
McMaster’s Faculty of Social Sciences strives to open minds and improve the world through innovative and creative education and research.

OUR MISSION
We aspire to be the pre-eminent Faculty of Social Sciences in Canada. Our students, faculty, staff and alumni are and will be recognized nationally and internationally as leading-edge critical thinkers, social change agents, decision makers and global citizens who contribute to the building of vibrant communities.

OUR VALUES
In his 2011 letter to the McMaster community, Forward with Integrity (Fwi), President Patrick Deane celebrates integrity as an institutional value and articulates a set of principles to guide the University in realizing its goals over the next decade. These include: a commitment to interdisciplinarity, dedication to the cultivation of human potential, achieving goals through collaboration with other institutions, fostering original thought and innovation, improving cooperation across campus, and being guided by a commitment to service for the greater good. To these we add diversity, equity, community, global citizenship and excellence as core values that, along with a commitment to building on our current strengths as a Faculty, have guided the definition of our strategic priorities for the next five years.
Diversity. Diversity is a distinct characteristic of the Social Sciences; we encompass diverse fields, methodologies and approaches to teaching and learning. The many differences that distinguish individuals and groups in society, including gender, ethnicity, race, religion, indigeneity, age, ability, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, identity, and political beliefs and ideologies, inform our pedagogies, research questions and approaches, and engagement with our students and the communities in which we live, work and conduct research.

Equity. Valuing equity goes hand in hand with valuing diversity. In our pursuit of equity, the Faculty is committed to reducing unfair differences among prospective and enrolled students. We are committed to student access to, and success at, University. The Faculty is committed to pursuing and exemplifying equitable and fair research partnerships with universities, governments, private partners and communities worldwide.

Community. We value the importance of communities as safe places in which individuals feel they belong, and in the case of the University, where they can debate and actively experiment with ideas and solutions, are accepted for their differences, and can participate in building a better future. Universities, while communities in their own right, intersect with multiple communities – from the local to the global, from the familiar to the unknown. The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to helping build better communities through engagement and the creation and mobilization of knowledge.

Global citizenship. We believe that the challenges facing humanity and the planet must be understood and addressed using a global lens. The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to educating our students to be engaged, world-minded citizens of a rapidly globalizing world, and to support world class research on global problems – problems that span fields of knowledge and demand interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches.

Excellence. Excellence means building on past accomplishments to create new knowledge and set international standards for research and education. We are committed to exceeding expectations and providing students with the best education for a changing world. To become the best, we value excellence in our faculty, staff and students.

Eileen Schuller
Senator William McMaster Chair in the Study of Religion

Eileen Schuller is internationally recognized as Canada’s pre-eminent scholar of the Dead Sea Scrolls and as one of the world’s foremost researchers in her discipline.

Since the 1980s, Schuller’s scholarly publications and interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls have been foundational in the field, with her cache of texts viewed as the most significant source for new research in the study of early Judaism and early Christianity over the past 100 years. Her critical works have not only transformed scholarship, they provide the basis for new research on the Dead Sea Scrolls for decades to come.

Schuller is also recognized as a leading authority on women in the Bible, and on prayer and worship in the Biblical world.

At McMaster, she has been an outstanding supervisor and mentor to her graduate students, many of whom are now well-regarded scholars and teachers.
LEVERAGING OUR STRENGTHS

The Faculty of Social Sciences offers a broad social sciences education, organized around eight Departments and Schools (Anthropology; Economics; Health Aging and Society; Labour Studies; Political Science; Religious Studies; Social Work; and Sociology). We offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in each of these fields. We also offer undergraduate degrees in Geography, Psychology, Social Psychology and Indigenous Studies and an interdisciplinary graduate degree in Globalization and the Human Condition.

The Faculty is made up of more than 110 tenure and teaching track faculty members, several contractually limited faculty as well as sessional faculty. We are proud to have within our Faculty outstanding and innovative researchers and teachers, as well as a cadre of highly motivated, dedicated staff members. We are home to more than 4500 undergraduate students and over 300 graduate students, many of whom hold prestigious external scholarship awards.

In leveraging our existing strengths as a Faculty we are well positioned to advance the future of McMaster University around the principles and goals of Forward with Integrity and to realize our vision of being the pre-eminent Faculty of Social Sciences in Canada. These strengths include:

**Excellence in research.** The Faculty of Social Sciences is recognized nationally and internationally as a highly successful, research intensive Faculty. Our successes are reflected in the 2013 Shanghai Jiao Tong University Academic Ranking of World Universities that placed McMaster’s Faculty of Social Sciences 41st in the world.

**Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition**

Since its inception in 1998, the Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition (IGHC) has contributed to research and teaching excellence about globalizing processes and how these come to bear upon our lives, our communities, and the environment in which we live. Graduate students engage in critical analysis of cultural, political, social and economic global processes through the unique interdisciplinary MA in Globalization Studies, as well as through IGHC’s participation in the MSc in Global Health.

IGHC members have achieved Canadian and international recognition in many areas of research, including conflict and security, environmental sustainability, labour and the economy, identity and religion, indigeneity, gender and governance in Asia, governance and citizenship, health and social policy, and literature, media and popular culture. Currently, working groups are actively engaged in the following areas of research: Globalization and Time, Austerity, Asian Studies, and Transnationalism and HIV/AIDS. The Institute hosts Fulbright Fellows and internationally renowned visiting scholars working on various aspects of globalization.

