



(RE)BUILDING ACADIA

Strategic Academic Restructuring Proposal

DRAFT for Discussion | Circulated April 6, 2026

Strategic (Re)Centring of the Academic Mission

Acadia University is at a critical moment. We face significant and unsustainable financial constraints and challenges, changing student needs and demands, declining enrolment and revenues, an ongoing government-mandated program review (Schedule H) and the threats from Bill 12. To respond, and to ensure the sustainability of Acadia, we must change. And we believe we can find a way forward that strengthens and centres the academic sector and educational mission as the heart and driving force of the university.

In response to the Board Executive resolution mandating a re-organization from three faculties to two, we are proposing the move from a Faculty structure to a **College** structure and to create **Two Colleges**. This marks a philosophical and organizational shift and will centre each College as a major academic division within the university, supporting a more robust and well-resourced academic sector.

In this proposed model, the Colleges become major academic units that group programs under shared leadership and a common educational mission with a simplified and flexible administrative structure. Each College will oversee curriculum, academic quality, resources, and academic student supports, and will serve as the primary organizational home for the academic sector. The two Colleges, for the context of this proposal, are each an integrated collegiate community of faculty, staff, and students working together to advance the academic and educational aims of the College and Acadia.

This new College structure builds on and highlights our already-existing critical strengths, emphasizes more collaborations and opportunities, embeds critical knowledge bases throughout both Colleges, and creates more streamlined and responsive administrative structures. Importantly, this new College structure will allow academic leaders to drive strategy, resources, revenue, curriculum, quality assurance, and innovation.



The Design Principles

This proposed draft model for discussion was created based on an assessment of our financial situation and existing inefficiencies, what we have heard from extensive engagement sessions and feedback sessions related to the Schedule H program review work and the future of Acadia University, as well research into and experience with diverse academic and organizational models. This draft was designed with the following principles:

- Fiscal responsibility to address immediate and projected financial challenges, and to ensure and safeguard Acadia's future;
- Centring the academic mission as the heart and driving force of Acadia, and appropriately resourcing it;
- Streamlining administrative structures to increase opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and innovation in pursuit of the educational mission and to reduce inefficiencies;
- Highlighting the key education, research, and community impact strengths of Acadia, while creating space for diverse academic identities and areas of study;
- Better-supporting programs and creating opportunities for new programs and partnerships to emerge;
- A students-first approach, with an emphasis on stronger, more robust, and more responsive supports and processes;
- Equity of resourcing and program size across both Colleges; *and*
- Creating a more responsive and flexible university and learning environment that prepares students for diverse futures and supports and responds to local, regional, national, and international priorities.

A Strengthened Resourcing & Staffing Model

In this model, Deans will function as strong academic leaders and advocates, supporting the work of the College, managing budgets, driving fundraising, and working with faculty to lead curriculum development and innovation. Each College will host embedded supports related to critical resources that will support a strengthened academic sector: recruitment, educational and curriculum development, academic advising, research supports, graduate program coordination, communications, external relations, student supports and accessible learning, and professional and extended learning. Each of these resources will directly support and work with each College, while connecting with and reporting to centralized teams to promote the work across the University.

Deans of the Colleges will receive appropriate resourcing and new hybrid budget models to develop new revenue streams, lead curriculum renewal and grow undergraduate, graduate,



and professional programs, and build internal and external partnerships. This change strengthens the role of the Dean, and aligns academic leaders at the nexus of faculty, staff, students, and community. Through this model, Deans, their Colleges, and their support teams are better situated to undertake targeted and strategic program growth, enhance recruitment efforts, support student life and development, develop a clear brand and related communications, grow donor, alumni, and community connections, and offer more coordinated and enriched supports to students, staff, and faculty.

Further, by embedding key resources related to the academic missions and success, Colleges will be enabled and empowered to function as coherent, strong, and outward-facing entities, working independently and together, with embedded supports remaining strongly connected to institutional services.

The College Model also strengthens opportunities for student feedback, leadership, and involvement, through the creation of College Student Councils, the continuation of the program-related student councils, and through enhanced opportunities for student involvement.

