

# Acadia 2025:

## Excellence. Engagement. Enlightenment.

### A Framework for Acadia's Strategic Plan

Presented by Dr. Peter Ricketts  
President and Vice-Chancellor

March 14, 2018



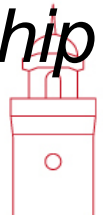
# Setting the Stage

- Acadia's current strategic plan was completed in 2006
- Mission statement:
  - *The mission of Acadia University is to provide a personalized and rigorous liberal education; promote a robust and respectful scholarly community; and inspire a diversity of students to become critical thinkers, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and responsible global leaders.*
- Overarching values:
  - *Excellence in Scholarship*
  - *A Close Community*
  - *Personal Responsibility*
  - *Leadership.*



# Setting the Stage

- The 2006 Strategic Plan identified five distinguishing features of a distinctive Acadia education:
  - *Personalized attention to students as learners*
  - *Undergraduate research*
  - *Education of the whole student*
  - *A focus on the environment and important social issues*
  - *Emphasis on responsible, global citizenship*



# Decade of Challenge

- Immediately post 2006 plan, Acadia's circumstances changed:
  - In 2008, the provincial operating grant reduced annual revenue by \$6.8 million/yr.
  - Unavoidable operating deficits, budget reductions, and staff/faculty cuts have limited institutional flexibility
  - Enrolment low-point reached in in 2008 (+/- 3,000 FT UG/G students)
- The combined impact pushed Acadia into survival mode.



# Where we were in 2007/2008

- Enrolment at approx. 2900 students
- \$5.3 million operating deficit
- \$70+ million in long-term debt
- 2 strikes in the two successive rounds of faculty bargaining
- Leadership change
- Brand damage
- Limited government support and significant funding distribution change – Acadia went from 10.5 to 8.5% of the system



# Strategic Response

- Restore fiscal sustainability:
  - reduce operating expenses
  - elimination of permanent positions
  - sale of assets and reduce long-term debt
  - transfer to provincial pension plan
- Three pronged strategic response:
  - recover lost provincial grant funding
  - increase operating revenues from tuition and other fees by reversing the decline in enrolments
  - increase external revenues from fundraising



# Strategic Response

- Focus on student recruitment -- current enrolment has rebounded to near pre-double cohort levels (+/- 3,800 FT UG/G)
- Diverse mix of students: 47.8% from NS, 39.7% from RoC, 12.5% international from 59 countries
- Dynamic, engaged, award-winning faculty
- Strategic Research Plan 2015 : *Rural and Coastal: Local to Global*
- Labour stability
- Donor support at record levels: significant new investment in physical plant and student support
- Stabilization of funding from Province



# Where we are today

- Strong brand renewal
- Enrolment increases each year (exception 2015-2016)
- Strong financial management
  - Balanced cash-based budget for 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 (enrolment, spending control, and additional grant)
  - 2014-2015 : operating deficit due to significant increase in pension costs
  - 2015-2016 : \$1.3m operating deficit (1<sup>st</sup> year enrolment decrease)
- Three successful rounds of labour bargaining
- Provincial support: Cutten Loan, Operating Loan and additional \$3.5m grant for last 5 years, now included in base grant
- Improved positioning with external stakeholders





# Setting the Stage

- Acadia is a “jewel in the crown” of the Canadian university system.
- Excellence, engagement, and enlightenment define the Acadia educational experience
- Acadia is liberal education university within the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century society and economy:
  - Enriched learning environment
  - Engaged and committed faculty
  - Undergraduate and graduate research
  - Experiential learning
  - Community service
  - Environmental stewardship
  - International and global outreach



# A Plan with Purpose

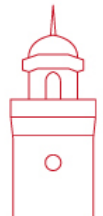
- Acadia 2025 will set the scene at high level for formulating goals, establishing priorities, and measuring impact
- Reflect on current strengths and the environment in which Acadia will move forward
- Test resilience of 2006 Strategic Plan, Strategic Research Plan, and Senate-led *An Acadia Education*
- Build upon knowledge gained during 2015 branding exercise