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2The methodology draws on bibliometric data with efforts to correct for variations across disciplines in the capital intensity of research, across universities in the size of faculties, and other such complicating factors. It should be noted that a significant amount of social sciences research at McMaster is conducted in faculties other than the Faculty of Social Sciences.
A 2012 study by researchers at Higher Education Strategy Associates (Jarvey and Usher) ranked McMaster social sciences and humanities research sixth out of 61 universities across the country.

The Faculty is proud of the breadth of its research expertise and its high-achieving researchers. We hold four Canada Research Chairs (Bioarchaeology of Human Disease, Public Economic Theory, Paleogenetics, and Public Policy and Globalization), two Ontario Research Chairs (Education Achievement and At Risk Children and Health Human Resources), two Senator William McMaster Chairs (Senator William McMaster Chair in Econometrics and the Senator William McMaster Chair in the Study of Religion), the Gilbrea Chair in Mental Health and Aging, the Sharjah Chair in Global Islam, the Paul R. MacPherson Chair in Indigenous Studies and a Canadian Institute for Health Research Chair in Applied Public Health. The Faculty also hosts three Fulbright Visiting Research Chairs (Globalization and Cultural Studies, Governance and Public Policy and Science and the Environment).

Presently, the Faculty of Social Sciences, in collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering, has recruited a Professor in Water Policy and Research who is working with the United Nations University in Water Without Borders. We are recruiting a jointly-appointed Professor in Advanced Manufacturing Policy.

**Integrating research into teaching.** The Faculty prides itself on its graduate programs which offer students a strong theoretical background, extensive methodological training, including sophisticated quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and training in languages needed to do field work around the world. Our Sanskrit program in Religious Studies is the largest program of its sort in North America.

The Faculty is equally proud of its success in incorporating research into undergraduate education in innovative and exciting ways. Individual faculty members have been recognized within and beyond the University for bringing research and teaching together.

These faculty are joined by many others in their pursuit and success in delivering high quality education to both undergraduate and graduate students.

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**McEEL First in Canada**

Established in 1994, the McMaster Experimental Economics Laboratory (McEEL) was the first laboratory in Canada dedicated to computer-mediated, interactive experiments in economics and related disciplines. It is the backbone of a research program in experimental economics at McMaster reaching back to the 1980s.

McEEL has allowed faculty and graduate students to create controlled laboratory settings to study the behaviour of individuals in market and non-market environments. Some of the topics investigated include trading emission permits by polluting firms, arbitrage in asset markets, alternative methods for managing over-extraction in fisheries and, most recently, the impacts of introducing private health care finance into public systems.
Community engagement. Community engagement is one of the pillars of Forward with Integrity. The Faculty of Social Sciences’ Experiential Education (EE) Office has taken the lead in guiding the Faculty’s, and University’s, commitment to encouraging students to put their education into practice and combine their education with practical skills that facilitate pathways out of the University into the labour market and society. The first of its kind in Canada, EE is co-funded and managed by students and the Faculty. EE offers diverse experiential opportunities to undergraduate students including internships, job shadows, career conversations, life and career mapping, undergraduate student research awards, student experience grants and leadership training. Many Social Sciences faculty members have developed unique courses that provide students with an opportunity to engage in local and global communities, and gain valuable applied experience. Engagement with stakeholders is a central component of the research conducted by a number of our faculty members. Their expertise and participation in community-based research has resulted in research with local, national and global impact. Their research affords opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to learn more about the city in which they have chosen to live and study and to gain hands-on experience with local community groups.

Disciplinary and Interdisciplinary education. The Faculty of Social Sciences excels in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary education. In addition to our Labour Studies and Health, Aging and Society programs, both of which have unique graduate programs, the Faculty hosts an interdisciplinary graduate program associated with the Institute for Globalization and the Human Condition and has recently introduced an interdisciplinary undergraduate Social Psychology program. The Faculty of Social Sciences also plays a vital role in the Global Health Program and Water Without Borders – Collaborative Graduate Program in Water, Environment and Health.

Empirical Social Sciences Research and Teaching
The Faculty has a history of creating unique educational and research environments with the goals of building research data and enhancing our methodological capacity. McMaster economists were Canadian pioneers as they established the first computerized experimental laboratory in Canada, entitled the McMaster Experimental Economics Laboratory (McEEL). Byron Spencer, an economist, is the Chair of the Executive Committee for Statistics Canada’s Canadian Research Data Centre Network. Mills Memorial Library houses one of these Statistics Canada data centres. These centres enhance the research and learning opportunities for faculty and graduate students, including opportunities for internships.
The establishment of an Institute for Qualitative and Quantitative Research (IQ2-R) in the new L.R. Wilson Hall represents a renewed commitment by the Faculty to build on its strengths and ensure its position as a leader in Social Science data analysis and methodological sophistication.

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Forward with Integrity identifies three priorities on which the University will focus for the next decade:

1. Develop distinct, effective and sustainable undergraduate experiences;

2. Enhance connections with communities; and

3. Research excellence.

The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to pursuing five strategic priorities that align our strengths and core values with FwI principles and priorities. These are:

**Strategic Priority 1:** Student success through discovery and teaching excellence

**Strategic Priority 2:** Expanding global and local impacts through research excellence

**Strategic Priority 3:** Building pathways, strengthening community engagement and valuing diversity

**Strategic Priority 4:** Enhancing graduate student education and research

**Strategic Priority 5:** Building a sustainable future for the Faculty

Teaching Large Classes in the Faculty of Social Sciences

The Working Group on Teaching Large Classes in the Faculty of Social Sciences identified three areas to explore and expand our knowledge and expertise:

**Classroom civility and student engagement in large classes.**
Creating an engaging environment for students is the key to civility in large classes. Strategies that promote civility include: clear communication of expectations, thoughtful classroom planning and organization, use of active learning strategies and educational technologies.

