

Ryerson University

# Shaping Our Future: Academic Plan for 2008-2013

Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic  
June 2008



Ryerson University

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## INTRODUCTION

*Shaping Our Future* proposes directions for the University that are rooted in its history and present circumstances, and that imagine its future. Fortunately for us, Ryerson University's present circumstances are extraordinarily bright, even auspicious. And so is its future. Building on its proud origins as a polytechnic institute, when Ryerson began to transform itself into a comprehensive university in 1993, its first-ever academic plan, *Learning Together*, helped us imagine where we are today: very much up-and-coming, the first choice of record numbers of students, growing quickly in academic stature and overall reputation. Indeed the gist of Ryerson today is that the impressive growth since 1993 has strengthened the quality of our achievements in teaching and research—and has added significantly to the University's reputation.



*Shaping Our Future* aims to build on and expand our current strengths by largely preserving the University's current priorities as established in the Quality Agenda: student engagement and success, growth in Scholarly, Research and Creative (SRC) activity, graduate growth, and reputation enhancement. These priorities serve us well. At the same time, *Shaping Our Future* also recognizes that no university can afford to stand still amid profound changes in the economy of knowledge, where students and researchers alike are constantly responding to the dynamics of change, especially technological change. So *Shaping Our Future* also proposes that Ryerson vigorously expand its response to dynamic change. Details appear in the section on strategies, but an example here would be to create new opportunities for cross-disciplinary inquiry by researchers, creative practitioners, and students. *Shaping Our Future* also proposes to explore other transformational changes in the University's academic structures, academic funding models, and services to the academic community, especially students.

The consultations that informed *Shaping Our Future* widely reaffirmed within the academic community a great deal of support for Ryerson's mission: to serve societal need by offering professional and quasi-professional university education. It is a distinctive mission; and undergraduates cite it as the single most important factor in their decision to choose Ryerson. It manifests itself in at least three tangible ways that recognize our history as an institution of applied learning:

- innovative, professionally-relevant programs and associated scholarly, research and creative activities;
- distinctive learning and teaching, built on creative integrations of theoretical and applied knowledge, especially in lab, studio, clinical, and workplace settings;
- strong relationships with external communities in the arts, business and industry, community agencies, and government and public sector organizations.

The academic consultations informing this plan also demonstrated an eagerness on the part of many community members to ensure that Ryerson's definition of "applied learning" can also be elastic

enough to keep pace with the rapid changes in the economy of knowledge in our time, to understand that applied knowledge is itself a fluid concept and recently of great interest to more traditional universities, as everyone comes to understand the critical role of experiential learning.

As outlined later, this plan envisions not radical change, but constructive change and growth intended to support Ryerson's journey along its own distinctive path. Ryerson University is, at its core, a diverse, urban university, located in the heart of Canada's largest city. It is and ought to remain a distinctive place within which to learn and teach, to engage in creative practice, and to conduct research.

## **RYERSON TODAY**

The launch of a new Academic Plan is also an occasion to take stock of the plan that is just concluding, Ryerson's first, in fact. While a separate report to Senate lays out the impact of *Learning Together* (2003-2008) in detail, it is worth pausing here to celebrate some of the tangible successes of the past five years. The growth that has occurred in those five years is nothing short of extraordinary, and very many people at Ryerson played critical roles in that growth and the University's overall success. Distinctive undergraduate programs increased, while graduate education also blossomed. Eight master's degree programs became 27, and one doctoral program became six. Full-time undergraduate enrolment rose 20%, while graduate enrollment tripled. The net tenure-stream faculty increased by 20%, with more than 230 new appointments overall, and ten Canada Research Chairs were appointed.

So in the 2007-2008 academic year, Ryerson University had:

- 23,000 undergraduate students in 47 programs
- 1,600 graduate students in 33 master's and doctoral programs
- More than 830 international students
- 6,700 Continuing Education students in credit courses in The Chang School
- Nearly 700 tenure-stream faculty, more than 60 limited-term faculty, and over 200 full-time equivalent (FTE) part-time faculty
- More than 950 FTE staff members, up from 860 FTE the year before, with the growth seen primarily in the academic units
- students admitted directly from high school with a mean average of 80.2%
- more than 40% incoming graduate students with at least an A- average
- an endowment valued at more than \$70 million

As one very important sign of the University's reputation, the number of students applying to Ryerson as their first choice has soared in recent years, increasing more than at any other university in Ontario. For Fall 2008, first-choice applications from secondary school students were up another 12.5% over the previous year, and total applications from secondary school students were up 9.8%.

Understandably, this growth has also generated increased requirements for resources, such as more faculty and staff, new laboratories and offices, and student study spaces. These are real needs, and the University is meeting them head-on. Beyond the increases in faculty and staff complement just described, the University has added, and continues to plan for, significant increases in physical space.

The purchase of four new properties in our precinct this year will enable a substantial effort to address our space needs. In 2008 the Ontario government's grant of \$45 million in support of the new Student Learning Centre is one further sign of provincial support of our efforts, our direction, and our mission.

A word about GTA growth: given Ryerson's centrality in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area), it is likely that Ryerson will be in a position to decide whether to accept an opportunity to grow substantially again (by as much as 30% -50%) in the next decade or so, as demands for post-secondary education in the GTA increase. The Board of Governors and the academic community, particularly through the consultations conducted for this new academic plan, have been cautiously optimistic about the potential opportunities, and clear that any growth must be strategic and appropriately funded—to make the University stronger and better, not just bigger. Expansion would need to be fully-consultative, strategic, and carefully orchestrated. It would happen over a period of several years, phased in gradually as funds for new buildings and operations were made available.

