

October 5, 2015

Dear Colleagues and Students,

As we catch our collective breath following the start of another busy academic year and exciting Homecoming, I want to share brief updates on three important items:

Inviting your input on Indigenous Strategic Plan

Western recognizes the transformative power of education in supporting Indigenous/Aboriginal peoples and communities in self-actualizing, and the important role universities play in closing the educational gap and influencing societal changes. To these ends, we are developing Western's first-ever multi-year Indigenous Strategic Plan – and we want to hear from you.

With the release of the University's Strategic Plan, [Achieving Excellence on the World Stage](#) in 2014, Western renewed its commitment to "improving the accessibility and success in higher education for Indigenous peoples." This includes strengthening our approach to planning and engaging Indigenous peoples at every level of the University, with a view to enhancing the study, work and research experiences for Indigenous students, staff and faculty members.

There are many compelling social imperatives to developing an Indigenous Strategic Plan at Western, which can support our shared vision and growth in this significant area. This process will also bring attention to many current and relevant issues in Indigenous education including the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission \(TRC\) recommendations](#), and [Universities Canada principles in Indigenous education](#).

To date, Western's Indigenous Strategic Initiatives Committee has developed a draft Vision, Purpose, and Guiding Principles, which are grounded in feedback from the [Indigenous Postsecondary Education Council](#), [Gathering Our Voices Talking Circles](#) (2013), and the Indigenous Graduate Student World Café (2014). I encourage you to participate in this strategic planning process. For more details and to provide feedback, please visit www.indigenousstrategicplan.uwo.ca. Deadline for the initial round of submissions is Nov. 30, 2015.

Recognizing the success of our colleagues

Following the Sept. 8 news that three Western faculty members had been named [Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada](#), more good news arrived Sept. 22 with the announcement that four Western professors and one King's University College professor have been named as new members of the [RSC's College of New Scholars, Artists and Scientists](#).

These prestigious accolades reflect positively not only on the talents of the individual recipients, but they also serve to raise Western's profile and reputation as a whole. For this, I am very grateful and pleased to congratulate Professors **Bipasha Baruah** (Women's Studies & Feminist Research), **Antonio Calcagno** (Philosophy & Religious Studies, King's), **Joanna Quinn** (Political Science), **Chantelle Richmond** (Geography) and **Nadine Wathen** (Information & Media Studies) on receiving these awards.

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Of equal importance, I also wish to thank all those who played a role in nominating their colleagues for this important distinction. Your thoughtful initiative is greatly appreciated and I encourage all members of our community to consider how they, too, might play a role in nominating and recognizing the success of our colleagues.

Improving Western's governance

On Sept. 21 and 22, Western's Board of Governors met for its annual retreat and its first official meeting of the 2015-16 academic year. We were delighted to be joined by a special guest, our new chancellor **Jack Cowin** (BA'64, LLD'00), as well as by London Mayor **Matt Brown** who serves as an Ex-Officio member of the Board.

Several important topics were covered during our two days together, including updates from various members who are leading three aspects of the Board's review of its governance practices. Discussion focused on issues specifically related to the Board's relationships and communications with the larger community; the structure of the Board and delegation of authority, and; the role of the Board and its members. More details of the review can be found in the [Chair's Sept. 9 Update](#).

I wish to thank Board Chair **Chirag Shah** and all the volunteer members of the Board for their commitment to serving the best interests of the institution and their ongoing support in helping Western achieve its vision to become a destination of choice for the world's brightest minds.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Amit Chakma', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amit Chakma
President & Vice-Chancellor

P.S.,

In my Sept. 15 update, Hong Kong was incorrectly referenced within a list of the top five countries from which Western has attracted international students within our incoming undergraduate class. Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China that represents a distinct geographical area of the world from where a significant proportion of our international students come.