**Writing assignments in large classes.**
Instructors have addressed the many challenges of offering quality feedback to large classes, including shorter writing assignments, group writing assignments and peer feedback. For student writing to improve we need:

- Enhanced peer writing supports
- More writing assistance from the Student Success Centre and Library
- Better preparedness of students before they enter their first year of university.

**Effective use of technology in large classes.**
Technology needs to enhance classroom instruction and student learning.
THE NEXT FIVE YEARS: FROM EVIDENCE TO IMPACT

In pursuing and measuring progress towards its five strategic priorities, the Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to evidence-based decision-making, strategic planning, and prioritization of actions that have the greatest impact. Key to our strategic planning is the new liberal arts building, L.R. Wilson Hall. Currently under construction, and due to be opened in August 2015, this building will offer students and faculty enriched physical learning environments, improved classrooms, excellent research facilities and a place where planned and chance encounters between faculty, students, staff and community will encourage creative learning and collaboration.

**Strategic Priority 1: Student Success through Discovery and Teaching Excellence**

Offering students a high quality education is increasingly challenging in the face of significant growth in enrollments, growing diversity in the student population and constrained public funding of post-secondary education. These challenges require innovative, integrated solutions. The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to improving our teaching and student supports in order to improve student success as measured by engagement, improved retention, greater academic achievement, and successful transition from the university into the labour market, post-graduate education and/or active citizenship.

**Optimize student learning experiences**

**Active learning strategies and new learning spaces.** Active learning strategies, often called democratic learning, refer to a range of teaching strategies delivered in technology rich environments. Students engage in self-directed and problem-based learning where they work through problems systematically with research and analysis and communicate their findings to a broader public.

This approach is highly suited to the teaching of Social Sciences. We study social and economic problems to which there is no single right answer or methodology. What’s more, active learning approaches to teaching have been demonstrated to improve learning outcomes significantly. They create enormous potential in our Faculty to improve student learning outcomes as well as educational pathways for under-represented groups.

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**Chelsea Gabel**
Department of Health, Aging and Society

In her first year of teaching in the University, Chelsea Gabel earned both a MSU Teaching Award and a cake baked by appreciative students.

The MSU Pedagogical Innovation Award, awarded to Gabel during the 2012/2013 school year, recognized her unique approach to teaching the fourth-year Political Science course “Special Topics in Canadian Politics”.

Gabel says her teaching approach depends heavily on a student’s willingness to participate creatively.

“I worked with the ability of the students to be creative. When you ask a student to be creative, it’s amazing what they can do,” says Gabel.
The Faculty of Social Sciences aspires to become a global leader and innovator in adapting active learning strategies to the teaching of Social Sciences.

With the building of L.R. Wilson Hall – to be shared by the Faculties of Social Sciences and Humanities – the University has agreed to the construction of technology-rich, active learning classrooms and spaces that promote informal peer interaction and self-directed learning.

We are committed to working with the McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning (MIIETL) to help faculty adapt their teaching strategies and to provide them with the supports needed. Our commitment to change is urgent as we prepare to teach in our new building by 2015. We will also build a financial reserve within the Faculty budget or seek alternative sources of revenue to improve teaching technology and architectures in existing classrooms.

**Best practice and innovation in teaching large classes.** Large classes are here to stay given pressures for Universities to educate growing numbers of students. Large classes pose challenges for maintaining high quality in post-secondary education. But this doesn’t have to be the case.

In 2012-13, the Faculty of Social Sciences partnered with CLL, now MIIETL, to establish a Working Group involving over 20 Social Sciences faculty to identify best practices and innovations in teaching large classes. The Working Group is currently writing a guidebook that includes case studies, techniques, and strategies that Social Sciences faculty use when teaching large classes. The Faculty is committed to working with Chairs and Directors in using this resource.

The Faculty of Social Sciences will also design and implement a plan to build learning communities within large classes. These have been shown to provide academic and social peer support for students, increase student retention, and improve academic achievement. It will also work with the School of Graduate Studies to improve the effectiveness of tutorials and provide enriched professional training to tutorial leaders.

L.R. Wilson Hall will facilitate these strategies through its improved infrastructure for teaching innovation.

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**Inquiring Minds: Teaching Inquiry in the Social Sciences**

Inquiry is a process of asking questions and investigating possible answers to gain a better understanding of the world around us. In a university context, inquiry refers to question-driven, self-directed research and learning. Inquiry approaches to learning thread across Social Sciences programs.

Inquiry courses – including the first year course SOC SCI 1SS3: “Inquiry in the Social Sciences” – are skills-driven rather than content-driven, focusing on the critical thinking, writing and research skills required to perform effectively at university and in today’s job market. Students develop life-long learning skills that include: determining what they need to learn, how to formulate questions and then how to identify and use resources effectively to help them answer those questions and how to report on their learning. Students also learn to apply discipline-specific principles and practices of inquiry necessary for advanced levels of academic research.
**Integration of teaching and research.** Recognizing that the integration of faculty research into undergraduate teaching encourages student creativity, enhances learning outcomes, and improves student retention, and that such integration is one of the distinctive strengths of McMaster as a whole (Deane 2011), the Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to building on existing ways that research and teaching are integrated in the Faculty.