# Environmental Realities

## Fiscal constraints

- Likely no annual increases in provincial funding or tuition revenue beyond current permitted levels for foreseeable future
- No increases in university debt
- 18 to 25 year-old cohort continues to decline, especially in Atlantic Canada; recruitment for domestic and international students is increasingly competitive and expensive



# Environmental Realities

## External expectations

- Ever-louder calls for universities to graduate students “career-ready” for 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy
- Challenged to respond with actions to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Governments want universities to be strong net contributors to the provincial economy, and especially in implementing the Atlantic Growth Strategy
- Government sees universities as important for increasing immigration of HQP to NS.



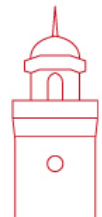
# Institutional Strengths

- Acadia has unique role within the NS university system: geographic location, learning environment, partnership with Town of Wolfville, regional and community engagement, alumni support and engagement
- Founding member of Maple League of Universities
- 2006 strategic plan distinguishing features remain intact:
  - Personalized attention to students as learners
  - Undergraduate research
  - Education of the whole student
  - A focus on the environment and important social issues
  - Emphasis on responsible, global citizenship

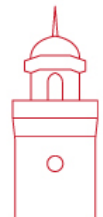
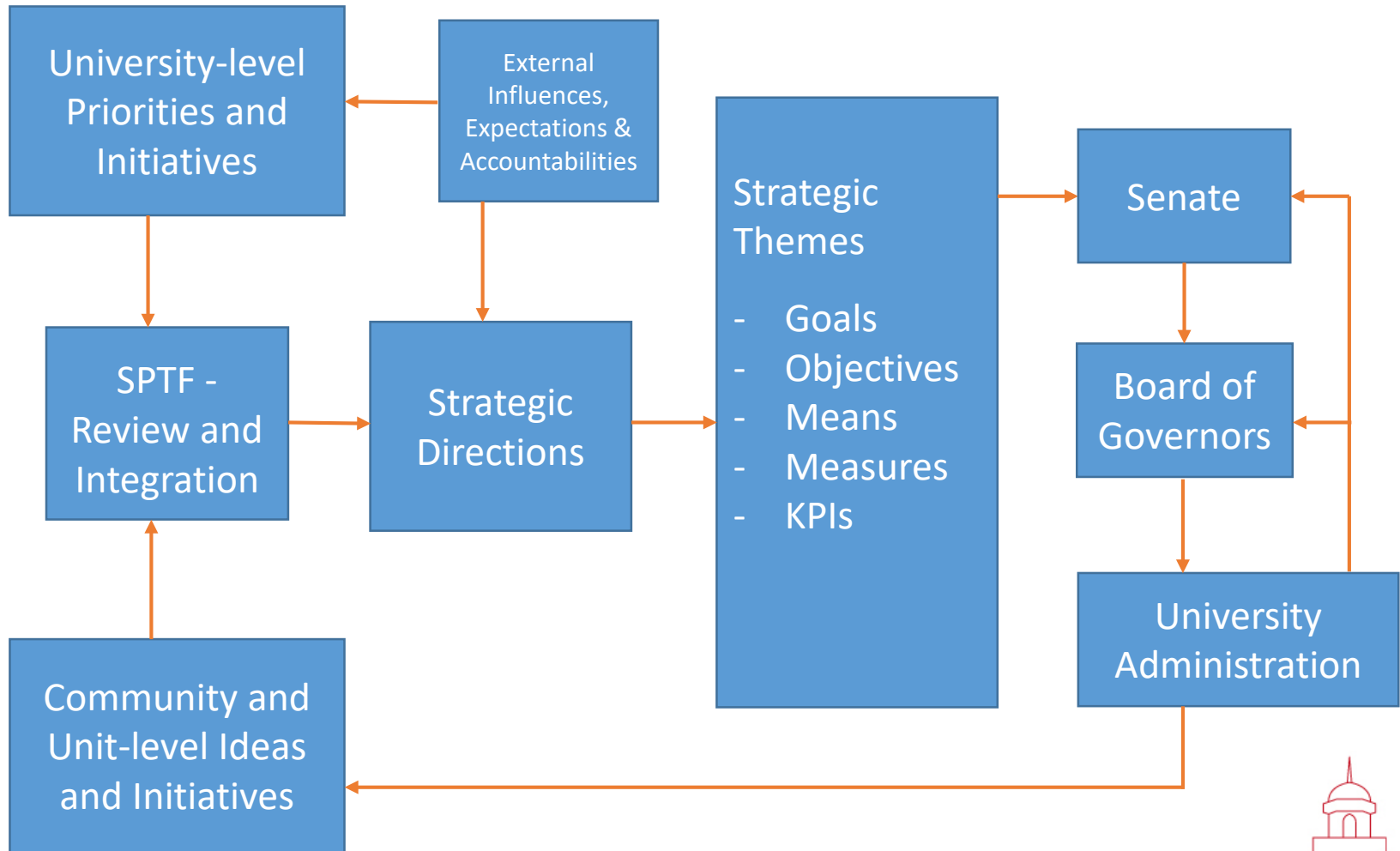


