



**Conrad Grebel**  
University College

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# **STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025**

## **RENEWING AN INSPIRED COMMUNITY**

Approved by the Board of Governors, April 19, 2022





## STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025 RENEWING AN INSPIRED COMMUNITY

Strategy is the process of reflecting on where you need to go, and then finding the path that will take you there. To find our direction for the next three years, we reached out to our whole community of stakeholders for advice—faculty and staff, students, alumni, donors, our Board, and our partners in the church and the university. These conversations affirmed our belief that Grebel is a place that inspires its people to build community, seek wisdom, and pursue peace and justice long after they leave our halls and classrooms. We are a small college, but our impact matters.

The main hope our stakeholders expressed was for Grebel to thrive in the future. No one advised us to radically change our identity, our programs, or our mission. Rather, they encouraged us to be good stewards of the College in the face of various challenges and pressures, so that it endures for the benefit of future generations. This prompted reflection on the values we share, which serve as signposts that point us toward our best aspirations. Our plan is about renewing mind and spirit, recommitting to our values, and building upon the best of what we do together. Our path for the next three years leads us home—toward the things that matter most about who we are at Grebel.

### WHO WE ARE

Conrad Grebel University College is affiliated with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada and the University of Waterloo. These relationships shape our identity and our work. Offering a transformative student experience is central to our mission – a commitment that is evident in our vibrant residence program and in our academic offerings in liberal arts, including Theology, History, Music, Church Music and Worship, Religious Studies, Mennonite Studies, and the first Peace and Conflict Studies program in Canada. Our academic programs are rooted in areas of traditional interest to our founders, and they have flourished through the integration of students, faculty, and staff from many different backgrounds and perspectives.

Since Grebel’s founding in 1963, we have relied on lasting connections with alumni, board members, and donors who provide vital support, thoughtful guidance, and generous funding as champions of our purpose and partners in our mission: to seek wisdom, nurture faith, and pursue justice and peace in service to church and society.

Grebel’s spirit stems from our people—students, alumni, faculty, staff, board members, and donors—who aspire to be a community of learning that sparks creativity, kindles generosity, and embodies hospitality. Our founders imagined the College as a bridge, connecting their community with the wider society in which they lived. From the beginning, the College drew people of many backgrounds, beliefs, and worldviews, committed to learning from each other in a community where all find belonging. This engagement continues to shape our character. Grebel strives for a big sense of “we”—a diverse, welcoming community of individuals who seek wisdom together.





## WE SEEK WISDOM

At Grebel, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding is core to our character. Through scholarly excellence, academic rigour, and imaginative artistic pursuits, Grebel faculty strive for excellence in their respective fields. But the quest for wisdom as teachers and students involves more than the pursuit of knowledge, skills, and academic excellence. Inside and outside our classrooms, we model values of curiosity about others, openness to new worldviews and perspectives, and humility about what we know – and don't know. We know that interdisciplinary approaches provide a rich academic experience, awakening surprising ideas and interesting partnerships, so we intentionally weave together diverse programs, people, and opportunities. In our experience, wisdom grows best in community.

## WE LIVE AND LEARN IN COMMUNITY

Grebel's goal is to be a learning community where students discover their calling, develop leadership skills, and build lasting friendships. We want to be a place where encounters with others stir new ideas and generate trust. We understand that building an inclusive community is an ongoing commitment that requires effort, reflection, practice, and grace. We are committed to being a place of belonging and we encourage students to think beyond their own experience and strive to understand each other's worldview, culture, race, sexuality, gender, and faith backgrounds. Grebel provides space for conversation and connection among people of diverse backgrounds and academic disciplines. Grebel is a place to ask tough questions, learn from others, explore faith, and become grounded in a lasting community.

## WE LOOK BEYOND OURSELVES

Our students draw on their experiences at Grebel to become community-builders in the wider world. The world needs people who ask, "who is my neighbour," and our goal is to point students towards opportunities to serve their neighbours at home and abroad. We challenge students to consider how they might contribute to a more just and peaceful world with a sustainable future, whatever their field of study. We reach out beyond campus through our community education programs and collaborative partnerships with a wide variety of civil society and community service agencies.

The College is located on the Haldimand Tract, which forms part of the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee peoples. In 1784, the land on which we now live and work was granted to support the Six Nations in perpetuity, but this did not happen. We are committed to the work of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, recognizing that Grebel was founded by descendants of Mennonite settlers of this region. This work includes decolonizing our historical narratives, our minds, and our hearts. This is an ongoing process, and we have a long way to go. We do this in humility and gratitude to our Indigenous neighbours, past and present.