Within the Faculty, we will discuss and analyze ways that this integration can be enhanced, including consideration of best practices in other universities, with the aim of better aligning course topics and faculty research, introducing new practices into existing courses, and creating new extracurricular undergraduate research opportunities. The Faculty will develop and implement a system of rewards and recognition for faculty who integrate research into curriculum.

**Strengthening student research, writing and analytic skills.** Strong research, writing, and analytic skills are key to both academic and employment success.

First year students in the Faculty are given a head start in their academic career with our Inquiry seminars. Taught in sections of only 30 students, first year students learn how to formulate big research questions, gather and interpret evidence, draw informed conclusions and present their findings and ideas to an audience of peers.

These seminars have a common, core curriculum but are framed around diverse subjects, from social networking to human rights. Our Inquiry courses promote active student learning and the development of core social sciences academic skills, namely, critical thinking, writing, research, analytics and communication. Students who complete our Inquiry seminar improve demonstrably their academic success. The Faculty is committed to providing every student with the opportunity to enroll in first year Inquiry seminars.

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**McMaster Researchers in Action**

**Cracking the Genetic Code of the Black Death**

Major technical advances in DNA recovery and sequencing along with a novel methodological approach have allowed an international team of researchers — led by Hendrik Poinar and Kristen Bos of McMaster University and Johannes Krause and Verena Schuenemann of the University of Tubingen in Germany — to sequence the entire genome of one of the most devastating epidemics in human history – the Black Death.

This marks the first time scientists have been able to draft a reconstructed genome of any ancient pathogen, and so to track changes in the pathogen’s evolution and virulence over time.

“The genomic data show that this bacterial strain, or variant, is the ancestor of all modern plagues we have today worldwide.” explains Poinar, an Associate Professor of Anthropology, Director of the McMaster Ancient DNA Centre, and an investigator with McMaster’s Michael G. DeGroote Institute of Infectious Disease Research.

“With a better understanding of the evolution of this deadly pathogen, we are entering a new era of research.”
In the Winter 2013 term, the Faculty piloted a new set of writing supports for undergraduate students to encourage writing excellence in Social Sciences. Focused at the Departmental level, faculty and graduate students are involved in providing students with regular opportunities to gain feedback and constructive help in writing assignments, while building a community of learning. The Faculty is committed to expanding these opportunities for students and working with the Office for Student Success in enhancing their writing supports for students.

The McMaster Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRAs) are intended to cultivate and support research partnerships between undergraduate students and faculty researchers. For its senior undergraduate students, the Faculty will increase the number of USRAs by 20% by 2016 as well as develop mechanisms for publicizing undergraduate and graduate student research.

**Student retention.** Almost 20% of students entering into first year Social Sciences programs do not continue in University, at McMaster or elsewhere. One of the primary reasons why Social Sciences students drop out of University is lack of financial resources (McMaster Office of Institutional Research). This is an enormous loss of human potential and is usually devastating for the individual student. Another 30% of students struggle to achieve their full potential at University.

To improve student retention, we adjusted our system of student advising to provide consistent personalized support to students, and, where necessary, work with other services on campus to ensure that we coordinate services and intervene early with appropriate supports to help students who begin to fall behind.

Through fund-raising, we seek to increase financial resources aimed at supporting students in need and celebrate student success through stories on our website and in our newsletter, and through our awards ceremony.

**Enhance and expand student opportunities to gain practical experience and learn to apply their academic knowledge and skills.** The success of the EE student referendum in 2012 increased financial support for Experiential Education by 43%, matched by contributions from the Faculty of Social Sciences.

**Social Sciences in Action: Connecting the Community and the Classroom**

Social Sciences in Action is a third-year experiential learning course where students participate in one or more active learning opportunities – outside the classroom – related to their undergraduate studies. This is a self-directed learning experience in which students research and reflect on their experiences in a volunteer placement or work environment. Examples include working with agencies who provide services to youth at-risk or immigrant and refugee communities, international internships and leadership positions (such as student politics).

Reading and reflection allow students to integrate their learning from these experiences with their academic skills and knowledge, and assists them in planning for further education and work experiences. The course is intended to encourage and recognize students’ involvement in their communities – local and global.
These resources are being used to expand, improve and diversify our EE offerings in response to student demand. Between 2008-9 and 2012-13, EE expanded the numbers of students accessing its programs from 842 to 1553. By 2017, we will increase by 20% the number of students involved in EE activities.

To this end, the Faculty has introduced the “Social Sciences in Action” course (See box on Page 11) that allows students to gain course credit for their experiences in student leadership, international or local volunteering, and other self-directed enriched experiences.

In-course placements with employers and in the community remain the most popular approach amongst students to gain experience in the field. The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to working with Departments to identify and advertise those courses that provide special in-course opportunities and problem-based assignments that allow students to apply their skills and knowledge to real world experiences. The Faculty aims to increase the numbers of these courses by 15% over the next five years. The Faculty will develop curriculum that teaches students across the University about the many facets of community engagement, from the ethics of working with community partners to community-based methodologies.

