A different kind of school.

A different kind of graduate.

Seneca

Introduction and Context

Seneca's Academic Plan 2012-17 builds on principles and priorities that have matured since our first Academic Plan was released eight years ago and sets out a bold vision that will distinguish Seneca, its students and its graduates.

The overarching goal of the initial plan was to "build an Academic Community dedicated to student success in which all involved are striving for academic excellence." The principle of "flexibility without compromise" was introduced and since that time has guided administrators, faculty and staff in their day-to-day activities to support student learning. In that plan, we also said that Seneca's academic community would be:

> inclusive, challenging and inspirational to students,

> responsive, consultative and innovative to industry,

> reflective, accessible and flexible to our communities,

> open, collaborative and creative to our partners in education and

> dynamic, supportive and enabling to Senecans.

We continue to be guided by that foundation, as we evolve to meet the ever-increasing expectations of learners, employers, our partners, government and society.

Seneca's Academic Plan
2012-2017

Seneca's Academic Plan will provide the framework for accelerating the shift from conventional teaching, learning and programming to a redesigned approach to high-quality college education with students as active partners in the teaching and learning process.

It reaffirms our commitment to a collegial environment that encourages critical thinking, embraces creativity, instills integrity and promotes academic excellence.

All Seneca students will be challenged to achieve a high level of integrative thinking and to demonstrate the ability to apply learning to relevant real world contexts. We will do this by providing learning experiences that are cross-disciplinary, networked, relevant, rigorous, flexible and focused on core literacies and skills.

Seneca's intent is that this Plan will foster teaching and learning of the highest quality by promoting the importance of effective teaching and meaningful learning across the college. Regardless of whether learning is full- or part-time, regardless of whether it is taking place in a traditional classroom, a technology-enhanced lab or online environment, learning will be social, participatory, accessible and inclusive. Drawing on the power of technology and social media, students will be actively engaged in relevant and rigorous real-world experiences that test and hone their skills.

Our aim is to recruit the best possible students from diverse backgrounds, locally, nationally and internationally, provide them with an enduring learning experience that enables them to achieve their goals and ensures they are well prepared for work or further study.

The plan identifies the distinctive qualities of the Seneca graduate: highly attractive to employers; ethical, engaged and confident; adaptable and capable of addressing the challenges of the future in a global context. Just as important, it identifies our goals to ensure the curriculum reflects these qualities.

Everyone at the college has a role to play in determining the success of our students, regardless of position. We will constantly ask the questions: "How does what we are doing promote relevance, rigour, provide networked learning experiences and develop core literacies?" and "How do we know?"

At the heart of this academic plan are five core principles that govern our priorities, guide our activities, and influence our strategic allocation of resources:

1 Inspiring cross-disciplinary, networked learning

2 Committing to a new set of core literacies

3 Offering high quality, relevant programs and pathways

4 Committing to teaching excellence

5 Advancing partnerships, applied research and outreach opportunities

In each of these areas, the Academic Plan identifies specific goals which have concise measurable and attainable targets. The strategies to achieve the goals will be developed with faculty and staff as the Plan is implemented.

Principles and Goals

1/
Inspiring cross-disciplinary, networked learning

A Seneca education has never been just about acquiring the skills of a particular career or profession. In virtually every context of work or further study, our graduates need to be able to imagine, explore, synthesize, connect, discover, create, invent and adapt.

Seneca will develop a cross-disciplinary, networked approach to learning that emphasizes diverse learning experiences, both virtual and physical, through a rigorous, flexible and relevant curriculum. This approach to learning, involving technology to allow responsiveness to student needs, will cross the traditional boundaries between disciplines. Cross-disciplinary and networked learning enables faculty and learners to explore clear and relevant links within, across and outside of the curriculum. It supports the use and application of what has been taught and learned in new and different ways. This approach also allows more in-depth exploration of topics, issues and problems in a richer mix of subject areas, disciplines, and programs.

A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO LEARNING WILL PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS AND FACULTY TO:

> *create and expand personal and professional learning networks*

> *master different ways of working across subjects and disciplines*

> *make connections between what is learned in different subjects and disciplines*

> *identify the appropriate knowledge and skills needed to investigate a particular issue or problem*

> *practise core literacies in context*

> *make assessment activities, support and feedback a powerful integrated feature of learning.*

Seneca will also continue to expand the opportunities for experiential learning to engage all of our students. Whether it be cooperative education, field placement, internships, externships, international work/study and projects or field trips, experiential learning allows students to ground their acquired knowledge and skills in the real world of work.

