

STRATEGIC **PLAN**

2015-2020

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DO
WHAT
YOU LOVE.

DOUGLAS COLLEGE STRATEGIC **PLAN** 2015-2020

Can we make post-secondary education better?

Better for students?

Better for the businesses and organizations that will employ them?

Better for the people of British Columbia?

These are the questions we asked when we looked to the future of Douglas College. The answer, each time, was “yes.” We **can** make post-secondary education better. And how we do it is the purpose of this document. It is our guide to a better Douglas College, a better system, and a better educational experience for students.

By 2020, we want people to see Douglas College as something new — a post-secondary institution that provides the educational breadth and depth of a traditional academic university with the applied skills of a college. Douglas will become known as a third option, one that is more responsive to employers and more inspiring and relevant for students, with educational experiences that encourage and support exploration and, at the same time, are grounded in the real world by providing opportunities to investigate today’s problems and practice the skills needed to succeed in a modern work environment.

WHO IS DOUGLAS?

With a dozen public post-secondary institutions, dozens of private institutions, and a host of online post-secondary options operating in the Metro Vancouver region, it has become increasingly important for each institution to articulate what makes its approach to education unique. This differentiation begins with the institution’s core purpose — its reason for being.

At Douglas College, a new and refined core purpose was developed through the strategic-planning process, highlighting the focus on students and the role that all employees play in creating a transformative educational experience:

We inspire our students to do what they love and be good at it, providing educational experiences that challenge, enlighten, and open doors to lives of passion and purpose.

This core purpose goes to the heart of Douglas College and is infused in all of the College’s activities.

CORE PURPOSE

WHERE IS DOUGLAS GOING?

With two main campuses in the heart of Metro Vancouver, one already serviced by rapid transit, and the other soon to be the starting point of a new SkyTrain line, Douglas College's position as an educational hub for the Lower Mainland will only increase in the coming years. A new vision for Douglas must reflect this increasing responsibility to serve the region and, at the same time, satisfy employer needs and government expectations. The B.C. government's Skills for Jobs Blueprint, for example, requires all post-secondary institutions to address labour-market needs and align a percentage of their educational programming with in-demand occupations.

As an applied institution, Douglas College is well-positioned to exceed expectations of the Blueprint. In addition, Douglas has tremendous strength in our academic courses and programs. More and more students entering post-secondary directly from high school or after a gap year are seeing the value of starting academic studies at Douglas College before moving on to a research university. In addition, university graduates are increasingly coming to Douglas College to acquire applied skills through our post-degree diploma programs.

Indeed, it is Douglas College's nature as an applied academic institution that provides the College with some of its unique sense of place and community. Douglas is not an ivory tower.

It is grounded by an applied, practical mandate, but at the same time able to provide students with the deep, well-rounded education typical of a research university.

These and other considerations have led to an exciting new vision for Douglas College over the next five to 10 years:

Douglas College is recognized as providing the most inspiring and relevant undergraduate educational experience in B.C., filling a niche between universities and colleges by combining the academic foundations of a university with the employer-ready skills of a college.

This vision is bold, but it is achievable. It is true to our core purpose, respectful of our institutional culture, and builds on our strengths. It is who we want to become.

VISION



WHY CHOOSE DOUGLAS?

Already, there are many reasons why students come to Douglas College, from the strength of our programs and faculty, to the supportive culture, to more practical reasons, such as our central locations, small class sizes, and reasonable tuition fees. But the dual nature of Douglas College as applied and academic is a core strength, and it is this strength upon which we will build over the next five years.

Why choose Douglas?

At Douglas, students receive the best of both worlds — the well-rounded educational experience of a university and the employer-ready skills of a college — in a student-centered environment that cultivates academic and career success.