Given Ryerson's success with the double-cohort and graduate expansions, the University community should have every reason to be confident in its capacity to respond to this new major opportunity, and to leverage the opportunity to keep Ryerson vital. Looking back, the 1993 change in university status and the double-cohort and graduate expansions were all accompanied by considerable gains in Ryerson's national and international academic reputation. Further expansion could be a similar period in the University's history: an opportunity to build new academic programs and physical spaces, and to strengthen existing programs and spaces—all activities that will garner the provincial grants to ensure the success of our efforts to serve current students, as well as the next generation, brilliantly.

## **ACADEMIC PLANNING IN CONTEXT**

Modern universities are very complex entities, and it is critical to our collective success that there be high levels of cooperation among various units, and effective coordination of the many planning exercises that take place across campus. The University leadership commits itself to a robust environment of integrated planning, where the framework of the Academic Plan and ongoing academic planning establish parameters for the many complementary planning exercises as well as those decision-making and priority-setting exercises that are essential in successful contemporary universities such as Ryerson. We will succeed best when our strategic research priorities, our space allocation and building programs, our human resources and financial and other services, and our advancement efforts are all genuinely harmonized in support of our academic mission and academic plans.

The Vice President, Research and Innovation (VPRI) and the Provost accept the responsibility of working together to facilitate the best research environment that the University's resources, used wisely and in a coordinated effort, can create; to identify and pursue federal and provincial funding that is made available from time to time and that can greatly benefit individual research groups as well as the university community. At the same time, the University holds to the quintessential ideal that researchers and creative practitioners are of course free to pursue ideas and projects as they themselves define them. It remains important that we continue to move toward the greater research intensity that is commensurate with a comprehensive university. The growth of the faculty complement and of graduate studies is bringing new SRC intensity to the academic community at Ryerson, with notable successes, and faculty members are pursuing, at levels greater than ever before, federal, provincial, and foundation- and community-based research funding. It is hoped that a successful conclusion to the local norms process will also create new capacity for faculty members to pursue research agendas of their choosing.

The University is committed to an integrated planning model that also harmonizes academic plans with staff resources and other such resources as technology, building infrastructure, renovations and maintenance, food and other ancillary services, financial services, marketing and communication, and health and safety services. A current example of that coordination is the fully-consultative planning now underway for the new photographic gallery. The School of Image Arts and the Vice President, Administration and Finance are working hand in hand to ensure that the renovations and new spaces will serve academic needs effectively. They are guided by the Master Plan and its three goals: “Urban Intensification,” “People First,” and a commitment to “Design Excellence.” As it does in this project, the Master Plan will help the University respond in a principled, future-looking way whenever decisions are to be made about the provision of new and renovated academic space. Such decisions will be shaped by these goals, and by consultations that take their warrant from the academic framework created in *Shaping our Future*.

The Provost and the Vice President, University Advancement, upon ratification of the new Academic Plan, are committed to working together to lead a process to align the University’s future academic aspirations and its funding opportunities. Moreover, a new Academic Plan once accepted by Senate will also frame the priorities of the next University-wide development campaign. Such coordination is essential.

It is of course impossible for this or any plan to predict everything to come in the next five years that might affect the University’s growth and development. Unexpected political, social, community, demographic, and fiscal pressures will inevitably arise. In a five-year plan, what matters more than specific blueprints are priorities and strategies to guide future decisions.

## PRIORITIES

The most recent articulation of Ryerson’s overarching priorities is the Quality Agenda, with its emphasis on student engagement and success, expansion of SRC intensity, graduate growth, and reputation enhancement. These are essentially preserved in *Shaping Our Future*. Graduate growth will continue to be a priority, but is no longer a discrete category because the University is beyond the start-up phase of graduate education; it is an integrated component of Ryerson’s academic programs. Learning and Teaching Excellence appears as a separate category in this plan in order to emphasize our commitment to fostering a rich environment that makes opportunities for students and professors alike to experiment with ideas and to experience intellectual and professional growth.

*Shaping Our Future* proposes five principal priorities:

### **1. High Quality, Societally-Relevant Undergraduate and Graduate Programs**

Ryerson is known for the high quality of its undergraduate and graduate programs that link university study to professions, professional practice, and careers. Ryerson will continue to pursue this mission, with the aim of preserving and extending our reputation for outstanding quality. Particularly in areas of academic growth, it will also seek to balance discipline-based programs with cross-disciplinary programs that open up new channels of ideas and perhaps even new professions; that take an entrepreneurial approach to the creation and transmission of new knowledge.

While universities sometimes continue to define canons of knowledge and practice along traditional lines, the world for which we are preparing students is seldom as engaged as we are by our disciplinary categories of knowledge and practice. Generally speaking, the world beyond is intrinsically more cross-disciplinary in its approach. In many arenas it seems that the boundary crossing, within the knowledge economy especially, is speeding up ever more.

Ryerson is already connected to a number of lively external communities in many ways: scholarly, research and creative activities; experiential learning and outreach of all kinds, including national and international experiences; and its general accessibility as expert consultants to government, business, industry, and community based agencies in the GTA. These formal partnerships and informal connections play more key roles at Ryerson than comparable partnerships might play at other universities, and they greatly enrich Ryerson's academic programs and opportunities for our graduates. They will continue to be nurtured and given a high priority.

