HELPING PEOPLE SEE

STRATEGIC PLAN (2018 - 2023) | REPORT ON PROGRESS

MAY 2021
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In 2018, the University of Waterloo’s School of Optometry & Vision Science (WOVS) released a highly ambitious strategic plan, identifying the goals and actions needed to lead us toward a bold future by 2023.

Now at the halfway mark of our strategic plan’s timeline, I believe it is important to take the time to reflect, refocus and reinvigorate our commitment to ensuring WOVS remains a global leader in optometry education, vision research, and patient-centred collaborative care.

In this report, we share the ways in which we have successfully moved the needle forward on our vision. I also will share our reflections on the changing world around us, requiring the School to adapt, pivot and redefine our goals.

We are proud of the progress we have made to date, recognize the need to iterate along our journey, and remain fully committed to making our ambitious vision a reality by 2023.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with our faculty, students, profession and greater community to finish what we started - helping people see.

Sincerely,

Dr. Stanley Woo, OD, MS, MBA
Director, WOVS
OUR MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

WOVS’ vision is helping people see

WOVS’ mission is to be a global innovator in optometry, vision research, education, and patient-centred collaborative care through:

- state-of-the-art, contemporary optometric education and training for practice anywhere
- high impact, world class eye, health, and vision science research
- exceptional patient care and experiences across the full range of patient-centred eye, vision and health-care services
- preparation of the next generation of leaders in the optometric profession
- training of the next generation of research leaders and innovators
- residency training across the full range of optometric care
- specialized training opportunities for practitioners
- life-long learning and continuing professional development opportunities
- eye health initiatives with global impact

WOVS’ guiding values are:
Excellence | Integrity | Compassion | Collaboration | Innovation
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS

Launch the Waterloo Eye Institute (WEI), Canada’s premier centre of excellence for eye and vision care

Goal #1: Establish the WEI to provide the continuum of eye and vision care from wellness, rehabilitation and surgery; and establish a cross-disciplinary translational research program using the eye as a window to brain function

Foster student excellence

Goal #2: Become the leading national resource for clinical education / training and continuing professional development

Goal #3: Promote a positive, student-centred and academically challenging environment, where students are supported and engaged inside and outside the program.

Goal #4: Deliver an evidence-informed curriculum, mapped to educational outcomes that facilitate use of pedagogical best practices and learning technologies.

Advance research of global impact

Goal #5: Enable high-impact research by School faculty

Promote the integration of optometry in Canada’s primary health-care system

Goal #6: Position patients at the centre of health care with better access to local and integrated health-care systems that deliver coordinated support and expand opportunities for interprofessional education and collaborative practice
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: LAUNCH THE WATERLOO EYE INSTITUTE

Goal #1: Establish the WEI to provide the continuum of eye and vision care from wellness, rehabilitation and surgery; and establish a cross-disciplinary translational research program using the eye as a window to brain function

Accomplishments:
- Established the Seeing Beyond 2020 campaign and signature areas for fundraising including the Waterloo Eye Institute (WEI), Research, Clinical Education/training and community impact
- Created a fundraising steering committee and engaged with stakeholder groups including professional associations, colleges, optometrists, industry, and community

In progress:
- Positioning the School as a centre of excellence in patient care, training, and research by heightening branding efforts and establishing a public awareness campaign
  - Further visibility will come through participation on the UWaterloo Health Initiatives Task Force
- Encouraging and fostering knowledge translation and transfer
- Expanding revenue generation through commercialization activities
- Recruiting multiple faculty with patents / commercialization interests
  - Founding the Center for Eye and Vision Research (CEVR) in Hong Kong in partnership with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)
- Exploiting emerging technologies to achieve WOVS strategic priorities and goals, with an emphasis on digital health and teleoptometry in a post-COVID world
  - Active collaborations include eHealth Centre for Excellence (eReferral for cataracts)

Future activities:
- Network more effectively with funding agencies to deepen and broaden relationships
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: FOSTER STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Goal #2: Become the leading national resource for clinical education / training and continuing professional development