We will extend opportunities for our students to combine their academic university education with more applied skills development through our McMaster-Mohawk College partnership. To date, the Faculty of Social Sciences has launched successfully the “Business” and “Leadership and Management in the Not for Profit Sector” certificates. By fall 2014, the third and final certificate in “Principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (Autism)” will be fully running. The Faculty of Social Sciences, in collaboration with the Faculty of Health Sciences and Mohawk College, is developing a new undergraduate degree for health care practitioners that focuses on understanding the broader determinants of health and develops the skills of those already working in the broader health care sector.

Taking it to the Street: Research that Aims to Make a Difference in Communities

Jim Dunn, Professor in the Department of Health, Aging and Society, is working with community groups in Toronto, Hamilton, Halton, and Peel as well as local planners and provincial policy-makers to look at the health impacts of neighbourhood housing interventions on the health disparities between the poorest and the wealthiest areas in southern Ontario cities.

Dunn employs innovative methods to study changes in the built environment over time. The Mobile Urban Video Recorder (MUVR) system uses 360° high definition video, audio and streaming GPS to capture changes in the built environment over time. This is marshalling the same technology that powers Google Streetview to conduct innovative social scientific research.

“There are many ‘capital assets’ in Hamilton – natural, social, cultural, economic and in the built environment – and it’s critical to ask how we can leverage them for betterment of health and the reduction of avoidable inequalities,” says Dunn. He is optimistic that he and other social scientists can help effect positive changes.
Offer new, innovative, in-demand programs
Teaching and curriculum innovation, in part, means keeping up with changing research areas and student interests. Our new interdisciplinary undergraduate degree in Social Psychology recruits high calibre students and offers a challenging curriculum. The first cohort of students graduated in 2013. We are committed to expanding on this success.

During the next five years, the Faculty will complete an environmental scan to determine emerging student interests and research areas to inform new degree offerings. We will build on the success of the Social Psychology B.A. (Hon) program and explore a graduate stream in this area. We will also explore the development of a limited enrollment Global Studies undergraduate option that is interdisciplinary in nature, exposes students to the many facets of a global world, and includes international internship/or terms abroad in order that students gain exposure to different cultures, systems, and economies. This undergraduate option would complement our MA programs in Globalization and in International Relations.

Strategic Priority 2: Expanding global and local impacts of our research excellence
The Faculty has achieved worldwide recognition for its research excellence. The impacts of its research are far-reaching and varied. Over the next five years, we will build on these successes. We aim to encourage curiosity-based research as well as that addressing practical social, economic and policy challenges. We are committed to effective knowledge mobilization to increase the recognition and impact of our research, training the next generation of researchers and enriching our teaching through research. Our research impact brings global recognition to the Faculty, enhancing our ability to attract talented researchers, students, and funding.

Strengthen research intensity
Strengthening research intensity requires attracting, retaining, and supporting tenure track faculty dedicated to research excellence. Indeed, with pending retirements (approximately 20% of present Social Sciences faculty are 60 years or older) and continued strong enrollment, maintaining and strengthening the human knowledge and resources that constitute the infrastructure of the Faculty are essential to the sustainability of the University. In the Faculty of Social Sciences we are committed to hiring the best tenure track faculty in fields commensurate with Faculty strategic priorities to protect the high quality research and teaching for which we are known. These hires will position us as a leader in Social Sciences research excellence in Canada and the rest of the world.

Key to strengthening research intensity is improving our success at externally funded research. Although the amount of external funding we bring in has been increasing, the funding environment is becoming more competitive in all fields of study. Our goal is to increase the rate of application for Tri-Council funding by 10 percent per year for five years. This goal is supported by the VP Research’s commitment to increasing the research support staff dedicated to advancing Social Sciences research. Two new such positions have been filled in the last twelve months.
External funders increasingly encourage cross-disciplinary research that is collaborative and involves external partners. The Faculty is committed to identifying and fostering research synergies that promote opportunities for interdisciplinary research and partnerships in our quest for research excellence and greater research intensity. By September 2014, we will produce and share a comprehensive inventory of ongoing research in the Faculty. We will also create and regularize new mechanisms for on-campus collaboration across fields, such as seminars and collaborative grant proposals. We are committed to the construction of social spaces within the new L.R. Wilson Hall that encourage serendipitous encounters and informal interaction between and amongst graduate students and faculty, which in turn spawn new research ideas.

**Improved Social Sciences research infrastructure: Institute for Qualitative and Quantitative Research (or IQ2-R)**

Social Sciences research excellence relies upon the methodological sophistication of the research design, and the ability to access or develop the kinds of data to answer research questions and test hypotheses. Social Sciences research embraces multiple methods that span quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is increasingly common to use multiple methods in one study. Researchers are presently hampered in their research by lack of access to high-powered computing, computer software, data analytical support or appropriate facilities for engaging in focus groups or individual and telephone survey interviews.

The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to building an Institute for Qualitative and Quantitative Research, to be located in the new L.R Wilson Hall. IQ2-R will handle Big Data, from low- to high-security and will offer researchers access to a range of high powered computers and software, analytical support, interview rooms, an experimental lab, and other research facilities needed to allow them to create, access, and analyze data in methodologically sophisticated ways. This facility will also create internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

**Connecting Research and Action**

In November 2012, four students from Melanie Heath’s fourth year Sociology seminar “Women, Sexuality and the Welfare State”, were among the speakers at a packed-room event held at the Hamilton Convention Centre and organized by the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, talking about poverty and ideas for action. In the audience were Hamilton NDP MP, Chris Charlton, Liberal Senator Art Eggleton and Conservative Senator Don Meredith, along with members of the Hamilton community.

