

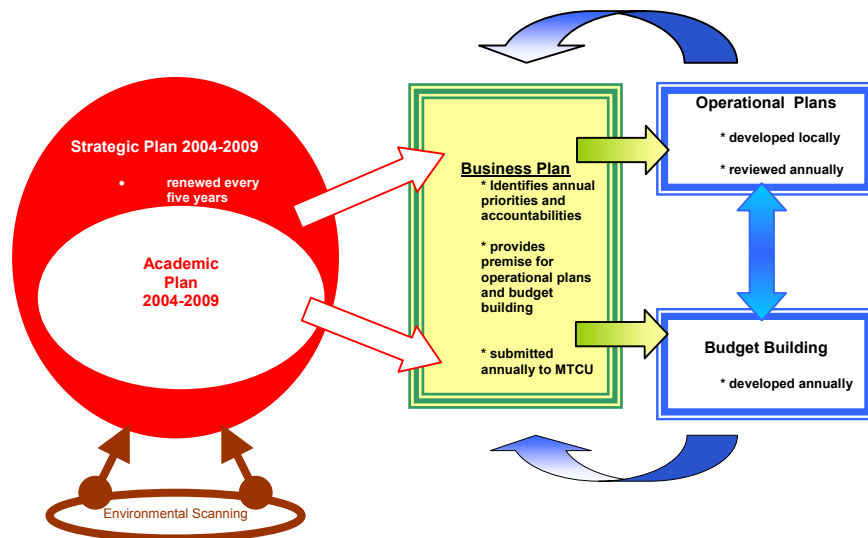
SENECA COLLEGE

ACADEMIC PLAN 2004-2009

**AN ACADEMIC COMMUNITY
ENGAGING STUDENTS FOR SUCCESS**

Context

The five-year Academic Plan (2004-2009) is a vital framework for the planning and implementation of Seneca College's "core business", our academic programs. The Academic Plan, as part of Seneca's Strategic Plan, informs and guides the annual business plan, which articulates specific yearly objectives to achieve our vision and goals. When academic areas make local decisions and frame their annual operational plans, they will refer to the Academic Plan to ensure that those decisions are consistent with the College's vision and the Business Plan, thereby contributing to the successful achievement of the academic priorities and goals outlined those plans.



Introduction

Seneca College is an Academic Community dedicated to student success. Seneca College is also a community where creativity is nurtured and innovation flourishes; where applied research is embraced; where the industries we serve are our partners; where students of diverse backgrounds are welcomed; and where faculty and staff embrace learning in all aspects of their lives. Education and training are our core focus. The Academic Plan is the framework through which the College's mission and strategic goals are to be achieved.

Our Mission is "To Contribute to Canadian Society By Being a Transformational Leader in Providing Students With Career-Related Education and Training". Seneca's Strategic Plan lays out the broad, strategic direction that will ensure the College will continue to flourish.

The goals of Seneca's Strategic Plan are to:

- provide a Superior Quality Educational Experience
- build Access to Success
- increase Organizational Capacity
- maintain Financial Health
- achieve a National Status
- expand International Education & Services
- provide Diversity and Equity

Fostering an Academic Community dedicated to student success is the key to achieving these goals. By providing current and relevant curricula, Seneca will achieve a reputation as a national institution and continue to attract an extensive range of students from Canada and abroad. This reputation will attract partners and funders in the private and public sectors who will, in turn, contribute to our financial health. These partners will contribute to the intellectual resources to ensure our programs remain "up-to-date" and responsive to the needs of the industries and communities we serve.

A reputation for being an Academic Community dedicated to student success also leads to strong, equal partnerships with universities and other post-secondary institutions. These partnerships provide opportunities for students from other institutions to take advantage of Seneca's programming. Other such agreements enable Seneca graduates to expand their personal learning horizons at other post-secondary institutions.

Equal partnerships result in Seneca being at the decision-making table working with research partners in industry and at other academic institutions to develop new ideas for applied research that will benefit society nationally and internationally.

Striving to excel in these areas will inform curriculum, improve our ability to act quickly to changes in society and industry, and enable our graduates to become tomorrow's leaders and innovators.

What is an Academic Community Dedicated to Student Success?

Our goal is to build an **Academic Community dedicated to student success** in which all involved are striving for academic excellence. In achieving this excellence we will be flexible without compromising standards. The academic community concept represents different things to each its members.

To the student this community is ***inclusive, challenging and inspirational***. The student's primary contact is the faculty upon whom the student depends for the delivery of the curriculum and the inspiration to become the best they can be. In addition, the student's Academic Community includes administrators and support staff who work together to ensure the student can achieve their academic goals.