Goals related to this principle:

At the end of five years:

1 *Every Seneca student will be provided with an experiential learning opportunity.*

2 *Every Seneca graduate will have participated in a cross-disciplinary learning experience.*

2/

Committing to Seneca's Core Literacies

Today more than ever, our students need to know more than the core professional content they study. From the day we opened our doors in 1967, our programs have included a foundation of broader general education subjects and a learning focus on "soft" skills.

In a rapidly changing economy and society, our graduates will be called upon to extend their knowledge and skills in new directions, think critically, analyze information, comprehend disruptive new ideas, communicate clearly, collaborate in teams, solve problems, and make sound decisions.

THE SOCIAL AND NATURAL WORLD in the 21st century faces unprecedented challenges. The cultural, political, environmental and economic changes underway demand new thinking and new literacies. This demands a fresh look at the core skills we are teaching and the way we define literacy. The traditional definitions of language literacy, numeracy and critical thinking need to be extended for students to become full participants in this knowledge-based society.

Promoting a culture in which teaching and learning the Seneca Core Literacies is "everybody's business" emphasizes the critical role of all faculty and the academic supports at the college. The library, the learning centres, counselling, student leadership and development – all have a crucial role in helping our students develop the literacies necessary to be successful in the world. In the end, our goal is to empower our graduates to be leaders – in their careers, communities and personal lives – who help strengthen the world's economic, social and natural fabrics.

We have taken the essential employability skills found in the learning outcomes of all programs and refreshed them from the perspective of the more complex set of global challenges facing this and future generations. By embedding the expanded view of core literacies into the existing skills, we create powerful teaching and learning outcomes across the entire curriculum of every program.

Building on the extensive work underway across the College in the twin foundations of these literacies — English and mathematics — every new student will experience a common orientation to the standards, outcomes and expectations of a Seneca education.

Goals related to this principle:

At the end of five years:

1 *We will have implemented a common orientation for every new Seneca student that provides an introduction to the standards, outcomes and expectations of our learning environment.*

2 *Every Seneca graduate will demonstrate competency in the Seneca Core Literacies.*

These are Seneca's Core Literacies:

1 Written communication

2 Oral communication

3 Quantitative literacy

4 Information literacy

5 Creative thinking

6 Ethical reasoning, personal and social responsibility

7 Inquiry and analysis

8 Critical thinking and problem solving

9 Digital literacy

10 Intercultural knowledge and global perspective

3/

Offering high-quality, relevant programs and pathways

Students come to Seneca for a relevant, high quality education. They expect their learning experience to be coherent and connected. They need flexible opportunities to learn within and outside of the classroom, online and face-to-face, across full-time and part-time programs.

THEY WANT TO APPLY THEIR LEARNING to real world situations and to learn from those with diverse thoughts and approaches. They expect their earned credential will be valued by employers and other postsecondary institutions. Some will want to move immediately after graduation to meaningful, challenging work. Others seek pathways to obtain additional credentials at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Building on the many pathways we already offer our students, we will continue to design forward-thinking programs which anticipate and respond to the global marketplace and promote life-long learning. We will build upon our existing strengths in faculty, curriculum and supports to develop high quality, innovative, and networked programming that is aligned with Seneca's mission and vision. That means continuing to strengthen our focus areas of academic expertise, and building the collection of credentials that allow us to have robust pathways within, to and from the College. We will continue to expand our degree and graduate certificate programs where our academic excellence and relevant industry expertise combine to produce a compelling offering in the marketplace.

Assessment strategies will be aligned with learning outcomes and learning and teaching approaches. We will encourage assessment *for* learning, as well as *of* learning.

Clearly defined and efficient pathways will be part of every Seneca program. To this end we will continue to strengthen our institutional and academic collaborations, resulting in transfer agreements with universities and colleges known for excellence. Within our college we will make pathways between our programs a priority, ensuring Seneca is our students' first choice for continuing their education. We will have a coordinated and connected approach across full- and part-time programs. External accreditation ensures our programs relevancy to employers. Continued recognition and endorsement of our curriculum by professional bodies enables graduates to obtain professional designations, increasing their marketability.