As part of the community-engaged learning component of their course, students partnered with Hamilton YWCA to conduct original research, develop tangible solutions to the problems faced by women living in poverty and present these to the community.

Other students worked with different community partner organizations on one of three other projects: Take Back the Night Event, Living Wage Campaign Project or a Grocery Flyer Project. All four of the projects, Heath said, “helped students think outside of the box to question how to make real social change.”
Enhance knowledge mobilization and exchange

Governments, business, and granting agencies increasingly stress the importance of effective knowledge mobilization. We want our research to influence the thinking of our academic peers and developments within specialized fields of knowledge.

We want our research to have an impact on government policy, community stakeholders, how societies are organized and ways of understanding ourselves and our world. We acknowledge and welcome accountability to the world beyond the campus and we want to share our research outcomes with communities, governments, and businesses to use new knowledge to improve people’s lives. Yet this desire for our research to have significant local and global impacts must be balanced with our responsibility to preserve academic integrity and independence and to continue to foster curiosity-driven research.

With support of McMaster’s VP Research, the Faculty will work with staff dedicated to knowledge mobilization (KM) to communicate the impact of research done by social scientists. Specific KM activities will include a Faculty community lecture series, and development of a research communication strategy. This strategy will include the development of measurements for, and improve by 25 percent, the mediated expression of ongoing faculty and student research, which could include not only scholarly publications but websites, social media, open access repositories, or special printed reports. The measurements will be developed by September 2014, and a 25 percent improvement is targeted for September 2016.

In addition to effectively communicating our research, we will inventory and share within the Faculty and across the University our participation and expertise in community-based research (CBR), and create an ad hoc committee or network of faculty members and students interested in CBR.

Bonnie Freeman
School of Social Work

Initially an Indigenous Pre-Doctoral Fellow in the School of Social Work, Bonnie Freeman is now transitioning into a faculty position. As Chair of the School’s Circle on Indigenous Social Work Action, Freeman’s connections with the surrounding communities and indigenous networks on campus, including the Indigenous Studies Program, mean the progress of First Nations, Métis and Inuit students in the undergraduate social work program is now better supported than before.

The School is already receiving increasing numbers of applications from indigenous students. Freeman is actively fostering links with indigenous community organizations in order to expand the School’s range of field placements and strengthen the undergraduate curriculum for indigenous and non-indigenous students alike. She guided an extensive community consultation process in support of a course on child welfare that the School offered at Six Nations Polytechnic in 2012. This course built bridges between the University and key community constituencies and between Traditional and Western approaches to teaching, learning and community healing.
Similarly, we will identify other priorities and methods for enhanced knowledge mobilization and exchange, such as collaborations with industry, government, labour unions, and the non-profit sector, and, after discussion across the Faculty, develop a knowledge mobilization plan by September 2014.

**Strategic Priority 3: Building pathways, strengthening community engagement and valuing diversity**

Pathways into and out of University have become more perilous to navigate for prospective and current students. In Ontario, where demand for education is strong, it has been difficult for some students to gain entry into University. This is especially the case for many under-represented populations including students from low-income households, Indigenous peoples, students with disabilities, and students growing up in rural communities.

Universities have been encouraged to find ways of improving access to post-secondary education for these students. Our responsibility to be part of this movement and to make sure that these initiatives work goes deeper than incentives and is rooted in the values we embrace – equity, diversity, community and global citizenship.

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**2013 Vanier Canada Scholars**

Four doctoral students in McMaster’s Faculty of Social Sciences - Deena Abul Fottouh (Sociology), Lori Chambers (School of Social Work), Lauren Wallace (Anthropology), and Tina Wilson (School of Social Work) – were awarded the prestigious Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship in 2013. The scholarship is worth $150,000 over three years. As the Canadian government notes, this scholarship program was created to “attract and retain world-class doctoral students and to establish Canada as a global centre of excellence in research and higher learning.” These are highly competitive and prestigious awards, requiring demonstrated academic excellence and outstanding research potential and leadership abilities. The leadership criteria go beyond more conventional academic performance, to include areas such as organizational, artistic or athletic accomplishments, community outreach, or civic engagement. Our students’ success in the Vanier competition is a testament to their own extraordinary abilities and to the outstanding qualities of the Social Sciences programs in which they are enrolled.
At the same time, shifts in the labour market confront undergraduate and graduate students with increasingly difficult transitions from University into jobs and careers. While labour market restructuring and downward wage pressures account, in part, for this trend, we have a responsibility for improving our students’ pathways into the labour market.

The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to building pathways for prospective students into the University, as well as from University into the labour market and our communities. Community engagement is seen as a primary strategy for building such pathways. A “Pathways Institute”, aimed at bringing together the various offices, staff and initiatives focused on assisting students into and out from University through community engagement and outreach will be established by 2015 and housed in the new L.R. Wilson Hall.

**Improve pathways into post-secondary education for those traditionally under-represented in Universities and in so doing increase the diversity of our student body**

The Faculty of Social Sciences will continue to offer free University course credits in collaboration with the Hamilton School Boards and Pathways Canada to high school students from inner city Hamilton to aid in their transition to post-secondary education. We will build on our summer partnership with Cathy Wever Elementary School (Hamilton inner-city school) through which we offer a 3-day introduction to University, and expand outreach activities aimed at introducing particular under-represented groups of students to University.