This is the experience we want all students to have at Douglas — an experience so good that even if they were admitted by a research university, they would still choose Douglas for the first two years, or even all four, based on the quality of their experience alone. An experience where, inside and outside the classroom, students benefit from faculty with academic depth and relevant work experience. Where first- and second-year students have opportunities to practice hands-on skills and to study internationally — opportunities that they

wouldn't get at a research university. And where all students are immersed in a culture that is dedicated to challenging and motivating them at every opportunity.

What does this mean for other stakeholders, such as employers, community groups, and governments? It means Douglas will actively seek out advice from employers to ensure that our programs are highly relevant to their needs. Employers will be valued partners who inform program content, provide workplace experience for students and, ultimately, demonstrate a preference for our graduates when they hire new employees. It means more hands-on opportunities in our communities with applied research projects, internships, and service-learning opportunities that provide value to employers and students alike. And it means even better value for students, government, and taxpayers through more efficient and effective processes that maintain low operating costs yet improve the student experience to become the most inspiring and relevant in the province.

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

To achieve our vision, our plan will focus on three strategic themes. These themes represent the hallmarks of a Douglas College education: an inspiring and relevant experience, grounded and flexible programs, and practical and applied skills. Each of these three themes is supported by a series of strategic underpinnings. These underpinnings represent the foundational elements necessary to support the educational environment, specifically: people, technology and facilities, external relationships, and financial sustainability. Together, these strategic objectives and underpinnings will allow us to achieve our vision.

DOUGLAS VISION

THEME

INSPIRING AND RELEVANT

GROUNDED AND FLEXIBLE

PRACTICAL AND APPLIED

INSPIRING EXPERIENCES

NEW-STUDENT FOCUS

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

SEAMLESS TRANSFER

ACADEMIC FOUNDATION

DEGREE PATHWAYS

EMPLOYER NEEDS

PRACTICAL SKILLS

PROFESSIONAL ALIGNMENT

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PEOPLE

TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

RELATIONSHIPS

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

STRATEGIC UNDERPINNING

STRATEGIC THEMES

THEME #1

INSPIRING AND RELEVANT

Collectively, the goal of objectives falling under this strategic theme is to create an inspiring and relevant educational environment. A challenging culture of ideas, critical engagement, and reasoned analysis. A place where learning continues outside the classroom, motivated by the relevancy of the program content. Although Douglas College is already an inspiring place for many students and employees, this strength needs to be more clearly defined and supported if it is to become recognized as a hallmark of a Douglas College education.

Key strategic objectives:

A. We deliver an inspiring, challenging, and highly relevant educational experience, inside and outside the classroom. Students increasingly recommend and choose Douglas as their first-choice institution, stay at Douglas longer, and report higher satisfaction with their experience.

Inside and outside the classroom, Douglas offers an educational environment that inspires students to apply themselves to their studies, to engage with the College community in challenging and thought-provoking ways and, ultimately, to complete their programs of study. Initiatives under this objective will enhance program quality, create more educationally focused student-engagement opportunities, ensure the utilization of effective delivery methods and educational technologies, and foster a culture of open dialogue that encourages critical thinking.

B. All students graduating from applied programs will have completed a defined period of relevant service learning or community volunteer experience.

As Douglas is an institution with many applied programs, students should have the opportunity to learn and practice applied skills through engagement with employers in the community. Such engagement will build new connections in the community and strengthen existing connections. Initiatives under this objective will build and improve opportunities for students to complete relevant experience working for potential employers or volunteering in community settings. These opportunities will help students obtain employment upon graduation, or provide them with unique skills to enhance their application for relevant graduate programs.

C. We put special emphasis on incoming students, to set them up for success in their academic and professional lives.

New students require special attention to set them up for future success at Douglas College, or at another post-secondary institution if they decide to transfer elsewhere. Initiatives under this objective will improve communication with prospective and new students, streamline administrative processes, reduce barriers, improve academic advising and, ultimately, enhance student satisfaction with the College's educational services and programs.