## **2. Student Engagement and Success**

Students always have been and remain absolutely central to Ryerson's mission and identity. In 2006 the President's Commission on Student Engagement commented on the state of engagement at Ryerson, and recommended several steps to strengthen it. Many of its recommendations have been acted upon, including for example the creation of the office of Vice Provost, Students and the restructuring of some services for students. In the next five years the University must continue its efforts to deepen student engagement and success by building on the many initiatives that have recently (and not so recently) been launched. The strategies below point to a number of areas that will receive special attention, such as English language skills; writing, math, and research skills; efforts to promote a more inclusive community through, for example, Tri-mentoring and access and outreach programs; and efforts to facilitate student-directed initiatives, some academic, others not. All of these areas contribute to the overall goal: to be even more effective in fostering an environment in which students are passionately engaged in their own education, and in their own development, and in the development of our community as a whole.

Student success is inextricably connected to the University's success. Every area of the University, not only the academic programs, contributes to that success. Students require academic and non-academic support, quality spaces for study and learning, and engagement with the wealth of opportunities that are part of a positive and enriching educational experience.

Student engagement, success, and retention are intricately related to an overall sense of university community. There are many kinds of communities—from small groups to which individuals can belong, to larger entities that encompass greater numbers of people. The Ryerson community includes not only its faculty and students, but also all of the staff and support personnel. Without them, the University could not function. A culture of respect, where all members of the community are valued for the part they play in making the institution successful, requires constant nurturing and attention.

## **3. Learning and Teaching Excellence**

Ryerson prides itself on the high quality of the teaching and learning environment that it provides, and it will be important to preserve our commitment to that, even as research intensity increases. It will be important to seek out new synergies between teaching and research, perhaps in new initiatives, for example, that expand the intellectual engagement of undergraduates in research opportunities within the curriculum. At both curricular as well as individual levels, support will be provided for faculty and teaching assistants to improve and enhance their teaching effectiveness, and teaching

excellence will continue to be honoured at all levels within the institution. Ryerson will support new and innovative teaching strategies, experiments, and initiatives, including growth in the use of instructional technology.



#### 4. SRC Intensity

Scholarly, Research and Creative activity—the construction and transmission of new knowledge—is essential to any university. The University will vigorously support the efforts of individual faculty members and larger research groups within Ryerson, as well as the efforts of Ryerson faculty members that involve collaborative research at other institutions.

Through a strategic exercise carried out by the VPRI in conjunction with this Academic Plan, seven areas of research activity have been identified as carrying special opportunities. These are:

1. Digital Media, Communication, and Information Technology
2. Energy, Sustainability, and the Environment
3. Health and Well Being
4. Cultural Prosperity
5. Technological Innovation
6. Management, Competitiveness, and Entrepreneurship
7. Learning and Teaching Effectiveness

Ryerson will continue to encourage and support innovation in SRC, particularly in areas that have direct applications in industry, infrastructure, and systems, and that contribute to the prosperity, culture, and health of society.

The University is committed to promoting SRC as a key part of student engagement at the graduate and undergraduate levels and as a key element in the retention of highly qualified faculty members.

## 5. Reputation

It will be critical to pay attention to the University's reputation as the Plan unfolds, and to make investments in promoting and communicating the successes of the University's academic programs; its faculty, students, and alumni; its innovations and initiatives; and its impact on society from a wide variety of perspectives. Ryerson's reputation has sharply increased over time, and it will be important to sustain that momentum.

## STRATEGIES

*Shaping Our Future* identifies strategies that, taken together, will provide pathways within which the community may pursue its five principal priorities. These strategies are deliberately expressed at a macro level. Doing so is meant to give ample opportunity for the University's various schools, departments, faculties, and other units to interpret and activate the strategies locally in ways that make the most sense in hundreds of unique circumstances and operations. At both the local and macro levels, it is assumed that the strategies would be pursued by linking academic goals and priorities to resource allocations that are fiscally sustainable and congruent with the University's five priorities. It is understood that the priorities and strategies are not linked in a one-to-one correspondence because there are likely to be multiple vectors across the priorities and strategies. The capacity to pursue the strategies will of course depend on the budget, and over the five-year period of the Plan it may be necessary to engage in midcourse corrections. It will be the role of the various faculties, departments, schools, and other academic units to determine what they can do to move Ryerson forward along these paths, and how they can do it.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING

### Undergraduate Programming

Academic programs are the University's lifeblood, and must be carefully stewarded. What this means is different over time, for academic program requirements and the curriculum at their foundation express the shifting state of knowledge, of academic disciplines, of time and place, and student expectations. Ryerson's programs and curricula are distinctively dynamic and responsive, and these features are to be highly prized. Ryerson's programming must, above all else, remain high quality, current, and societally relevant. Its current curriculum model has served Ryerson well, building highly regarded professional and professionally-related programs. As societal need continues to change rapidly in the twenty-first century, it is important that the model itself also continue to evolve, along with the definition of "career readiness," in order to provide graduates with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.

Students deserve opportunities to choose educational pathways that give them breadth as well as depth, and that help to prepare them for the evolution of their own career changes and professional opportunities over, say, a working career of 40 or 50 years. It is, of course, folly to pretend that an academic program can look forward half a century, but it is safe to say that students today need educational opportunities that emphasize strong intellectual foundations and relevant professional skills, along with critical thinking, research skills, and practice at pursuing new ideas, solving problems, and grasping the interconnectedness of people, ideas, things, and places in a globalized century. To do all that and more is a tall order, and sometimes it feels as if universities today make adjustments to program requirements and curricula as if seeing through a glass darkly.

Ryerson has always had a more standardized approach to curricula than most. Over the last few years the tripartite curriculum model has been interpreted as allowing a bit more flexibility than before, both in existing programs and in the development of new ones. *Shaping Our Future* acknowledges that the tripartite model gives us a clear framework that has proved to be valuable, and it is at the foundation of our entire curriculum. Rather than eliminating it, which was suggested a number of times during the consultations leading to this Academic Plan, which might be akin to ripping up the Magna Carta, *Shaping Our Future* proposes to open it up somewhat, to bend it, to meet the needs of contemporary students, who are engaged in an ever more dynamic, transnational, trans-disciplinary world.



