Seneca

Challenge Accepted: Stronger Together

The 2022-23 Business Plan

Preface

In the preface to last year's Business Plan, business planning was compared to a game of roulette. Even in the best of times, there are long odds in landing on all the objectives of an annual plan.

"In the midst of an ongoing global pandemic, business planning covering 12 months into the future takes on an air of unreality," read the plan. "Perhaps not since the last global public health crisis a century ago have operations been so at the mercy of externalities beyond any one organization's control."

And now, as this is written, an even more sobering – even unimaginable – reality has been thrown into the already full-to-the-brim vat of uncertainties facing Seneca as we plan the year ahead.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has opened a new, and more dangerous, chapter of geopolitical relations. While it is too early to understand the long-term consequences, they are guaranteed to be profound and painful.

Unfortunately, there is no vaccine against the wanton and reckless acts of a despot.

In the immediate business sense, the Russian war against Ukraine has little direct effect on Seneca. The number of students recruited from the two countries is a fraction of our total international population. Like the withdrawal of Saudi students a few years ago, we are big enough to manage the disruption.

But setting aside the human costs of the war, and the terrible toll it takes on our students and their families from the affected countries, it is a reminder that business planning today increasingly seems to be built on shifting sands, not stable foundations.

None of that, of course, takes away the need to do business planning. And while we hesitate to embrace the quote fully, it is worth remembering Dwight D. Eisenhower's famous dictum, paraphrased here: Plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.

We believe that means we need goals and measurable outcomes that will remain in our sights even as they inevitably get pushed off course, buffeted by external circumstances beyond our control.

That's a humbling reminder that we can't get stuck on the "how", because how we get to our goals will rarely be how we charted the journey before setting off. Plans are useful when they are seen as organic guides that adjust with changing circumstances and realities, not immutable manuals of instruction.

Thankfully, Seneca is blessed with a culture of flexibility, innovation and resilience. It has served us extremely well over the past two years. It is a source of enduring strength as we face a year that will likely see the long-awaited transition out of the pandemic, tempered now by the shadow of war that stretches across the world.

In honour of the bravery of Ukrainians defending their country against an implacable enemy, we call this year's business plan:

Challenge Accepted: Stronger Together

Introduction

Any discussion about our plans for the year should start with recognizing why we are even able to entertain the thought of setting out our ambitious goals: the amazing employees – faculty, support staff and administrators – of Seneca.

When we talk about the transformational agenda of Seneca Au Large, which underpins this plan, we acknowledge that the pandemic gave the entire Seneca community an opportunity to step back and think deeply about how we wanted to emerge from this unprecedented time.

It was an opportunity to at least momentarily put aside the terrible toll of the pandemic, to stop reacting to the rollercoaster-like waves of the virus, and, instead, to be intentional and strategic about how we become an even stronger Seneca on the other side.

But as much as the pandemic opened the door to new thinking, it also was a window – a big, clear picture window-sized view – into the deep well of dedication, innovation and resilience of our employees.

Those traits have allowed us to say without hesitation: Seneca is a leader in high-quality polytechnic education, offering students a rich postsecondary experience however they study with us. That has been true through every zig and zag of the pandemic, every unexpected turn we have faced over the past two years.

And those traits will continue to be critical to our students' success, and the success of the entire Seneca community, as we continue on the Au Large journey.

A third insight from the pandemic was a lesson long known, but necessary to relearn and relearn and relearn: A clear, focused and well-communicated set of priorities is key.

Key because then there is no ambiguity about the priorities. Key because then resource allocation is straightforward. Key because it then allows everyone to rally around the same objectives, and work together to achieve them.

Transitioning to a post-pandemic Seneca

We said last year we take nothing for granted. That is more important than ever.

Despite the rush to declare the pandemic over, we will continue to put the safety of our community first. We will continue our relentless focus on our priorities because that is how we have achieved enviable enrolment and financial results over the last two years.

For our FY22-23 planning cycle, our overall positioning remains: Seneca is a leader in high-quality polytechnic education, offering students a rich postsecondary experience however they study with us.

Three priority areas will drive our activities in FY22-23:

- Transitioning to a post-pandemic Seneca for both students and employees
- Focusing a strategic lens on enrolment targets to consider appropriate domestic/international balances and credential mix
- Continuing to implement Seneca Au Large initiatives and developing new initiatives under its major pillars of equity, sustainability and more virtual

Supporting the Au Large major pillars are the digital strategy and capital planning, both indispensable to achieving our ambitious goals.

And it is all possible because the Seneca community, working together, makes us stronger and makes it happen.