The Faculty will develop selected on-line courses, as well as other non-traditional delivery methods (such as compressed courses, more summer and night course offerings) to improve student access to University education.

We are committed to increasing the numbers of bursaries and other income supports for low-income undergraduate and graduate students.

The Faculty will work with others on campus, in particular with the Dean of Students, to break down barriers and improve supports to enrolled students.

When hiring staff and faculty, we will take into consideration issues of equity and diversity on the understanding that many groups perform better when they see themselves and their communities represented in the University.

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**Marshall Beier: 3M National Teaching Fellow**

In 2012, Marshall Beier, Professor of Political Science, was awarded a 3M National Teaching Fellowship, Canada’s highest award for teaching instruction, for his innovative teaching which brings his own research into courses and provides undergraduate students with an opportunity to do original research.

Third and fourth year students learn about international politics and arms control through a large arms control simulation. Senior students use their knowledge to help re-design the simulation for lower level students.

Beier’s innovations within the classroom bring his subject matter ‘to life’ for his students.
**Increase community engagement opportunities for students**

Faculty members in Social Sciences work with local community partners as well as community partners from around the world. Community engagement is highly dependent upon individual faculty members or students. To deepen and extend the impact of community engagement requires concerted effort.

Recognizing the opportunity that community-based research presents for community engagement and sustained partnership, as well as the expertise of a number of its researchers in this area, the Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to raising the profile of CBR to attract undergraduate and graduate students who are passionate about working with communities and realizing the kinds of impacts CBR can have on peoples’ lives.

Toward this goal, we will develop one or more courses that teach students about community-based research methodologies and ethical behaviour. In addition we will increase the number of community engagement opportunities for students. These will include academic placements, volunteer opportunities, and courses with a community engagement component. The Office of Experiential Education will take the lead on this initiative.

**Improve career readiness amongst our students**

Through our Office of Experiential Education, the Faculty of Social Sciences already offers internships, job shadowing, career conversations with alumni, and non-credit courses that teach students leadership, career mapping and interview skills. We will expand career-related opportunities for undergraduate students through Experiential Education.

We will implement an exit survey of our graduates to keep track of what they do upon graduation and learn how their education helped them, or could be improved, to achieve their life goals.

> “Since I was first hired to teach a course at McMaster in the Fall of 1991, teaching and learning has changed significantly thanks to technological advances both in and out of the classroom. I am especially interested in how technology will enhance the McMaster student experience given the University’s adoption of the Learning Portfolio. I am intrigued by its possibilities. Thanks to a grant from the President’s Office (Forward with Integrity) and additional funds from the Faculty of Social Sciences, I facilitated SocSci 2LP3 in the Fall term of 2013. This course is a pilot project that aims to focus on mentoring and learning with thirty students. Ideally these students will subsequently become mentors for the incoming class of 2014 guiding its members as they develop their own learning goals and begin to assemble their own Learning Portfolios.”

Philippa Carter
Assistant Professor, Religious Studies
We will also engage alumni to create internships and other career development opportunities for our graduates. To this end, we will develop an on-line portal through which Alumni can recruit our students for job openings, and facilitate peer mentoring around using social media for networking.

The Learning Portfolio
The Learning Portfolio has been embraced by Forward with Integrity as an important on-line tool that students can use to document and reflect upon their educational experiences, including extra-curricular activities. The Learning Portfolio is intended to enrich students’ learning outcomes and potentially provide students with a document to share with prospective employers.

With financial support from Forward with Integrity, two Social Sciences courses will experiment with the learning portfolio to determine what works best for our students, and whether these are valued by employers. By the end of the 2013-14 academic year, we will share the results of this research and act to align our curriculum with the recommendations arising from this work and faculty teaching preferences. We will also work with MIEETL and EE to ensure that faculty members understand how to deploy the learning portfolio in their courses so students maximize its potential benefits.

Strategic Priority 4: Enhancing graduate student education and research

The Faculty of Social Sciences offers many excellent graduate programs. We are committed to maintaining excellence by ensuring students have the appropriate supports for success and by nurturing new fields of excellence in the future. Excellence in graduate education in part hinges on recruitment and retention of excellent faculty.

Wayne Lewchuk
Precarious Employment and the “New Normal”

That new normal could prove damaging both for Canada’s economy and for the health of households and communities, indicates an employment study headed by Wayne Lewchuk (Labour Studies and Economics).

According to the study report, entitled “It’s More than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-being” and jointly published by McMaster University and United Way Toronto, only 60 percent of workers in Hamilton and the GTA have what they’d classify as stable, secure jobs. The other 40 percent are either working short term, contract jobs with little to no security or benefits, or full time hours without security. The effects of precarious employment can be far-reaching, Lewchuk says, and have severe impacts on family life because it delays a person’s ability to make major life decisions, such as buying a house, puts extra stress on an established family and limits the amount of time a person may be able to contribute to activities such as volunteering.

“It doesn’t have to be this way,” Lewchuk says. “Labour markets have changed, and we have to rethink things.” The report is meant to be a “conversation starter and a kick off for finding solutions for a growing situation.”
Enrich graduate life and experience on campus
Toward this goal, the Faculty of Social Sciences will provide a central meeting place (graduate student lounge) in the new L.R. Wilson Hall where graduate students can interact with each other and faculty. We will also develop and advertise courses that are available to a wide range of students from across disciplines to encourage intellectual breadth and a broad range of skills amongst our graduate students. This would also ensure students have adequate course selection opportunities.