As the education and skills required by our graduates evolve, then, so must Ryerson's curriculum model and the curricula of our many academic programs. New and innovative curricula and program structures, including both discipline-based and cross-disciplinary programs, double majors, and increased access to minors within a program of study, will be encouraged. It will also be valuable for students to have greater access to a wider range of courses, to be able to explore a wider range of academic areas, and be able to change from one program to another more freely. Liberal studies course offerings could also be expanded, and students should be given more opportunity to increase their scientific literacy in an era of significant scientific developments and dilemmas that affect the environment, health care, the law, and civic life generally.

Curriculum structures and administrative systems will be reviewed in a consultative way and then adapted to make these transformative moves possible. New modes of program delivery, including hybrid models that blend face-to-face and other formats, require consideration. Spring and summer terms of course offerings need to be evaluated and expanded in order to support the academic goals and other needs of Ryerson's students.

English is a second (or third...) language of many students at Ryerson, a fact to be celebrated because the linguistic diversity is a sign of strength. At the same time, there is a growing recognition that the University needs to do more to support a

segment of the non-native speakers of English when their skill levels inhibit their academic progress. Strengthening the foundational literacy and numeracy skills of all students is also important. The University will work to address these gaps in skills and support so that all students can take optimum advantage of the educational opportunities Ryerson provides.

It is likely that, during the life of this Plan, Ontario will be introducing mechanisms to promote clear and transparent pathways for student mobility between postsecondary institutions. This includes transferability of credits from one university to another and enhanced college-university programming. Ryerson must be open to initiatives and opportunities, to play its role in a way that is consistent with

its mission and that preserves or improves the quality of its educational programs. Related to these provincial requests for greater student mobility, as discussed earlier, it is also likely that Ontario will ask Ryerson to expand in response to demographic pressures for access in the GTA. If we do accept that challenge, the growth would be spread over a mixture of new and existing academic programs, so that some balance across the faculties is preserved and so that we are open to new academic initiatives. The anticipated balance is something like two thirds of the growth in new programs and one third in existing programs, with appropriate resources to make it possible to carry out such plans responsibly. The two-thirds area of growth could be an opportunity to create cross- or trans-disciplinary programs unique to Ryerson.

**Strategy 1:** Ryerson's undergraduate curriculum will continue to evolve, so that undergraduate programming and its delivery remain innovative and responsive to students. Courses will be made more accessible, students will be given more choice, and transferability will be enhanced.

**Strategy 2:** Ryerson's undergraduate programs will offer opportunities to students to develop a broad foundation of knowledge and skills necessary for the changing professions of the twenty-first century.

Students are clear that they want their education to include experiences that connect formal university study to the world around them. Ryerson has developed a wide range of partnerships—locally, nationally, and internationally—with business, industry, community organizations, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and government agencies, in order to offer hands-on experiential opportunities to as many students as possible. These opportunities include, but are not limited to, internships, placements, co-operative programs, service learning, work terms, exchange programs, clinical placements, and field experiences.

Ryerson prides itself on creating a wide variety of experiential learning opportunities, and will continue to give high priority to these across all of its programs. Programs are encouraged to be innovative in identifying experiential learning opportunities that are appropriate to their discipline.

The University undertakes to ensure that the resources and mechanisms are in place to provide these opportunities and to make improvements in them where necessary.

**Strategy 3:** Deans will evaluate the experiential learning opportunities available to students in their faculties, and will pursue improvements and new initiatives based on their evaluations and available resources.

## **Graduate Studies**

Over the past five years, the number of graduate programs and graduate students has grown substantially. At present about six percent of Ryerson students are enrolled in master's and doctoral programs. Most comprehensive universities in Ontario have about ten percent of their students enrolled in graduate studies, and Ryerson hopes gradually to match that. It would be desirable to see much of that growth at the doctoral level across a mix of existing and new programs. Ontario's funding of graduate programs will be a key factor in how any program growth will unfold.

While a significant number of graduate programs at Ryerson has been developed since 2000, there

remain several areas in which new graduate programs would be appropriate in terms of mission, resources, and aspirations. The presence of graduate students brings a new dimension to the life of our academic community, enriching our research culture, creating further opportunities for undergraduates, and offering faculty and staff who are engaged with these graduate students new opportunities as well.

**Strategy 4:** Subject to appropriate funding, Ryerson will increase the number of its professional and research-based graduate programs, particularly at the doctoral level.

Graduate students are a key part of the academic life of a university, and their training and involvement are vital to the success and retention of undergraduate students as well as the attraction and retention of highly qualified faculty. In many cases, graduate students are the faculty of the future, and they deserve robust professional development opportunities in their capacities as teachers and researchers.

At Ryerson there are also special needs arising from the speed of graduate growth since 2000, such as the requirement of enhanced graduate funding, increased numbers of teaching and graduate assistantships and appropriate training, additional learning supports such as ESL education and assistance, and physical space for graduate study itself. In 2007 Ryerson participated in the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey, which reinforced the impression that graduate students are particularly keen to have workshops, seminars, and other educational opportunities focusing on skills development within and beyond their academic programs.

**Strategy 5:** Each faculty in conjunction with the School of Graduate Studies will identify how services to graduate students may be strengthened, and the University will endeavour to pursue the recommendations with available resources.