THEME #2

GROUNDING AND FLEXIBLE

Objectives under this theme are designed to optimize the College's unique Academic Foundations program to ensure students have a solid academic foundation and seamless transfer to degree programs at Douglas or other institutions. A solid academic foundation provides the intellectual groundwork for further education to build upon, challenging students with a breadth of academic coursework and providing an integrated program structure to keep them moving toward their goals.

Key strategic objectives:

A. Academic Foundations programs will be structured to engage and challenge students, ensuring they have the foundational skills needed for a degree program, a career, and to be an informed citizen.

Initiatives under this objective will encourage academic exploration, critical thinking, research, and analysis, setting students up for future success.

B. Academic Foundations programs will ladder into all Douglas College applied degree programs, and students must declare an intended degree program after their first year (30 credits).

Initiatives under this objective will create alignment between Foundations programs and degrees within Douglas. Processes will be created to encourage students to choose a direction for their studies by the end of their first year, keeping students on track and reducing the inefficiencies inherent in obtaining credits without having an established goal.

C. One- and two-year academic programs will transfer seamlessly into B.C. research universities and into the top five Canadian universities outside of B.C.

Douglas College students already do well when they transfer to university, graduating with similar GPAs as direct-entry students. Initiatives under this objective will improve program efficiency by strengthening the transfer of credits to and from degree programs at a growing number of select institutions. This will also further help students optimize their time and investment at Douglas.

THEME #3

PRACTICAL AND APPLIED

The goal of the objectives that fall under this theme is to improve program-specific, applied workplace skills to prepare students for employment. Some of the College's applied programs have been extremely successful in preparing their students for licensing exams, enjoying pass rates that exceed the national average. All applied programs should strive toward these high standards, guided by active and knowledgeable Program Advisory Committees.

Key strategic objectives:

- A.** The learning outcomes of all applied programs (certificates, diplomas, degrees, and post-degree diplomas) are well-aligned with employers' needs to prepare graduates for employment immediately following graduation.
- B.** All applied degree programs provide current, substantive knowledge of the area, applied skills, interpersonal skills, and a solid academic foundation. Degree graduates express satisfaction with their knowledge and skills.

Initiatives under objectives A and B ensure program content and delivery is of the highest quality to meet or exceed the expectations of students and employers. The academic coursework provided in all degree programs is designed to afford students the opportunity to pursue graduate credentials, should they wish to do so in the future (and provided they have demonstrated the appropriate level of academic achievement to satisfy admission requirements).

- C.** All regulated professional programs are designed to ensure graduates are eligible to meet the standards for certification/licensing required by the professional association or licensing body.

Initiatives under this objective will align program content with relevant certified professional bodies and address any gaps.



STRATEGIC UNDERPINNINGS

UNDERPINNING #1

PEOPLE

Supporting all the strategies described above are the faculty who develop and teach the courses, the instructional support staff who assist the students, and those who contribute to the operations of the College in a variety of ways. The people who work at Douglas College are key to the College's success, representing the first strategic underpinning that lies at the foundation of the Strategic Plan.

Key strategic objectives:

- A.** The skills and competencies of College employees (faculty, staff, and administrators) are current, responsive to change, and reflect the strategic needs of the organization.

Initiatives under this objective will provide all employee groups with valuable professional-development opportunities to maintain the currency and relevancy of their knowledge, skills, and competencies.

- B.** Exemplary performance is expected, recognized, and appreciated, creating a culture of excellence and accountability.

Initiatives under this objective will create a culture of excellence that rewards exemplary performance in a timely and encouraging manner, cultivates leadership organization-wide, and provides consistent, ongoing, and timely performance feedback to all employees.

- C.** Employees have a clear understanding of the College's Strategic Plan, annual goals, and their role in delivering the plan.

Initiatives under this objective will improve and streamline communications methods, tools, and processes at the College, including reporting on the progress and status of objectives within the Strategic Plan.