# Strategic Planning Process

- Set goals that are aspirational and realistic
- Commit to actions that are tangible and measurable
- Undertake highly consultative process, involving campus and external stakeholders
- Consider current strategic plans, mission statements, and provincial outcomes agreement
- Ensure both internal and external stakeholders inform the final plan



# Acadia Strategic Planning Process



# Key Questions to Consider

- Does the 2006 mission statement, with its five distinguishing features, still define the unique experience that is the Acadia education today?
- Does it make sense to develop an institutional mandate statement as part of the plan that is influenced by our relationship with the provincial government?





# Key Questions to Consider

- How can we ensure that Acadia's strategic plan will actually define what distinguishes us from other universities, and that it will lay out a roadmap for building upon those distinctive characteristics?
- How can we bring together the key elements of the branding exercise and the Senate deliberations on the Acadia education experience into a concise and coherent statement of Acadia's unique value proposition to Canadians and people from around the world?



# Key Questions to Consider

- How can we ensure that Acadia's strategic plan will actually define what distinguishes us from other universities, and that it will lay out a roadmap for building upon those distinctive characteristics?
- Is there a big bold institutional-level initiative that could be a defining moment for Acadia and promoting the Acadia brand?



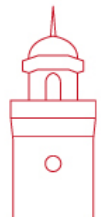
# Timeline

- **March – June 2018 *Phase I - Ideas for Acadia 2025***
  - Official Launch – March 14, 2018
    - Invite members of the community to participate in an open consultation to think about what we want Acadia to be in 2025, which would be the year after the completion of a five-year strategic plan (2019-24)
    - Acadia 2025 Website goes live (<https://acadia2025.acadiau.ca/>) – interactive website to receive ideas and comments from internal and external communities
  - Town Hall sessions with faculty, staff, and students, together with sessions at Senate and the Board
  - Build an *Acadia Ideabook* and ‘word cloud’ based upon the submissions, with feedback and suggestions on the vision, values, and mission statements, ideas as suggested by the community, and the identification of emerging themes



# Timeline

- **July – December 2018 Phase II – Strategic Direction**
  - A Strategic Planning Task Force (SPTF) comprised of faculty, staff, administration, and students will be appointed by the President to conduct a more focused phase of consultation based upon the *Acadia Ideabook*
  - A series of Acadia Circle (A-Circles) groups could be created to address emerging themes, and start identifying potential goals, objectives, and strategic actions
  - Establishing a small number of external Circles (e-Circles) to engage selected external communities in the strategic planning process
  - Develop a draft Strategic Directions document that will outline the proposed themes of the strategic plan and circulate it for direct internal and external comment



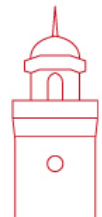
# Timeline

- **January – April 2019 *Phase III – Drafting the Plan***
  - The SPTF conducts a more focused phase of consultation based upon the *Strategic Directions* document at the departmental and unit level and continuing feedback from the Circles addressing prioritization of strategic directions, themes, goals, objectives, and actions
  - Production of a Draft Strategic Plan submitted to the President for review then published for consideration by the Acadia community