### **Life-long Learning**

The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education plays an important role at Ryerson in providing life-long learning opportunities for thousands of students. It has also been successful in providing innovative programming, in partnership with faculties, schools, and departments in the preparation of internationally trained professionals for careers in Canada. The Chang School joins with the University's faculties in providing critical opportunities for new Canadians and for others for whom postsecondary education has historically been an impossible dream. The Chang School will continue to play an important role in the Ryerson of tomorrow.

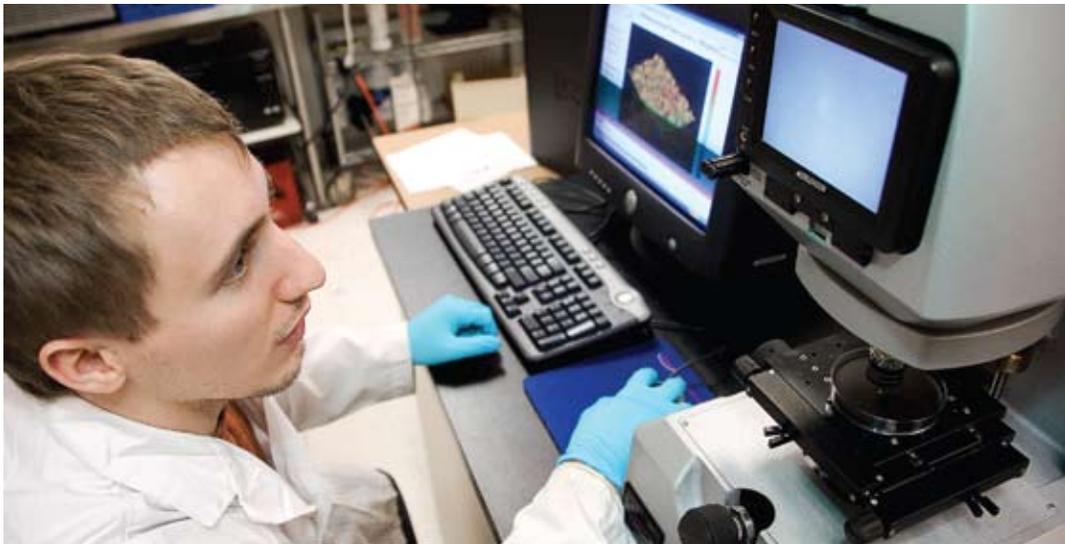
**Strategy 6:** Ryerson will continue to pursue initiatives that offer life-long learning through continuing education programming as well as a broad range of programs designed to meet the access obligations of a democratic society.

## **SCHOLARLY, RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY**

Scholarly, research and creative (SRC) activity is central to the mission of the University. These pursuits provide opportunities to create and transmit new knowledge, a process that is central to the health of the academy, the prosperity of the society we serve, and the future of our graduates.

The University will need to focus its resources in areas of strategic importance as well as in areas of emerging importance. These areas have been identified in an SRC Strategic Planning process involving representatives from each of the faculties, The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, the Provost, and the VPRI. The areas that have been determined to be of strategic or emerging importance are outlined as follows in no particular order.

As a recognized leader in digital arts, engineering, design and media content creation, Ryerson University is involved in a variety of scholarly, research and creative activities in the area of Digital Media, Communication, and Information Technology. This engages the digital arts, science, and technology in a dialogue that fosters a vital exchange of ideas, enables imaginative forms of human communication, and informs new and exciting media in business and education. The area Energy, Sustainability, and the Environment focuses on Ryerson's ability to balance the complex interactions between the need for development, its effect on the environment, and the means for achieving ecological stability and sustainability. This includes activities leading to production of renewable energy or controlling the harmful effects of conventional energy production, water, natural resources, climate, materials, manufacturing, and public policy. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines Health and Well Being as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being." This strategic area can be characterized by the interplay of the experimental sciences, engineering, the affiliated health sciences, social sciences, and humanities, and the knowledge and methods each brings to address issues of health, stress, and well being. Ryerson is engaged in many diverse activities in the realm of health and well being of various communities, especially in an urban context.



Cultural Prosperity represents the contribution of the social sciences, humanities, all media, and fine arts to the economy and society. Across its faculties, Ryerson is uniquely positioned to leverage and stimulate creative expression, innovation, and vision, drawing on its diverse urban, academic, and multicultural surroundings. Technological Innovation exemplifies the contributions made to Canada's economy and society from disciplines in engineering and the physical and life sciences. Ryerson has traditionally had a strong foundation of researchers contributing to technological innovation and intends to build on existing strengths in such areas as aerospace and robotics, power electronics, medical physics and biomedical engineering, advanced materials, and safety engineering.

Ryerson supports a focus on activities in Management, Competitiveness, and Entrepreneurship, the study of planning, organizing, resourcing, leading or controlling an organization, starting new organizations or revitalizing mature organizations while best managing performance. As a leader for career-focused and applied university education, Ryerson engages in a wide range of activities

to improve Learning and Teaching Effectiveness in education, training and development. Research in this emerging area ensures that there is development towards a meaningful and practical body of knowledge about student learning and teaching effectiveness in higher education.

Joint initiatives will be undertaken with University Advancement to seek endowments for research chairs in areas of strategic importance. New research opportunities will be explored through national granting councils, research foundations, external research institutes, other institutions, as well as business, industry, governments (federal, provincial, and other), and external communities. Centres that enable strategic alliances between the University and other sectors, including both the extended public sector and private enterprise, and that build upon and reflect the existing and potential educational and SRC strengths and priority areas within a faculty or the University, are a key part of Ryerson's SRC agenda. An interdisciplinary Centre devoted to digital media, communication, and information technology is being considered.