 UNDERPINNING #2

TECHNOLOGY AND FACILITIES

Increasingly, the ability to deliver educational programs and to meet students' needs is dependent on the effectiveness of educational technology, the availability of instructional space, and the quality of the equipment that supports students' learning. The College must ensure that instructional technology is current and reliable. In addition, business processes in the College will be supported by appropriate technology that is geared toward improving the experience of users.

Key strategic objectives:

A. Technology strategy and infrastructure at Douglas is forward-thinking and modern, providing users with a reliable, secure, fast, and seamless environment that promotes innovation and leads to increasingly high levels of satisfaction and productivity.

Initiatives under this objective will improve the student and employee experience at Douglas College through technology in a cost-effective, but forward-thinking, manner.

B. First-year students report high levels of satisfaction with recruitment, admissions, and registration processes.

Initiatives under this objective will improve the application and registration processes at Douglas College, creating a system that is clear and easy to use. As well, improved recruitment processes will be designed to engage productively with prospective students, increasing yield rates of admitted and attending students.

C. The College has sufficient and appropriate space (teaching, administrative, and student) optimally utilized to advance the College's operations, enhance the educational and workplace experience, and engage and support partnerships with employers and other community stakeholders.

Initiatives under this objective will optimize existing space usage at the College and explore options to increase capacity to meet future demand.

UNDERPINNING #3

RELATIONSHIPS

Achieving many of the College's educational goals depends on having effective working relationships with external partners, businesses, industries, post-secondary institutions, communities, and government agencies.

Key strategic objectives:

- A.** We have strong and valued relationships with key employers, post-secondary institutions, and other partners in each sector in which we offer programs. These relationships add value by expanding learning opportunities outside Douglas (e.g., research, practica, internships, and partnership programs), by providing students with networking opportunities prior to graduation, by increasing employers' investments in and support of Douglas College, and by ensuring College programs are relevant and responsive to labour-market demands.

Initiatives under this objective will increase the number and quality of external learning opportunities for students, as well as develop a centralized and comprehensive way to track and maintain these opportunities.

- B.** Douglas is regarded as a valued and influential strategic partner, open to new and emerging opportunities, by all three levels of government. The Ministry of Advanced Education looks to Douglas for ways to strengthen the post-secondary system.

Initiatives under this objective will strengthen the College's relationships with each level of government.

UNDERPINNING #4

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The strategic goals of the College will require investment of time, energy, and resources. The College is in very good financial shape, which has been achieved through revenue diversification and cost-consciousness. The College must continue to make decisions with a long-term perspective to ensure we can achieve our strategic vision.

Key strategic objectives:

- A.** The College's financial management policies, practices, and systems facilitate the development, protection, and allocation of resources to increase revenues, effectively manage costs, and mitigate risks, outperforming benchmarked peers.

Initiatives under this objective will balance risks and rewards in College expenditures, leading the sector by providing exemplary fiscal management.

CONCLUSION

Douglas College has changed significantly over the years. In terms of size and scope, we now offer more credentials to more students than ever before. But what has not changed is our sense of commitment to those students and to the cause of education itself. With this strategic plan, we have focused our energies on key areas that will help build an even better college — one that can, in many ways, lead the post-secondary system in British Columbia. Each day, we ask our students to strive for greatness — to challenge themselves, to grow, and to learn as individuals and as citizens.

We should expect no less from ourselves.

KEY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

1. Douglas will be increasingly recognized for providing educational programs that are both applied and academic.
2. More students will regard Douglas as their first-choice institution.
3. Students will stay at Douglas College for longer and report higher satisfaction with their education and experience at Douglas.
4. Students will increasingly describe their experience at Douglas as relevant and inspiring.
5. Employers will increasingly recognize the value of a Douglas College education.
6. All students will be able to apply, register, and connect to Douglas with ease from any mobile device.
7. All Douglas students in applied programs will complete an internship, co-op placement, practicum, or service learning opportunity in the community.
8. Douglas will be increasingly recognized as a valued partner by the Ministry and within the post-secondary sector.

DOUGLAS COLLEGE