Support research excellence amongst our graduate students
The Faculty of Social Sciences has seen significant growth in its graduate studies over the last five years. Graduate student numbers have increased 20% in that time. This has been driven by a combination of new faculty attracting top-notch students to existing graduate programs and the development of new graduate programs. Our graduate programs attract some of the best students from around the world. Many of these students win prestigious external scholarships, such as the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (See story on Page 16).

The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to building new graduate programs in emerging areas of interest such as Health, Aging and Society, Labour Studies, Social Psychology, and managing Big Data. The Faculty will explore inter-disciplinary degree opportunities with other Faculties, in particular with the Faculties of Science and Engineering where new research collaborations are emerging.

With the opening of the IQ2-R lab in the new L.R. Wilson Hall, graduate students will have access to the data, software, research facilities (such as focus group rooms), and analytical supports to engage in multi-method research in an enriched environment. This will include offering graduate students and faculty short courses aimed at learning new software packages, to advance their analytic capacity. We will work with the library to expand the available resources needed to support traditional text-based disciplines including, where possible, raising additional resources in support of the library.

Improve transitions from graduation to employment
Most doctoral programs are designed to prepare students for careers in academia. Yet only a minority of the 5,400 students who received a PhD from a Canadian university in 2009 – as few as 25% in some disciplines – end up with a job in academia (Carr 2012).

The majority of PhD and MA graduates will find jobs in industry and the public or not-for-profit sectors. Or they will create their own jobs and businesses. We will develop better measures of post-graduation employment, and consider adjusting programs to introduce a professional orientation to some streams of the PhD, if appropriate, by September 2015. This could include improved learning opportunities in project evaluation, project management and policy expertise. Although there are some experiential education opportunities for graduate students, the Faculty will consult with graduate students about their interest and support for expanding such activities.
For those graduates hoping to pursue an academic career, we will develop more systematic supports for these students in terms of publications, conference presentations, CV preparation, and preparation for interviews. We will provide opportunities for graduate students to present their research outside of their own discipline, whether within the University or in the broader community. In addition, we will improve knowledge mobilization around graduate student research in order that a wider audience knows our students’ areas of expertise, achievements, and skills.

We will work with the School of Graduate Studies to offer more professional and employment supports for graduate students. This could include opportunities to develop networking skills, team building, coordinating and running meetings, and preparation of budgets.

**Strategic Priority 5: Building a sustainable future for the Faculty**

The Faculty of Social Sciences has for many years faced the challenge of inadequate financial resources to fulfill its educational and research potential. Our strategic capacity to build a more sustainable future has been hobbled by old systems, gaps in leadership, and unsystematic decision-making approaches. These challenges need to be addressed if the Faculty is going to meet its goal of being the best Faculty of Social Sciences in the country and one of the best in North America.

**Ensure budget sustainability over the short and long-term**

Toward this goal, the Faculty of Social Sciences embraces the new activity-based budget model and is committed to working with the University to ensure the University’s smooth transition towards this model.

The Faculty of Social Sciences has gained control of its in-year deficits over the last few years, but has an accumulated debt that must be paid. It is crucial that the Faculty continue its path of prudent spending to ensure long-term sustainability. Going forward, spending priorities will be aligned with our new strategic plan, albeit with recognition that the Faculty must also be responsive to changing opportunities and challenges, including academic priorities.

In terms of increasing revenue, the Dean of Social Sciences is committed to working with Advancement to fundraise in support of Faculty priorities. The Faculty of Social Sciences will also work to secure revenue from other sources, such as one-time funding opportunities offered by governments and foundations, to support its special initiatives.

**Strengthen leadership in the Faculty**

The Faculty of Social Sciences will work with the University to offer enhanced leadership mentoring and training opportunities for faculty to ensure a cadre of talented leaders ready to lead departments, special initiatives on campus, and large multi-partner, multi-investigator, multi-site, or multi-country studies. In particular, the Faculty is committed to improving the pathway into leadership of women faculty who are seriously under-represented in leadership positions across campus.
Recognizing that staff members are the backbone of the University as they provide the necessary supports to faculty, students and administrators, the Faculty of Social Sciences aspires to become an employer of choice, attracting top candidates for its staff positions and retaining its brightest staff.

As noted in the FWI Advisory Group report (2012) staff learning is integral to organizational transformation. Many staff plan, implement, monitor, evaluate, and manage, and would value mentoring and learning opportunities in developing further these competencies. The Faculty will encourage employees to advance their careers through training and education, and pursuit of other growth opportunities. It will also strive to create a positive, supportive work environment for staff in all areas of the Faculty.

**Create dynamic and positive work environments**

Creative, dynamic and positive work environments are fostered, in part, by well-designed, appropriately lit and pleasant physical work areas. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to ensuring that the new L.R. Wilson Hall creates a dynamic learning and research environment that benefits undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. The Dean is equally committed to overseeing, and where necessary raising the funds for, the systematic renovation and upgrading of existing building spaces occupied by the Faculty.

The Faculty of Social Sciences is committed to pursuing its five strategic priorities with the goals of fulfilling its overarching mission to become the pre-eminent Faculty of Social Sciences in Canada.

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**References**

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