To industry this Academic Community is ***responsive, consultative and innovative***. We reach out to industries, inviting them to participate in our advisory groups that inform our curriculum development. We provide highly qualified graduates. We conduct applied research and creative projects that meet or exceed their needs.

To our communities this Academic Community is ***reflective, accessible and flexible***. We embrace the many diverse groups we serve in our immediate neighborhood or abroad.

To educators this Academic Community is ***open, collaborative and creative***. We reach out to the educators in the secondary school system to raise their level of awareness of what we have to offer, not only to their students but also to the educators themselves. We seek out collaboration with our post-secondary peers in creating transfer agreements that work for students. We enter into innovative applied research opportunities that push the limits of practical knowledge.

To the people working at Seneca this Academic Community is ***dynamic, supportive and enabling***. To work at Seneca is to have the opportunity to grow individually and professionally through a network of peers who are willing to share expertise. To be part of the Seneca community is to be encouraged to develop creative and innovative solutions to assist students and colleagues and to help the community grow.

To all our constituents this Academic Community is dedicated to being flexible without compromising our standards.

This academic plan describes the initiatives and activities that will bring to fruition the ideals of this Academic Community for all its members.

Specifically this academic plan focuses on three aspects of Seneca's Vision:

- To Lead in Student Success
- To Lead in Access to Higher Education
- To Lead in Learning and In Applied Research

Our VISION is to Lead in Student Success

In achieving our goal to provide a Superior Quality Educational Experience, the College is *preparing today's learners for tomorrow's communities and workplaces. Students are the central focus of Seneca's purpose and mission. Student success and satisfaction at Seneca will be ensured through expert faculty and staff, relevant curricula, increased access opportunities to lifelong quality learning experiences, informed course and program choices, varied delivery options, and appropriate supports that are timely and targeted to individual student needs.*

The achievement of our students is directly related to the college's ability to maintain and foster a positive learning experience. Within the teaching environment, experience is contingent upon measures that ensure excellence in program curriculum, and innovation in teaching practices. Within the college, that experience is augmented by responsive services and extra-curricular educational opportunities within a dynamic physical facility conducive to the pursuit of higher education. Seneca College is committed to the continual development of a superior quality educational experience through our expert faculty and staff and through the establishment of quality assurance measures and standards that foster student engagement in all its manifestations.

At the heart of Seneca's activities is the academic program. Attention to the maintenance and constant improvement of curriculum is a focal point of activity for Seneca's academic areas. To this end, the College will

- continuously monitor key success indicators and require all programs to undertake an objective, regular formal review using an established and comprehensive program review mechanism
- ensure Advisory committees meet bi-annually to advise programs on the currency of the curriculum and to ensure graduates are well prepared for the workplace or further post-secondary education
- engage in a continual self-assessment of its course offerings, on the basis of student and industry feedback from internal and external sources

Comprehensive programming has been a hallmark of Seneca College, providing an educational opportunity for a large segment of the population and graduating citizens who can contribute to the local, national and international settings. Seneca offers and maintains college certificates, graduate certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas, and applied degrees. In responding to growing trends and anticipating new ones, academic areas will

- investigate emerging employment and educational opportunities to establish and propose new programs that address economic and societal needs
- identify elements of current programs for revision and renewal
- identify co-op and field placement opportunities that are current and meaningful
- respond quickly to the changing markets and needs of our community
- create new programming that draws together a range of disciplines

Our students arrive at our College with different educational preparedness and from varied life experiences that have commensurate demands and expectations. This multi-dimensional reality provides both a mutually enriching educational and cultural experience, and a welcoming challenge for the College community. Therefore, the College will

- be flexible and innovative in the teaching of courses by introducing new, effective approaches
- address the various learning styles in a manner conducive to the subject matter
- develop e-learning strategies that enhance the classroom experience and address new learning styles
- foster an approach to teaching and learning that respects the diversity and multi-cultural nature of our student body
- continually monitor and assess our students for discernable changes, our programs for their contributions, and our proposals for perceived effectiveness
- engage in pedagogical research on learning and teaching through our Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) institute or other educationally related research initiatives

Seneca's Academic Community has a profound interest in encouraging the fullest appreciation and understanding of the learning process. Learning should foster a critical understanding that informs one's daily encounter with life at home, in the workplace and in the broader public sphere. The learning process should encourage student engagement, which is about the natural curiosity of all humans to discover, interpret and act on their knowledge. Student engagement is both an outcome and a means to facilitate student success. The academic challenge of those who guide the learning process in Seneca is to uncover, invigorate, or simply channel those expressions of new discovery. To achieve these goals, the College will,