Accomplishments:
- Expanded WOVS’ unique clerkship program in quantity and quality, while expanding the breadth of experience students gain in domestic clerkship sites (special emphasis on providing robust ocular disease and therapeutics training in Canada)
- Created and supported an Office for Continuing Professional Development to increase opportunities for continuing education, distance learning, residency training, specialty certification, and interprofessional education and collaborative practice by through the following:
  - recruited a Coordinator, Office of Continuing Professional Development
  - explored options in 5 in 5 Optometry, a novel learning platform
  - offered ongoing advanced procedures certification, and online Continued Education options to increase access to evidence-informed courses

In progress:
- Providing specialty certification support and partnership with the Canadian College of Specialties in Optometry, including low vision rehabilitation, contact lens, vision therapy, ocular disease (dry eye), public health

Future activities:
- Expand accredited residency training opportunities that build on WOVS’ academic excellence with leading-edge clinical practices, and establish Centres of Excellence in Patient Care in western and eastern Canada to support the development of regional clerkship programs – eventually evolving to include specialty care in optometry and residency training
- Explore opportunities and establish satellite campuses (where feasible) for optometric education, patient care, and research with support from the profession, regulatory agencies, and the government
- Develop and promote joint Doctor of Optometry / research programs
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: FOSTER STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Goal #3: Promote a positive, student-centred and academically challenging environment, where students are supported and engaged inside and outside the program

Accomplishments:

- Successfully integrated simulation technology into the curriculum, thanks to the establishment of WOVs FYiDoctors Simulation Lab in 2018
  - Introduced technology that allowed students to practice binocular indirect ophthalmoscopy (BIO) techniques; in September 2020, slit lamp simulators were introduced
  - The lab has enhanced student learning outcomes and skills development and provides an opportunity for WOVs to develop an imaging virtual case library for further student learning
- Grew WOVs’ unique clerkship program in quantity and quality, while expanding the breadth of experience students gain in domestic clerkship sites (special emphasis on providing robust ocular disease and therapeutics training in Canada)
- Developed and implemented Objective Structured Clinical Exam (OSCE) assessments to provide feedback on student learning and readiness for the Optometry Examining Board of Canada (OEBC) examination and practice
  - As a next step, WOVs is committed to analyzing options for integration or maintaining as a formative assessment
- Created an Office of Student Affairs to support students’ co-curricular activities, associations and clubs, providing coordination with the School and an enhancement of communication and engagement

In progress:

- Promoting co-curricular activities in collaboration with Canadian Association of Optometry Students (CAOS) and the University of Waterloo Optometry Students’ Society (UWOSS)
- Modelling effective practices in optometric practice management and clinic development

Future activities:

- Embed a student wellness and mental health focus in WOVs culture, policies, and academic programming
- Incorporate cultural competency and awareness of BIPOC issues
- Utilize exit surveys, student feedback and alumni feedback to inform program evaluation
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: FOSTER STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Goal #4: Deliver an evidence-informed curriculum, mapped to educational outcomes that facilitate use of pedagogical best practices and learning technologies

Accomplishments:
- Accomplishments from the previous commitment (integrated simulation technology, clerkship program, OSCE assessments and the Office of Student Affairs) meet the objectives of goal #2
- Supported excellence in graduate teaching assistants by establishing recognition awards, University-wide winners for teaching and Three-Minute Thesis competition

In progress:
- Develop a “roadmap for learning” that is unique to WOVS
- Establish a method to promote and reward teaching excellence
- Actively explore opportunities to bring forth patient care experiences and contact time earlier in WOVS’ optometry curriculum to first- and second-year students
- Design, evaluate and implement an integration plan for the International Optometric Bridging Program (IOBP) participants to join WOVS third-year optometry curriculum and graduate with an Doctor of Optometry degree

Future activities:
- Establish a formal institutional assessment plan to ensure a continuous evaluation process and curriculum review in accordance with accreditation standards
**STRATEGIC PRIORITY: ADVANCE RESEARCH OF GLOBAL IMPACT**

**Goal #5: Enable high impact, state-of-the-art research by School faculty**

**Accomplishments:**
- Supported basic research and the translation of knowledge from research to clinical application
  - Spearheaded by Dr. Ben Thompson, Center for Eye and Vision Research (CEVR) in Hong Kong has promoted inter-disciplinary research and expanded research collaborations with PolyU