A framework will be developed at both the central and the local level that will help Ryerson to fulfill its SRC objectives, and promote an environment that ensures collaboration among Ryerson's faculties, schools and the library—among scholars in various fields—in research and creative, scholarly, and professional activities. The SRC Enhancement Program also includes internal programs to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration within Ryerson, inter-institutional collaboration (e.g. between universities, or universities and industry), and international initiatives. The building of a new Student Learning Centre will provide a unique opportunity to strengthen the library as both a research institution of its own and a key part of the SRC life of the University.

The Vice President, Research and Innovation will work with the Provost and the Vice President, Administration and Finance and the Deans, Associate Deans, Chairs and academic members to attract resources and provide adequate infrastructure for scholarly, research and creative activities, and explore the establishment of partnerships with other institutions for possible access to specialized facilities in order to grow our SRC funding, output, and impact. The stated goal has been to double externally funded research to \$25 million by 2011.

Ryerson also recognizes that not all SRC is tied to external research funding, and that other types of scholarship and creative activity are also recognized and valued. Mechanisms for this recognition will be established and will continue to evolve on criteria of quantity and quality. This includes the growing trend to recognize the scholarship of teaching and learning.

As the quantity of SRC grows, so must the infrastructure to support that growth. Faculty must be supported both in their submission and administration of grants. The Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation has recently undergone a review to determine how it can better serve the needs of faculty.

**Strategy 7:** The University will continue to provide stimulus and support to increase both the quality and quantity of SRC activity.

The Office of the VPRI will facilitate the promotion of knowledge transfer, commercialization of research, and the management of intellectual property issues for maximum impact within the receptor community, to advance both economic and social goals. This includes optimization of Ryerson's relationships with the teaching hospital network and associated health related institutes.

**Strategy 8:** The transfer of knowledge to the community, industry, and the marketplace will be fostered.

Partnerships and collaborations will be established to support, encourage, and promote the development and strengthening of strategic research clusters and internationalization. The Office of the VPRI will collaborate with faculties, departments, schools, and other service departments to establish strategic partnerships with targeted institutions and identify opportunities to support a range of international initiatives for faculty and students aimed at the increased internationalization of the institution; to ensure that the Ryerson name gains an increased international recognition.

**Strategy 9:** The University will increasingly pursue partnerships and collaborations that support the overall SRC plan.

Increasingly, universities are coming to see the value of immersing undergraduates in a research environment from their first weeks on campus. While Ryerson students even in first year have historically been engaged in studying the research of others, their own engagement in the research agendas of faculty and graduate students has sometimes been delayed until later in their programs, often in fourth year. It is important to recognize that undergraduate education should also include an SRC component tied to the SRC enterprise of the University. Undergraduate students, in all years, but particularly in their upper years, benefit enormously from this connection, which fits with Ryerson's experiential learning mission. And Ryerson's SRC endeavour benefits greatly from their participation.

**Strategy 10:** Undergraduate as well as graduate students will be provided with SRC activity opportunities.

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, SUCCESS, AND RETENTION



There are many ways students can engage in the life of the University, and there are many areas outside of their specific academic experience that contribute to their success and to completing their degrees at Ryerson. Ryerson has spent much time looking at these areas. There are challenges to being an urban campus that draws students from a wide area. Relatively few students live in residence, and many students have jobs and residences off campus. It is essential that Ryerson provide students with opportunities to engage with the campus and the support to help ensure that that engagement leads to successful conclusions.

Ryerson is also committed to serving under-represented populations, and to providing access and opportunities to those who have lacked opportunities to succeed. Working to meet the needs of both potential and matriculated students is important as part of the University's engagement with the citizens of Toronto, Ontario, and Canada, and with its civic mission and the commitments of its academic community to equal opportunity, fairness, and a democratic society.

## **Student Support**

Overwhelmingly, students perceive Ryerson to be a place where students matter as individuals, and where their individual success matters too. Support for students at Ryerson is already a high priority. That support is created holistically across the University, and takes the effort of staff, faculty, and students themselves. Some is delivered formally, as in library workshops or through the Learning Success programs or in the laboratories or clinical settings, for example. It is also informal, through impromptu discussions about academic advising, ideas and projects, aspirations, and all the rest.

Wherever it happens, it is important to the development of students that the environment created across the University express a genuine interest in the intellectual growth and well-being of students and a commitment to creating and renewing a supportive environment. Students helping students through peer-helper programs, in math and writing labs, for example, are very effective means to that end, and the University is committed to expanding and preserving new opportunities for peer on peer support.

As the number of programs and options expands, student advising will continue to play an important role in student success, including a sense of commitment to learning, retention, the timely completion of academic programs, and satisfaction with a Ryerson education. It will be critical to sustain Ryerson's historic commitment to superb teaching and academic advising even as the University moves more fully into its comprehensive status; meaningful academic advising, along with formal interactions with faculty members, are of very high importance with respect to student engagement.

In the consultation process leading to this Plan, many members of the community identified the need for more support for fundamental skills: math, writing, critical thinking, and ESL. Particularly for those students who struggle to make academic progress early in their university careers, these are essential areas needing more support, and that support can also help to improve the performance and post-graduation opportunities of even the most successful university graduates.

The University must also ensure that it mounts strong programs for first-generation students, New Canadians, Aboriginal students, LGTBQ students, culturally and linguistically diverse students, and students with disabilities. Gains in these initiatives have been steady over the past few years, but more support is necessary, and will be a priority as part of Ryerson's commitment to accessibility. As the diversity of the GTA increases, so must our effort to understand who is coming to Ryerson, and who is not; who chooses particular programs, and why. We want to ensure that students from under-represented groups—e.g. low income families, Black communities, Aboriginal communities—are not excluded from Ryerson.

