

A message from Dr. Janet Morrison



Harnessing our Strengths to Secure our Future

June 9, 2020

Colleagues: as we continue to prepare for the fall term, I want to underscore the principles and planning assumptions we're using to guide that work. Further, I want to focus on our enrolment recovery planning and, specifically, the accountability we will all share for driving student success and satisfaction. As always, I will be transparent and frank; I continue to see this as foundational to navigating the pandemic together.

Principles

By way of reminder, shortly after the provincial and national States of Emergency were implemented, we articulated Guiding Principles for managing through the crisis. Foremost was the imperative to safeguard the health and holistic wellbeing of our entire learning community. Equally important, however, was ensuring the long-term economic sustainability of Sheridan.

Planning Assumptions

Those of you who participated in the [April 23 Town Hall](#) will recall that -- to the specific issue of Sheridan's financial health -- we presented five enrolment impact scenarios that were used to inform budget modelling: low, moderate, high, severe and catastrophic. Each scenario was predicated on an assessment of external factors (e.g.: physical distancing, travel and visa restrictions, government responses to economic indicators, increased competition within the sector, etc.); and, internal impacts (e.g.: operations and delivery, the international recruitment market, affordability, our domestic market share, etc.).

After carefully considering each model, our Integrated Planning & Analysis team recommended an interim planning assumption forecasting a 'High Impact' enrolment loss scenario which -- for the fall -- rests on a projected decrease of 21% in domestic and 42% in international enrolment. The enrolment picture for next term will become increasingly clear in the coming weeks, but we remain at risk of tilting to the more dire scenarios of 'Severe' or 'Catastrophic' enrolment loss. Specifically, accepted offers are currently 7% lower than the same date last year (-11% domestic and -1% international) and deposits paid are 46% lower (-50% domestic and -46% international).

Given that so much of our revenue is derived from enrolment, a failure to mitigate the expected losses is crucial to, among other things, maintaining job security for as many employees as possible, for as long as possible. That remains a preoccupation for me and every other member of the executive team.

Enrolment Recovery

I appreciate that this is daunting, but we've been preparing for this since April, when we undertook a process to leverage Sheridan's strengths to demonstrably drive recruitment and retention in the face of a continuing reliance on alternate delivery. Specifically, we tasked three tables -- one comprised of senior academic leaders, another focused on the practical aspects of emergency operations, and the Galvanizing Education Hub -- to contemplate models that would immediately and positively impact enrolment. [This work was a sprint.](#) It was grounded in human-centred design -- a process that begins by understanding the people you are designing for and ends with innovative solutions, tailor-made to meet their needs -- and informed by a comprehensive literature review of tools and best practices, an examination of what worked well (or didn't) in our pivot to remote delivery in March, as well as targeted stakeholder consultations. (By contrast, medium- and longer-term academic and enrolment innovation will -- of course -- demand the active engagement of faculty, our collegial processes, and broad consultations.)

Today, I'm pleased to announce that four high priority initiatives have emerged from this work and have been approved for immediate implementation. At a very high level, these include:

- 1. Launch new programming that is more flexible, responsive and accessible.** This will include the development of micro credentials that allow a wide range of potential students to start at Sheridan quickly and easily. Further, we're going to create new graduate certificates using a streamlined, market-responsive development and approval process that allows for high quality, in-demand programs to reach the market sooner.
- 2. Position Sheridan as a leader in rethinking higher education.** Building on our reputation for trailblazing, we'll invest in a process to engage students, faculty, staff and alumni, industry and community partners, and other interested collaborators to co-create a forward-thinking vision for what higher education needs to become in the post-pandemic era.
- 3. Mentor and support our community to thrive in a remote learning environment.** This will include an array of resources, activities, engagement, and outreach designed to support our faculty, staff, and students to "learn well" in online and remote environments. The intention is to create digital assets and useable tools embedded in onboarding/mentorship and within identified core courses. We're also intent on developing a summer 'transition-in' support program for new students to connect early with Sheridan and gain skills and experience with remote learning platforms.
- 4. Invest in targeted communications and implement a "Fall Promise" or experience guarantee.** The research done by our tri-table team identified key factors that will most influence students' decision to start or return to post-secondary studies this fall. Drawing on those insights, an aggressive marketing and communications campaign will be launched to demonstrate how Sheridan is uniquely delivering across five elements:
 - academic quality;
 - the safeguarding of health and safety;
 - affordability;
 - student success supports; and
 - engagement opportunities (to cultivate peer relationships).

To the specific issues of quality and affordability, Sheridan will be offering a '**Fall Promise' that provides students with an extended window to experience Sheridan, risk-free.** Specifically, the date for withdrawing without academic or financial penalty will be extended to October 9. This will be supported by our Academic Advising team and an array of student success programming. We've also reduced student fees, cut the enrolment deposit by half, are offering flexible payment plans, and will be actively connecting students to financial assistance. These pieces of the puzzle will be supported by our Financial Aid team.

Please stay tuned in the days ahead for a public announcement about these efforts.

Colleagues: this plan rests squarely on Sheridan's strengths. Quite simply, I have every confidence in our faculty and staff to deliver exceptional learning experiences, even in the face of a pandemic. Each one of us has a role to play in fostering recruitment and retention, which -- by extension -- will safeguard our stellar reputation and ensure Sheridan's economic sustainability.

Please continue to take care of yourselves and the people you love. If you'd like to talk with me about our fall planning, don't hesitate to book a 15-minute coffee chat by emailing: president@sheridancollege.ca.

Warmly,

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President and Vice Chancellor

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