Goals related to this principle:

At the end of five years:

1 *We will have implemented a renewed process of program evaluation based on continuous monitoring of student and societal needs.*

2 *We will have mapped and evaluated the Seneca Core Literacies as well as the cross-disciplinary and experiential elements in every Seneca program.*

3 *Every Seneca program will provide opportunities for students to transfer credits within or outside the institution through mechanisms such as laddered credentials and block credit exit points and transfer agreements.*

4 *All Seneca programs will support flexible delivery strategies to meet the varied needs of learners.*

4/

Committing to Teaching Excellence

Each faculty member brings unique experiences to Seneca. We support that talent and expertise by fostering teaching and learning of the highest quality across the College, offering resources for faculty to be effective and innovative, and encouraging reflective practice.

In addition to having passion for their field and teaching, all Seneca faculty recognize first and foremost that teaching is a human endeavor. In their critical role of leading and guiding learning, they are empathetic, creative and committed to student success.

Connecting with students as active partners in learning, Seneca faculty demonstrate a keen interest in their students and seek to develop their discipline expertise and model core literacies. They recognize the importance of connecting students to each other and to relevant content in a global context to encourage relationships that will last through their time at Seneca and beyond. Faculty also understand the need to employ appropriate technology in their teaching activities, engaging students as active learners.

IN ADDITION TO HAVING APPROPRIATE CREDENTIALS and experience in the field, Seneca faculty are committed to refining their teaching practice through reflection, formative self-evaluation and formal and informal development.

Faculty will employ a variety of teaching methods, grounded in the scholarship of teaching and learning, to inspire their students. They will select learning activities that are authentic and engaging as they challenge students to achieve a high standard of learning. Working collaboratively and building networks around teaching and learning faculty will continually explore, integrate and evaluate teaching strategies as they ask themselves: "How am I inspiring learning" and "How do I know?"

Goals related to this principle:

At the end of five years:

1 *We will have implemented new policies and standards of practice for Seneca faculty.*

2 *Through an ongoing commitment to teaching excellence and reflective practice, faculty will demonstrate they meet the Seneca standards of practice.*

3 *Faculty will model digital literacy through use of a variety of media and/or mobile technologies to engage students as partners in learning.*

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Advancing partnerships, applied research and outreach opportunities:

Partnerships are core to Seneca's vibrancy as an institution. They provide students, staff and faculty with the opportunities to work with industry and institutions locally, nationally and internationally, and to develop strong networks.

Partnerships with professional associations and industry are deepening, opening a variety of opportunities for students including recognition of credit for certification; guest speakers; donations; cooperative education and graduate placements. These interactions will support students as they build their professional networks. The diverse and international nature of the Seneca community is a huge asset that can and should be leveraged to the benefit of our students and their learning experiences. Our students require a global perspective and fluencies that cut across cultures, languages and borders which will be achieved through global partnerships and outreach strategies.

SENECA'S RESEARCH PROGRAM IS ONE that first and foremost is connected to our students, programs and curriculum. It provides opportunities for students and faculty to collaborate across program disciplines and with external partners, ensuring program relevancy and exposing students to the research process, including design, strategies of inquiry and research methods. In doing so, our applied research program is a strong support to the achievement of the Seneca Core Literacies.

Seneca's applied research program is also innovative and responds to industry. It creates and facilitates relevant, high-impact applied research projects and promotes partnerships, collaborations, intellectual discourse, debates, and exchanges that address the real-world innovation challenges facing our communities, industries, partners and economy. In doing so, our applied research program contributes to economic and social prosperity in addition to enriching the learning experience of Seneca students.

Through applied research projects and action research in the classroom, our research program is integral to ensuring the quality, relevance and rigour of our programs. It encourages, supports and recognizes teaching excellence. It contributes to the knowledge, skills and distinguishing attributes of our students.

Goals related to this principle:

At the end of five years:

1 *All Seneca programs will include opportunities for students to be involved in a variety of activities that demonstrate partnership, such as applied research projects and industry-related projects, showcases of student work, action research, service learning, volunteering and/or joint class projects with an international partner.*

2 *All programs will have mapped and evaluated partnership, applied research partnerships and activities and outreach activities.*

3 *Seneca will have expanded its international outreach to develop study, work and volunteer abroad opportunities as well as faculty and student exchanges.*

This is a great
time to be at
Seneca.

Seneca