Due to its history and urban location, Ryerson has a relatively small residential population. In this context, and in light of our diversity, all Ryerson students benefit not just from peer and faculty support but from the support of staff dedicated to student life—who help to develop events, activities, and programs based on student need.

Following up on the Commission on Student Engagement, the Vice Provost, Students will lead an analysis of the next steps necessary to help boost student engagement even further.

Student Services, the Registrariat, and other units will work with the faculties to enhance local supports; and will collaborate widely with students, clubs, and other partner organizations to strengthen student engagement, retention, and success.

**Strategy 11:** The Vice Provost, Students will assess the academic support services, and other services for students, and the University will work to sustain its effective programs and make improvements and changes where necessary.

### **Sports and Recreation**

In order to provide an overall engaging environment and a holistic educational experience, Ryerson will strive to enhance the opportunities and facilities for students to participate in sports and recreation activities. These activities promote the physical well-being of members of the community and help with mental acuity and academic focus, leadership skills, opportunities for building networks of friendship and community engagement. Intramural and varsity sports teams, and access to healthy physical activities, workshops, and seminars, all play an important part in student engagement, success, and retention.

**Strategy 12:** The Director of Athletics will lead efforts to enhance facilities and opportunities for intramural sports and recreation.

### **The Student Learning Centre and Study Space**

Flexible, comfortable, informal space for students is essential, especially when most Ryerson students live off campus. Students with one class in the morning and a lab in the afternoon and another class or club meeting in the evening need a place to “land,” to work in teams, to read quietly, to multitask their academic work and social engagement, and so forth. The University has made substantial gains in this area in the recent past, and is committed to continuing to make gains, designing spaces for undergraduates and graduates in full consultation to make the most effective decisions about the allocation of space.

Over the life of this Plan it is likely that several capital projects to build new space and renovate or repurpose existing space will unfold. These plans will be guided by the goals of the Master Plan.

**Strategy 13:** The University will make a key priority of its continued expansion of space for formal and informal study, informal gathering, and research and teaching.

Most immediately will be the photographic gallery on Gould and the new Student Learning Centre at the corner of Gould and Yonge Streets. It is a fascinating time to build a twenty-first century learning centre, and a significant challenge to take the best advantage of the profound impact of the digital revolution on knowledge creation and transfer; to take into account the impact of that revolution on the way students learn and are engaged. The library will be a principal occupant of the new Student Learning Centre, and the library will be committed to acquiring the resources, particularly electronic resources, that students and faculty will require.

The library remains at the heart of the university, and Ryerson remains committed to continuing to strengthen its resources, its collections, and its role in the academic community beyond its physical borders. The Ryerson library has been able to grow its collection since 1993 at a relatively faster pace than many Ontario universities, and Ryerson is committed to sustaining that momentum. As the library expands its footprint and its role, it will continue to pursue strategic relationships with the faculties and with student-related academic services, and will continue its current efforts to promote a safe and congenial study environment that enhances the day-to-day experience of being on campus.

### **The Learning and Teaching Environment**

It is difficult to separate the learning and teaching environment from any other part of this Plan, as learning and teaching are intrinsic to everything else.

The learning environments in modern universities have been in a period of slow evolution since the 1960s, when many of an earlier generation's assumptions about what should be studied, and how, were reconfigured (or, less often, set aside). Arguably, however, the technological revolution of our day will do more to reshape the nature, the rhythms, and the daily habits of students and faculty than any other changes in a very long time. Where for example will social networking sites, podcasting, and other digital media take us? How will the requirements of greater transferability, greater flexibility, and the pressures of time affect what happens in classrooms, what happens in a virtual environment, and so forth?

Impossible to answer, especially with firm conviction, but important to contemplate. And it is important to have in place some means for helping us all keep up with the technological and other kinds of change, and for inspiring new ways of constructing curricula, or new ways of using classroom time, using virtual environments, whatever the changes may be.

The Learning and Teaching Office has a mandate that includes stimulating change on the Ryerson campus through a variety of means. In response to the theme of decentralization the LTO has adjusted its model of support, so that some services continue to be offered centrally, while others have migrated to individual faculties. It will be important over the next five years to have the LTO's model continue to evolve, and to explore the state of resources across campus devoted to stimulating the learning and teaching environment.

Key areas to be explored will be the provision of support for teaching assistants; support for individual faculty members working on pedagogy projects or improvements; and departments, schools, and faculties who are working to revise or reframe courses and programs; learning technology; learning spaces; and student engagement.

**Strategy 14:** Ryerson will invest in the learning and teaching environment of a twenty-first century university; support pedagogical innovation; preserve its studio and lab cultures; and strengthen its experiential learning model.

One model that has been very successful in recent times in providing supports to students, as well as to the faculty who teach and advise them, is the faculty team approach. A team may, for example, consist of a Faculty Associate from the Learning and Teaching Office, a Librarian, a Counselor, a Learning Strategist, a Student Life Facilitator, and a Learning Technology Liaison. Each of these team members is part of a central university group where they work with colleagues in the same areas to develop strategies that promote effective teaching and learning. Each member then brings this expertise to the team at the faculty level, working to institute and support initiatives particular to the faculty and

students in that faculty's programs. There is the possibility that other types of supports, including, for example, enhanced student advising, could be incorporated in this model.

**Strategy 15:** All faculties will be encouraged to create a faculty team in partnership with others to support teaching, learning, and student success and retention.