Proposed Leadership & Organizational Structure for Each College

Leadership

- Dean (responsible for the entire College)
- Associate Deans (responsible for clusters of programs)
- Manager of College Operations (responsible for logistics, budget support, data and record keeping, building management, project management)

Administrative & Staffing Support

- Executive Assistant (oversees a cross-trained team of administrative assistants and staff and supports the Dean, Associate Deans, and Manager)
- Administrative Assistants (responsible for specific roles, but cross-trained)
- Critical Support Staff (e.g. placement leads, technical staff, etc.)

College-Level Embedded Support

The creation of a College Model also strategically allocates resources to embed support positions directly into each College, with reporting mechanisms within the College structure as well as connecting these positions to centralized teams. All positions in this category report both to the College Dean and their central teams whenever appropriate.

- Educational Developer & Extended Learning Specialist

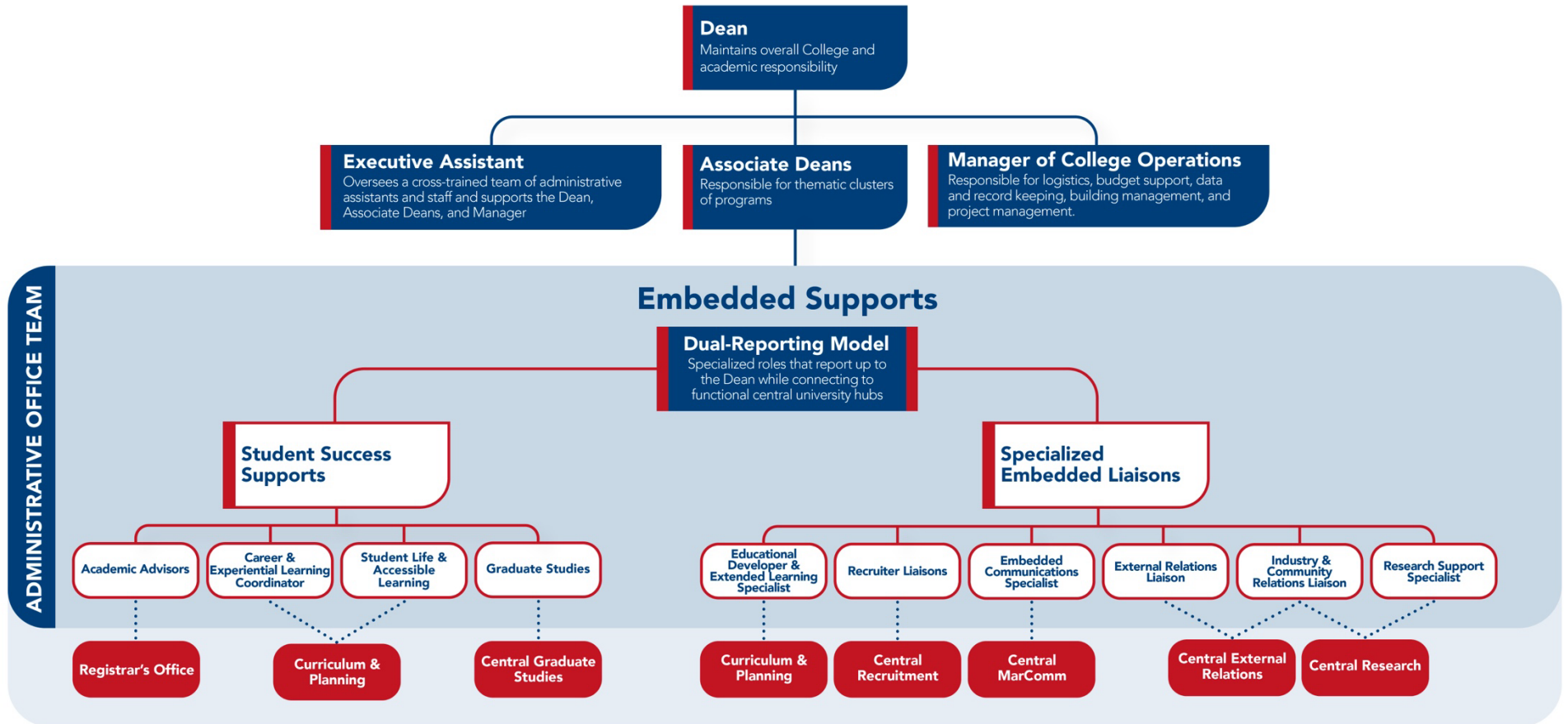


- Recruiter Liaisons (with cross-trained yet differentiated roles)
- Embedded Communications Specialist
- External Relations Liaison
- Industry and Community Relations Liaison
- Academic Advisors (with cross-trained yet differential roles)
- Career and Experiential Learning Coordinator
- Student Life & Accessible Learning
- Research Support Specialist
- Graduate Studies

Our excellent model of liaison research Librarians from the Library and Archives nicely complements this College structure with a core group of Librarians and Archivists supporting each College and their associated programs.



Organizational Structure & Embedded Support Framework



Liaison Librarians and Archivists will continue to support programs across both Colleges in their current embedded model.



The Proposed Two Colleges

As a starting point, and building on the critical strengths of Acadia, we propose two Colleges based on the following themes, which will encompass our current and potentially emerging programs.

College of Health, Community, and Change

CENTRES AND REINFORCES

Programs and research strengths in health sciences, mental health, community wellbeing and development.

INTEGRATES

Critical social sciences, humanities, and creative disciplines that can and must inform health and community policy and training.

College of Environment, Systems, and Society

CENTRES AND REINFORCES

Programs and research strengths in environmental, physical, and life sciences, technology, commerce and entrepreneurship, education, social structures, governance, and public policy.

INTEGRATES

Critical social sciences and humanities disciplines that can and must inform environmental and social policy and training.

Existing, re-imagined, and new undergraduate and post-graduate programs will be re-organized and re-deployed from three Faculties into two Colleges, and be supported through thematic clusters, led by Associate Deans. Programs themselves will become the sites of collaboration and program administration, and new program and course ideas will be developed among colleagues within Colleges.