# Timeline

- **April – June 2019 *Phase IV – Finalising the Plan***
  - After review by the President, the Final Draft Strategic Plan would be brought for formal discussion at the Senate, Board, Faculties, and administrative areas for feedback into the development of the Final Plan
  - SPTF finalises the plan, and submit the Final Strategic Plan to the President for presentation to and approval by Senate and then the Board

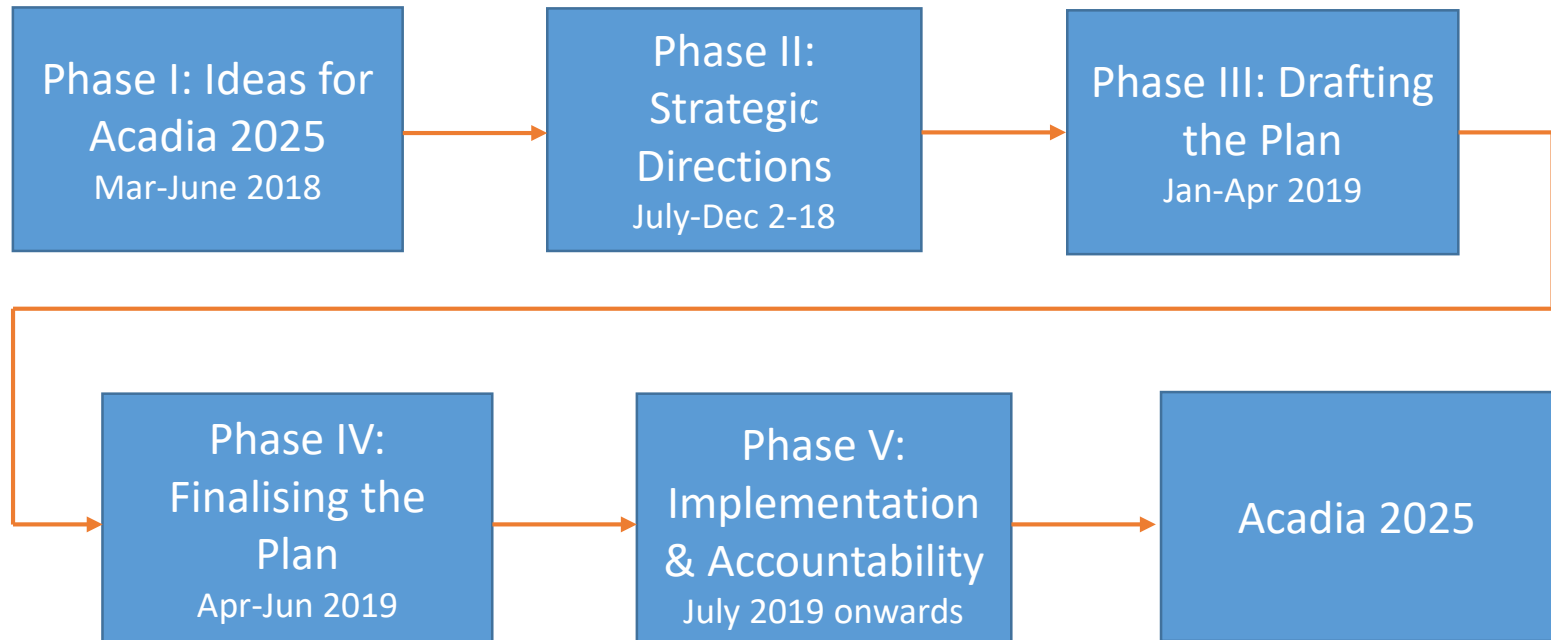


# Timeline

- ***Phase V – Implementation and Accountability***
  - Following approval, entire Acadia community engaged in implementing the plan
  - President responsible for reporting on progress to the Board, Senate and the Acadia community regularly but at least annually



# Acadia Strategic Planning Framework





# Questions and Comments?