- encourage student questioning in the learning process through practices of fairness and respect
- exhibit a mutual, humble regard for the unknown in discipline knowledge and the learning process
- provide opportunities for student engagement in the development of curriculum, and the provision of extra-curricular learning activities
- ensure that all parts of the college, including administration, faculty, staff and external advisors, contribute to student engagement initiatives

Our faculty need to remain abreast of the changing educational landscape in order to effectively provide their expertise within a particular discipline and to facilitate the continual learning of our students. This engagement is achieved through a number of initiatives, including,

- participation in professional development that enhances the learning process
- attendance and participation in conferences dedicated to the learning process
- attendance and presentation at discipline specific conferences
- engaging in academic and applied research

Finally, student engagement thrives in a social and physical environment that fosters creativity, encourages interaction, challenges the mind, and augments the learning process. These goals are achieved through the provision of services that address the hierarchy of student needs. The maintenance and promotion of these goals, therefore, requires that the College will,

- ensure the campus learning commons are appropriately equipped to meet the academic needs of the students and programs
- encourage student social and academic activities at the college, faculty, school and program levels
- provide ancillary services in a responsive, timely and supportive manner
- continually monitor and assess the provision of these services through regular surveys in order to implement opportunities for improvement
- evaluate physical space to ensure its compliance with the goals of student engagement
- ensure the availability of current technological tools for academic excellence and student success

Our VISION is to Lead in Access to Higher Education

By developing comprehensive programming, multiple pathways and supports for students to achieve their educational goals, the College will achieve its goal in building Access to Success. Seneca will become the Canadian model for the creation of access opportunities to higher education and training.

An Academic Community dedicated to student success must have effective access strategies. In the broadest sense of the term, access refers to the opportunity for Canadian and International students to choose a program of study that matches their abilities and interests, to receive the necessary support to be successful in that program, to shape their course of study to meet their needs, and to enroll in an additional program if choosing to continue their studies. Access also includes students receiving appropriate credit for past education and work experience.

Seneca College offers a variety of full-time programs that reflect the current and emerging job markets. The format and length of each are in line with the requirements of the particular fields, such that Seneca provides and maintains college certificates, graduate certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas and applied degrees. Part-time learning opportunities are an integral component of Seneca's commitment to access as well. They are responsive to the educational and training needs of our adult communities. In order to ensure maximum access for both individuals and organizations, Seneca will:

- offer a diverse range of relevant, innovative and flexible programs and services
- recognize and serve a variety of markets and learner profiles
- assist foreign trained persons to readily attain appropriate credentials and experience
- ensure that staff and faculty are dedicated to the objective of empowering adult students to optimize their educational and vocational mobility through lifelong learning strategies
- lead in the development and provision of quality learning opportunities and services
- continue to develop internal and external partnerships, with emphasis on access to success and national presence
- provide support and training for employees to expand their skills and develop leadership within Seneca College
- demonstrate leadership in the use of student feedback as enhancements to programs and services

Maintaining appropriate admission standards for all Seneca programs is essential. Admission requirements help to ensure that the limited resources of the College are focused primarily on post-secondary programming. Nevertheless there are initiatives that can be taken to help potential applicants who are under-prepared to meet post-secondary admission standards. At Seneca this will include:

- remedial training and language centres
- success semesters for under-prepared students

- establishment of agreements with schools, school boards and agencies
- advisement for applicants to Seneca's programs, including skills assessment to help them determine their interests and aptitudes and to assist them in making informed course and program choices

The concept of access includes a commitment to the student's success in the program to which he or she has been admitted. At Seneca, measures to ensure students success will include:

- development of delivery modes that allow students to broaden their learning styles and to use preferred learning styles
- remedial instruction to meet the needs of under-prepared students and second-language students
- tutoring, advisement, and other forms of remedial support
- redirection and second chance opportunities for students having difficulties
- support to help new students adjust to Toronto and Seneca.
- outreach opportunities through the development of distance learning
- research to determine the effectiveness of retention strategies being used and to develop new strategies.
- proactive support to facilitate access and success for students with special needs