## PRIORITIES | GOALS | OBJECTIVES

To thrive in the future, we must face today's challenges. Two extraordinary years of navigating the COVID-19 pandemic have turned our minds towards what is most important for Grebel to be successful in the years ahead.

### WE WILL CENTRE ON STUDENTS.

In recent years, providing great student experiences has become a growing challenge for universities across Canada—a challenge that has deepened during the COVID-19 pandemic. Concerns about student mental health, resilience, and happiness are endemic in Canadian universities. One recent survey revealed that the percentage of Canadian university students who were at least “satisfied” with their opportunities to “develop lasting friendships” dropped by 13% between 2009 and 2021. [Source: *Canadian University Survey Consortium, 2021*].

In this environment, Grebel's reputation for providing transformative student experiences is one of our most important distinctives. We are proud of this record, but we must not take it for granted. In the next three years, we will centre our attention on the student experience, from recruitment, to graduation, to alumni engagement.

Our recruitment systems will be reassessed to ensure that we continue to attract academic and residence students who resonate with what Grebel offers. We will actively expand the diversity of our student body, and increase awards, scholarships, and bursaries to lower financial barriers to the Grebel experience.

Grebel has made strong investments in physical spaces over the past ten years, including a warm and welcoming library and renovated kitchen and dining room. We will now take stock of our aging residence and classroom spaces and consider ways to refresh and renew them based on what students need to thrive personally, socially, and academically, with the goal of making our campus fully inclusive, accessible, and welcoming.

While students in Grebel classes provide quantitative feedback through course surveys, residence student experiences have traditionally been tracked with more qualitative feedback. We will begin to survey residents and associates each year to collect measurable data, so that we never miss an opportunity to improve our program.

### GOALS

1. **Strengthen the culture of inclusion and belonging.**

### OBJECTIVES

1. Incorporate principles and practices of inclusive excellence in all College programs.
2. Expand outreach, recruitment efforts, and financial aid for historically under-represented students, including those from MCEC congregations.
3. Participate in the University of Waterloo's strategies in improving student experience, mental health and wellness
4. Measure and track student satisfaction in relation to student experience, intercultural competency, mental health and wellness, healthy relationships, and other important metrics.







## GOALS

### 2. Connect students with opportunities for vocation and community service.

### 3. Renew faith formation and spiritual development programs.

### 4. Evaluate Student Services programming to be more responsive to changing student needs.

### 5. Develop the alumni community as a resource for current students.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Create opportunities for students to find mentors and make connections across disciplines that expand vocational possibilities.
2. Strengthen existing Living-Learning Communities and investigate new partnerships between the residence and other UWaterloo programs.
3. Expand external graduate internship opportunities and coop placements in Grebel's academic programs.
4. Foster a culture of student service by creating stronger connections with service organizations and initiatives.

1. Create opportunities for interfaith dialogue and relationship building.
2. Increase student participation in church leadership training options.
3. Evaluate the Chaplaincy program to ensure it supports the spiritual formation of students at a Mennonite institution within the context of a diverse university.

1. Assess Grebel's existing residence, apartment, and office facilities to consider the feasibility of upgrades, renovations and additions.
2. Review inclusivity and accessibility practices in physical spaces, food services, and programs.

1. Leverage digital opportunities for Grebelites to connect, by offering increased options for livestreaming and other virtual events.
2. Maintain a healthy, up-to-date alumni database and track career paths.
3. Connect with alumni regularly and build vibrant alumni networks that lead to a growing donor base and a steady flow of next generation students.



## WE WILL ENGAGE OUR PARTNERS.

As a church-related college linked by bridges to the campus of a major university, Grebel’s location offers a unique perspective on the world. The rich potential of our peculiar setting was recognized from our beginnings in the early 1960s. Our founders saw that joining with the University of Waterloo offered the opportunity to engage with a much larger community. Over time, we began to offer scholarship and teaching in fields such as music, peace and conflict studies, history, religious studies, theology, Mennonite studies, arts, and sociology.

From the beginning, we embraced the fact that the University would shape the College, providing the opportunity to teach students from a wide range of disciplines and perspectives, and the promise of collegiality with a larger community of scholars. J. Winfield Fretz, our first President, put it this way::

“I was not interested in creating a separate school, a non-socializing, non-interacting school, an isolated academic community, as though we had the truth and were somehow going to reveal this to others. We were learning as well as teaching.”

Many months of pandemic have eroded the ties that bind people and institutions. Over the next three years, we will reach out to our partners, renewing relationships with both the University of Waterloo and Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC). We will explore new ways to collaborate with the University and our sister institutions on the west side of Laurel Creek. We are grateful for emerging relationships with our Indigenous neighbours, and we hope to nurture and build on these important connections. We will re-imagine how our teaching, expertise, and other resources are offered in service to the wider community. And we will seek productive relationships with other partners to marshal collective resources towards common goals.