**In progress:**
- Recruiting new faculty members who will generate high impact and world class eye, health, and vision science research
  - School of Advisory Commitment on Appointments (SACA) is underway to hire two regular, professoriate faculty members
- Developing resources to expand research programs including university funding, tri-agency funding, industry grants, foundations, and philanthropy
- Fully realizing the outstanding research potential (teleoptometry, specialty care outreach) of the Center for Sight Enhancement (CSE) in support of its mission - to promote excellence in all facets of low vision rehabilitation
- Supporting continued growth and development of the Center for Ocular Research & Education (CORE) in its mission to improve global eye health and vision through advanced bioscience, clinical research and education
- Remaining a key partner with CEVR and seeking out other international collaborators
- Implementing mechanisms to assess and enhance WOVs’ research impact

**Future activities:**
- Promote the next generation of leaders and innovators in vision science by increasing graduate student training capacity, with the goal of advancing opportunities as resources grow
STRATEGIC PRIORITY: PROMOTE THE INTEGRATION OF OPTOMETRY IN CANADA’S PRIMARY HEALTH-CARE SYSTEM

Goal #5: Position patients at the centre of health care with better access to local and integrated health-care systems that deliver coordinated support, while expanding opportunities for interprofessional education and collaborative practice

Accomplishments:
- Aligned our policies and practices to support exceptional patient care and experience, including updated job descriptions, classification, and standard operating procedures for clinic staff in anticipation of a new structure with the WEI
- Implemented an on-line booking process which enhances patient convenience and experience
- Enhanced WOVS’ reputation and communication with family health teams, community based clinics, other health-care practices, hospitals and systems

In progress:
- In conjunction with the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), developing partnerships between the School and newly created ophthalmological services to provide full scope, integrated eye and vision care from wellness through surgery as part of the WEI
  - Updated from the original plan to reflect the transformation from LHIN to KW4 Ontario Health Team (KW4 OHT), with a year one focus on priority populations - including refugees, homeless / precariously housed, and the elderly (with a focus on long-term care homes)
  - Integration inspired by broader UWaterloo health strategy as a signatory partner in KW4 OHT
- Supporting and enhancing patient access to rehabilitative care, and increasing awareness and communication about the CSE, political advocacy partnership on fees with the Ontario Association of Optometrists (OAO), and research on telehealth model for vision rehabilitation
- Ensuring the School maintains a modern, state-of-the-art facility and instrumentation to provide contemporary patient care
- Advocating for patients and their families in navigating the health-care system through the engagement of a patient advisory group
- Increasing outreach to underserved populations, including the following School initiatives:
  - Providing ongoing care to residents of Wikwemikong, an Indigenous community located on Manitoulin Island; developing a pan-Canadian solution for access to eye care; and providing free / subsidized care to local refugees, precariously housed and the elderly through partnerships with CW Jeffereys Collegiate Institute and KW4 OHT
- Advocating for a state-of-the-art academic health centre for contemporary primary care practice with focus on patient-centred, interprofessional and collaborative practice and care
- Participating in the UWaterloo Health Initiative Task Force

Future activities:
- Implement inter- and intra-professional collaboration models within our facilities
CONCLUSION

Upon reflection, the School of Optometry and Vision Science has made meaningful progress from June 2018 to May 2021 in all four strategic priority areas. While a written report cannot truly capture the immense breadth of work happening at the School on a daily basis, it is encouraging to see how much headway has been made in bringing WOVS’ vision to life.

We thank everyone who has played an important role in this progress - our students, faculty, staff, donors, volunteers and community.

We look forward to sharing a final report, following the conclusion of the School of Optometry & Vision Science’s strategic plan in 2023.
APPENDIX A: WOVS STRATEGIC PLANNING STEERING COMMITTEE

An enormous debt of gratitude is owed to the WOVS Strategic Planning Steering Committee members for their leadership, insight, and guidance at every stage of this plan’s development.

Inta Bregzis, Clinic Manager
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* Also member of the WOVS Strategic Planning Executive Committee (SPEC)