Seneca's Academic Plan includes an assurance that students are able to gain access to a broad range of programs and that there is assistance for students to make informed course and program choices. Once in a program, students have access to subjects that meet their career goals and, upon graduation, they are able to continue their education at Seneca and, through articulation agreements, at other post-secondary institutions. When students start a new program at Seneca or elsewhere, they receive appropriate credit for subjects and programs they have completed at the post-secondary level, as well as for relevant work experience. While studying at Seneca, students should be able to move from full-time to part-time studies, or the reverse, and complete subjects on-line or "at-a-distance" if that is what their situation requires. At Seneca, measures to ensure multiple pathways for students will include:

- a broad range of programs including an increase in the number of Applied Degrees
- transferability of credits within Seneca
- access for students to a wide range of subjects accomplished, in part, through the continuing development of on-line and distance learning
- a national network of articulation agreements that allows for a transfer of credits between Seneca and other institutions, thereby providing students with avenues to pursue further education
- development of catch-up and fast-track options, in which students can complete a program of study in less than the usual amount of time.
- international agreements that facilitate a two way movement of students between Seneca and other institutions in all parts of the world

Our VISION is to Lead in Learning and in Applied Research

Seneca will Lead in Learning *by providing excellence in education and skills development, and by encouraging all Senecans and others in the community to be lifelong learners.* The College will Lead in Applied Research *by contributing economically and socially with solution-focused research activities in collaboration with business, industry, social agencies, other institutions of higher learning, and government.* Together these activities will assist Seneca in achieving its goal of Building Organizational Capacity. *Seneca's ability to anticipate and respond to the changing learner needs of our diverse student body depends on the capacity of our employees to learn. To the extent that Seneca offers applied degrees, engages in applied research, develops Centres of Excellence, and plans for growth, we create more opportunities for all employees.*

Seneca's priorities in their broadest sense are evident in the choices we make in our vision of establishing a culture of creativity, innovation and responsiveness. We are committed to meeting and exceeding the educational needs of our industry partners and the global community. Our goal is to continue to foster a supportive learning environment for all, advance applied research opportunities and to employ a humanistic approach to teaching and learning. This is apparent in the willingness of the College to embrace this vision.

People matter at Seneca College, and in our people we will recognize the opportunities and challenges offered by our diverse student body. By embracing an overarching holistic view of our internal needs, we demonstrate an appreciation of our employees. The whole organization will benefit when Seneca:

- commits to current and relevant professional development for our faculty, staff and administration
- affords opportunities and pathways for growth within the organization
- recognizes the need for flexibility in employment
- provides a working/learning environment which is safe, healthy and attractive
- recognizes merit, performance, skills and responsibilities so as to encourage staff to reach their full potential

Increasing the amount of applied research at Seneca College will confirm our identity with regards to research, innovation, and creativity, both internally and externally. Research activity is one manner in which the college provides opportunities for employee advancement and increases its own status nationally and internationally. Achieving this goal will require that Seneca continues to:

- seek funding from non-governmental organizations, as well as Government funding bodies
- pursue partnerships outside our usual frame of reference
- support research projects not directly tied to increasing revenue, but which would increase the College's identity as a transformational leader

- focus on local, provincial, national and international educational research needs

Establishing Centres of Excellence is another manner by which Seneca College will create an environment conducive to success. In so doing, we are providing leadership nationally and internationally. A Centre of Excellence is recognized by external organizations as an essential resource with the ability to lead, influence, shape and establish policy and standard sector practices. Through its activities, It continues to earn respect for the quality of people, ideas, resources, services, and programming connected to the Centre which directly benefits students and other stakeholders. Centres of Excellence will be identified by their:

- comprehensive range of programming, including corporate training, certificate, diploma and degree credentials
- collaboration with private and public sector partners in applied research
- graduates, faculty and staff who are acknowledged for their leadership in the sector nationally or internationally
- innovative culture and entrepreneurship, providing superior learning opportunities for students

Conclusion

Seneca is an Academic Community dedicated to student success.

The cultural change implicit in the creation of an “Academic Community dedicated to student success” will transform all parts of the College. In becoming a part of that community, all Seneca employees, no matter what their role, will recognize that their joint priority is the retention and success of our student body. Support staff, faculty and administrators will embrace their respective roles in engaging the student body and in assisting students to achieve their career goals. In modeling the values and behaviours expected of Seneca students and graduates, the day-to-day activities of all employees will have a lifelong impact on student success.

In implementing strategic decisions, Seneca will continue to lead in Student Success, in Access to Higher Education and in Learning and Applied Research. By making this Academic Plan public, we are making a commitment to our existing students, to the public, to our alumni and to our prospective students that Seneca is the best place for them to achieve their goals.