Equitable Seneca

Starting the distribution of proceeds from The Jane Fund to support EDI-focused student initiatives
Developing and implementing plans to embed EDI principles across all schools in their curriculum, decision-making and stakeholder relations
Building EDI practices into Innovation at Seneca by identifying barriers to equity-deserving groups in HELIX and applied research enterprise and initiating practices to remove such barriers
Creating a physical symbol of the path to reconciliation by building a walking path at King Campus around Lake Seneca, using technology to engage participants with education vignettes on Indigenous and broader EDI issues
Launching a new student support called Student Navigator that focuses on helping students from equity-deserving groups succeed at Seneca by navigating them through academic and non-academic resources at Seneca and in the community

Sustainable Seneca

Developing and implementing sustainability as a core literacy in academic programs, including developing meaningful learning experiences for students and professional development for faculty to assist integrating sustainability into curriculum design
Developing and implementing sustainability approaches in stakeholder partnerships and procurement of goods and services
Implementing the framework of the UN's PRME, focusing Business programs on sustainability in five areas: curricula, research, educational frameworks, partnerships, and thought leadership
Completing an energy audit to get a baseline data set to allow us to develop a GHG emissions reductions plan with a primary objective for net zero emissions.
Developing a GHG and Energy Reduction Plan to reduce energy and GHG emissions across campuses

Developing a corporate communications strategy for communicating all sustainable initiatives to all stakeholders.
Developing and implementing a waste management strategy that includes the completion of the waste minimization and reduction plan and targets
Developing and implementing a grounds – integrated landscape implementation and maintenance plan

More Virtual Seneca

Completing implementation of the new student service delivery model in the Registrar's Office, Student Services and Academic Learning Services and identifying opportunities for extending the new service framework to other student-facing departments
Implementing a hybrid service delivery model for all service departments
Providing students across all faculties with greater choice to access learning through increased offerings of flexible delivery, extended reality (XR) modules and microcredentials
Supporting faculty with supports related to flexible delivery, including professional development and mentorship
Building dedicated, custom-built online teaching spaces at all campuses and completing upgrades to Flex learning classrooms
Identifying and implementing CRM-type software to centrally manage Seneca-wide external corporate, social, alumni and other external connections

Enrolment

Implementing a comprehensive enrolment management strategy to manage a more diversified international enrolment growth while expanding domestic enrolment
Leveraging data analysis and labour market trends to balance domestic/international enrolment and credential mix across all faculties

Supporting the enrolment strategy with expanded recruitment and conversion initiatives by:
  - Growing degree enrolment and graduate certificates, microcredentials and other short programs designed to rapidly retrain students
  - Focusing on non-direct mature audiences
  - Continuing the three-pronged Start at Seneca, Stay at Seneca and Return to Seneca campaign
  - Investing in increased marketing and advertising opportunities

Enhancing Seneca's website by
  - Integrating the Continuing Education standalone site into senecacollege.ca to provide prospective students easier access to both full-and part-time studies
  - Optimizing the current website experience for prospective students

Human Resources

Increasing leadership and employee development opportunities to support the Au Large pillars of equity, sustainability and more virtual
Expanding succession planning to support leadership continuity and employee retention

Focusing the annual pulse survey on issues to improve the work environment and support employee engagement
Providing further resources in Human Resources department to expand hiring and retention practices in a highly competitive job market

Digital Strategy

Continuing to extend on-campus digital innovation display technology, developing content for on-campus screens, spirit walls and overhead digital signage
Enhancing virtual OneCard to support digital wallets, expand international mobile payment top-up options and integrate with student room booking to provide automated access control
Implementing an integrated MS-Teams supported cloud-based telephone system to replace on-premises phone system
Introducing: - course-specific chatbots with adaptive learning capabilities to enhance learning opportunities for students - holographic image-based teaching options - deep learning-based early warning systems to identify students at risk and improve their success - AI-driven systems to offer digital assessments to grade, administer and report on tests; and to support hiring practices of employees through natural-language processing

Post-Pandemic Seneca

In what will likely be the year of transition from pandemic to endemic, from government regulations to institutional choice, Seneca is undertaking several initiatives as part of our determination to emerge from the pandemic an even stronger Seneca through new initiatives and continual improvement.

Flexible Work Approach Implementing a flexible work approach that responds to the academic and service needs of students while respecting employees' desire for more choice in where they work – on campus or remotely
Enhancing the campus experience Investing in capital projects and improvements that will continue to position Seneca's campuses as attractive, modern, safe and welcoming spaces for students and employees, including: - Planning for the Health and Wellness Centre at Newnham Campus - Planning for the Garriock Hall replacement at King Campus - Building new facilities at our campuses, including new lab for health care programs and new networking lab (Newnham), SCILS Bio-Chemical Lab (Seneca@York) and Training Centre for contract training (Markham) - Continuing to refresh areas at all campuses, such as the Fashion area at the Newnham Campus, the courtyard at the Stephen E. Quinlan building and digital innovation installations across all campuses

- Completing the revamp of access control system and security cameras to enhance campus safety and security

Expanding learning opportunities
Developing and implementing a framework to integrate learning outcomes and experiences into curricula, including principles of
    - equity, diversity and inclusion
    - sustainability
    - essential and core employability skills
    - internationalization
Expanding global mobility opportunities for students and employees to engage in activity focused on equity, sustainability and cutting-edge virtual educational experiences
Launching a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning program that supports faculty-led teaching and learning research projects