The result will be a ‘collegial’ environment where administrative silos no longer constrain collaboration and creativity, and individual faculty are free to explore interests and expertise across disciplines. Associate Deans will work with faculty and College staff to administrate clusters of programs, thereby freeing up faculty members to do academic work rather than administrative work. This will also further enhance student learning, engagement, and leadership opportunities.



Cascading Changes

This academic structural re-organization will necessitate realignment of supporting and adjacent functions into consolidated operational units. For example, the OneStop Centre will bring together student services in a way that helps students navigate the university in a less cumbersome and more approachable way. The new academic structure will inspire some creative re-organization of library services, research and graduate studies support, community engagement, external relations, and the Registrar's Office. And vital support units like financial services, technology services, enrolment and recruitment, and marketing and communications will be tasked to imagine more integrated structures that work with and reinforce the academic mission of Acadia while elevating the level of operational efficiency and impact. As academic matters are the heart of the institution, this academic restructuring must come first, followed by a similar re-imagining of other academic and non-academic units.

Timelines

We recognize that many people will be concerned about the timelines, and how quickly these transitions will take place. The final proposed plan is due to the Board of Governors in June 2026; if accepted, the work of restructuring of the academic sector would begin, and a full implementation of the College model will not take place until July 1, 2027.

Moving Forward

While the external and internal pressures and stressors are high – Bill 12, Schedule H, declining enrolment, fiscal challenges, and changing student demands – we have a critical moment to meet these challenges, ensure our survival, and reimagine Acadia. And we can do so through creating structures that centre and better resource the academic sector, better reflect the already-present expertise and strengths at Acadia, increase our efficacy and responsiveness, better support students, and align with local, national, and international priorities. This will enable Acadia to elevate our liberal education and our student-centred model to be more responsive to the needs of our region and to a rapidly-changing world while preparing students with the skills and tools to navigate their futures.

Our new academic structure will allow for more free-flowing collaboration and creativity among faculty in both academic programming and research, and will send a message to the province and the country that Acadia is an active leader in shaping the future through our research, community engagement, and education of the next generation of leaders, changemakers, creators, entrepreneurs, community builders, and democratic citizens.