## GOALS

## OBJECTIVES

**1. Renew our partnership with the University of Waterloo.**

1. Refresh key agreements among the University of Waterloo and the four affiliated and federated institutions.
2. Pursue new partnerships in areas where Grebel’s strengths are aligned with priorities established by the University and the Faculty of Arts.
3. Advocate for the development of a music performance space on the UWaterloo campus.
4. Create opportunities for students in all faculties to connect with Grebel’s programs.
5. Support the University’s social impact objectives through the Kindred Credit Union Centre for Peace Advancement to expand the reach of the Centre’s activities.

**2. Renew our partnership with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, and our relationships with the wider Mennonite community.**

1. Develop a new framework agreement to frame the MCEC/Grebel relationship, encompassing vision, governance, mutual support and accountability.
2. Connect faculty teaching and scholarship to church and community, including global Anabaptist Churches.
3. Build connections among Mennonite-related colleges and organizations to promote effective resource sharing.

**3. Build relationships with wider community partners that leverage resources for positive impact.**

1. Explore opportunities to work with Indigenous partners on joint initiatives.
2. Explore new partners, clients, and opportunities for our continuing and community education programs.
3. Support Library/Archive engagement with community groups and community members who access our resources.
4. Engage with Kindred Credit Union, the UW-Research Institute on Aging, resident organizations in the Centre for Peace Advancement, and other current partners to consider new initiatives.



## **WE WILL EXPLORE NEW PATHWAYS FOR LEARNING.**

Grebel has always aspired to be a community of learning where students and teachers seek wisdom by integrating classroom teaching and scholarship with the day-to-day experience of living and working together. Over the years, Grebel has built a well-deserved reputation for high-quality learning experiences, whether in traditional classrooms, community education programs, or the Grebel Peace Incubator.

Maintaining and building enrolment in our academic programs is a core priority. We will identify impediments to enrolment inherent in the larger university system. We will develop new courses, explore new programs, and ensure that we offer a sufficient selection of spring-term classes to meet the needs of a growing cohort of Arts co-op students. We will extend our reach by offering new online learning opportunities and refreshing older online courses, taking advantage of the new skills and experience acquired through remote teaching during the pandemic.

We will support the scholarly activity of our faculty by developing new resources and incentives for scholarship. Obstacles to scholarly productivity in our current environment will be identified, and we will consider together how these can be best addressed.

Wisdom cannot be found without equity, diversity, and inclusion. Excellence in learning requires that our programs integrate knowledge that arises from diverse experiences. In this way, students learn to embrace complexity, reconsider their received knowledge, and skillfully engage in respectful dialogue. We commit to building a culture of inclusive excellence, in alignment with principles endorsed by universities across Canada, including the *Scarborough Charter* (2021), *Inclusive Excellence Principles* (2017), *Principles on Indigenous Education* (2015), and the “Calls to Action” of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*.





## GOALS

1. **Increase enrolments in Grebel courses and programs.**
2. **Strengthen Grebel's culture of scholarship and creativity.**
3. **Strengthen community and continuing education programs to serve our constituency and reach new learning communities.**
4. **Build a culture of equity, diversity, anti-racism, and inclusion that shapes our academic and residence programs.**

## OBJECTIVES

1. Develop new in-person and Centre for Extended Learning courses to attract students from across the university.
  2. Identify potential areas of cooperation in research and teaching with UWaterloo and AFIW programs.
  3. Develop cross-listed courses to increase opportunities for students to take Grebel classes and build capacity for inter-disciplinary learning.
  4. Ensure Grebel has sufficient teaching resources and spring term course offerings to meet student needs.
  5. Introduce new students to Grebel through Center for Peace Advancement coaching and extracurricular activities.
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1. Promote and celebrate faculty scholarship and creative activity.
  2. Encourage internal and external scholarly conversations, colloquia, and other initiatives.
  3. Expand opportunities for research and creative activities for undergraduate and graduate students.
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1. Develop new community education programming for external communities to support further training and education.
  2. Explore potential new continuing education programs that build on Grebel's traditional areas of expertise.
  3. Build on existing remote learning options in the Conflict Management Certificate Program.
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1. Review academic programming within a framework of anti-racism and decolonization.
  2. Expand respectful dialogue skills and cultural competency training for faculty, staff and students.

## **WE WILL BUILD RESILIENCE FOR OUR FUTURE.**

Those of us who serve at Grebel today are stewards for people who will need Grebel tomorrow. It's our responsibility to prepare the College to face the future with confidence and hope. COVID-19 taught us the painful lesson that events beyond our control can have a powerful impact on our lives and work. It's wise to assume that the pandemic will not be the last crisis that we face together. We need to build our resilience as a community.

Resilience comes from anticipating risks and wisely managing resources of money, time, and human spirit. Grebel has expanded to the point that it makes sense to take stock of how we work together, how our time is consumed, how we make and spend money, and whether long-standing practices, programs, and systems might be updated and improved.

We can also build resilience by expanding our resources. Many Grebel programs—including some that are at the heart of our mission—are not adequately funded by tuition, government grants, or other sources of consistent revenue. We are entering a fourth year of government-mandated tuition freezes, even as inflation rates are the highest in 25 years. With the support of our committed donors, we will increase donations and endowments, so the programs that make Grebel distinct and special are sustained for the future.

Grebel's employees are a crucial source of our resilience, and they are emerging from two difficult years of pandemic in need of restoration. Our resilience as an organization depends on providing employees with support for maintaining their own resilience and the resources they need to thrive in their roles. We will continue to update our workplace policies and practices to align with the University of Waterloo and the best practices of leading employers.

We have a responsibility to look beyond ourselves and contribute to resilience and sustainability in the world around us. Over the next three years, we will initiate action to reduce the environmental impact of our operations, consider investments to lower our carbon emissions, and become actively involved in sustainability work at the University and in the local community.

By taking these steps to build our resilience, we will ensure that future generations can live and grow at Grebel, as we seek wisdom, nurture faith, and pursue justice and peace together.







## GOALS

1. **Expand environmental stewardship efforts in our buildings and operations.**
2. **Strengthen the College's financial position for future generations.**
3. **Practice the wise use of our limited resources.**
4. **Enable employees to realize their potential and contribute to the success of the College.**

## OBJECTIVES

1. Develop actionable environmental recommendations based on advice from the College's Green Team, to support Canada's 2030 emissions reduction targets and other environmental goals.
  2. Make investments in capital improvements that reduce carbon emissions, replace aging infrastructure, and support other environmental stewardship goals.
  3. Support community-wide sustainability efforts through involvement in UWaterloo's Sustainability Office and Sustainable Waterloo Region.
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1. Raise an average of \$2m per year to support operations, scholarships, endowments, and capital projects.
  2. Generate planned gift pledges to double our \$10m endowment to provide long-term support for programs and students.
  3. Review recruitment strategies and capacities to ensure strong enrolments in residence and academic programs.
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1. Publish a dashboard of key financial, enrolment, and other metrics for the board, faculty and staff, so that all College planning is informed by a shared understanding of our financial position.
  2. Review operations and programs in all departments to determine whether any long-standing practices or legacy activities should be updated or ended in light of new context and realities.
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1. Commit to working conditions, benefits and policies that attract talented employees, support their success and productivity, strengthen diversity and inclusion, and promote employee retention.
  2. In light of upcoming retirements, review job descriptions, terms of employment, and organizational structure so that these roles align with current and future needs.



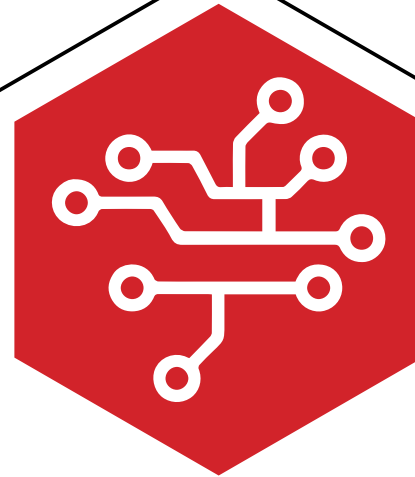
## **CENTRING ON STUDENTS**

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2. Connect students with opportunities for vocation and community service.
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4. Evaluate Student Services programming to be more responsive to changing student needs.
5. Develop the alumni community as a resource for current students.



## **ENGAGING OUR PARTNERS**

1. Renew our partnership with the University of Waterloo.
2. Renew our partnership with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, and our relationships with the wider Mennonite community.
3. Build relationships with wider community partners that leverage resources for positive impact.



## **EXPLORING NEW PATHWAYS FOR LEARNING**

1. Increase enrolments in Grebel courses and programs.
2. Strengthen Grebel's culture of scholarship and creativity.
3. Strengthen community and continuing education programs to serve our constituency and reach new learning communities.
4. Build a culture of equity, diversity, anti-racism, and inclusion that shapes our academic and residence programs.



## **BUILDING RESILIENCE**

1. Expand environmental stewardship efforts in our buildings and operations.
2. Strengthen the College's financial position for future generations.
3. Practice the wise use of our limited resources.
4. Enable employees to realize their potential and contribute to the success of the College.