## **ACADEMIC STRUCTURES AND ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES**

### **Faculty, School, and Department Organization**

This may be a good time to look at revising Ryerson's academic structures. Through the consultation process leading to this Plan, the topic of reorganizing some quarters of the University arose repeatedly. The establishment of new faculties and the possible reorganization of existing schools and departments to support program growth and development are possible to contemplate. Ideally, any reorganization would build new synergies, perhaps in support of trans-disciplinary collaboration or other major priorities. Examples that emerged in the consultations were a Faculty of Science and a Faculty of Law, both of which have a certain logic.

Naturally, creating a new faculty is a substantial undertaking, one that requires full consultation with respective groups, and requires the consent of Senate and the approval of the Board of Governors. Any new faculty to be established would need to have sufficient critical mass to ensure its academic and fiscal viability. Any realignment of existing departments and schools would need to be clearly strategic, and again the resource requirements would be taken into consideration. The phrase "the good of the university" comes to mind.

**Strategy 16:** A report on the academic structure of the University will be developed by the Provost through a consultative process.

### **Funding models**

Ryerson is committed to fair and transparent strategic resource allocations to support high quality academic programs, and to being a good steward of its extensive facilities and infrastructure to the best of its financial capacity to do so. Funding models must reflect these basic principles and ensure appropriate accountability for the use of scarce resources.

Ryerson's current funding models for academic programs were established to support Ryerson's curriculum structure, and have served it well. As schools and departments seek to develop course offerings for students outside their programs or to work with other schools and departments, particularly outside of their own faculties on initiatives such as inter-disciplinary collaborations, changes to the funding models will be considered. Ryerson's curriculum structure also assumes a very efficient scheduling of classes, with little flexibility in student timetables. As program models evolve, and more student choice is proposed, there will be more need for course offerings outside of the normal semesters and times. Evolution of the curriculum model will require that the ways in which undergraduate and graduate programs are funded be reevaluated.

**Strategy 17:** The Provost, with the Vice Provost, University Planning and the Deans, will review Ryerson’s academic funding models.

## FACULTY AND STAFF

### Faculty



Highly qualified faculty are essential to the University.

A faculty member’s knowledge base, research and teaching skills, professional judgment and experience, research agenda, intellectual curiosity, passion for teaching, collegial network, industry contacts, vision of the future, ethical practices, publications, creative works, service to the university and the discipline and profession—these are all vital elements that make up the faculty of the University.

*Shaping Our Future* envisions the continued expansion of the Ryerson faculty, a successful conclusion to the local norms process, and new initiatives designed to strengthen the university’s recruiting and retention of highly qualified professors. Instituting local norms will be critical to both recruiting and retaining colleagues. In addition, the Plan envisions working in tandem with University Advancement in the next development campaign to expand significantly the number of endowed chairs, in research and in teaching, across the campus. As expressed elsewhere, this Plan also anticipates initiatives to strengthen services to faculty with respect to research services and staff support.

**Strategy 18:** Ryerson will compete vigorously to attract and retain highly qualified faculty.

Ryerson is a place where teaching matters, and prides itself on fostering teaching excellence. A wide range of awards is given to recognize exemplary teaching, and Ryerson faculty continue to win external awards as well.

All who are engaged in the teaching process—full and part-time faculty and instructors, new and experienced faculty and instructors, and the growing body of TAs and GAs—have a contribution to make to the quality of the educational experience of students, and as such have a professional responsibility to continue to reflect on and improve teaching and learning practices. Thus, it is essential to offer all those who teach the opportunity to learn and improve their teaching.

**Strategy 19:** Opportunities will be enhanced for faculty, instructors, and teaching and graduate assistants to strengthen their teaching practices.

## **Staff**

While Ryerson has managed, even in its period of rapid expansion, to maintain roughly the same staff to faculty and staff to student ratios, it is recognized that more could be done to ensure that these ratios—and the people and work they represent—are more in line with sector norms. Consultations with the community indicated a desire for additional staff support both within the academic areas, where staff support has already received the greater percentage of recent growth, and in the staff support areas of the University.

**Strategy 20:** The University will work to expand the staff complement where possible, recognizing the vital impact of staff support on the educational mission.

Ryerson's staff is critically important to every aspect of the University. The staff who routinely interact with students across the campus play a large part in their success and retention, and the interactions between staff and students, from the span of an initial admissions visit to convocation, play a large part in students' perception of their Ryerson education.

Members of staff play formal and informal roles in a student's education, from work within laboratories, to the provision of business services, to the care of the classrooms and grounds, to food service, to CCS efforts to install the latest teaching technology.

It is recognized that part of the University's commitment to life-long learning is expressed in the numerous formal and informal opportunities that are offered to staff to support their own growth and professional development.

**Strategy 21:** Additional professional and career development opportunities will be designed or supported for staff.

## UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

University Advancement (UA) will play a key role in making the Academic Plan a success.

As UA launches its next campaign, following the successful conclusion of the “Invest in Futures” campaign, it is committed to the following principles:

- The University’s academic plan informs the campaign priority setting process. This will ensure that the institution builds on areas of core strength, and focuses on key objectives.
- Development priorities align with the vision and academic plan of the University, faculty, department, school, or unit. This will provide a solid rationale for why it is important, and provides UA with the tools to successfully present the funding priorities.
- A thoughtful and timely consultation process must be developed to allow the faculties, departments, schools, and units to have opportunities to make their resource needs and priorities known. This will also enhance and build the partnership between faculty members and UA in reaching out to the community for support.

The Provost and the Vice President, University Advancement will lead a process to assess the viability of prospective initiatives and projects, from the development perspective, as they emerge from various academic units in response to Shaping Our Future.

**Strategy 22:** Development activities will be undertaken to support proposals both at the university and faculty levels, consistent with the priorities of the Academic Plan.

Alumni are one of Ryerson’s greatest resources, and many have returned to Ryerson to contribute in a variety of meaningful ways. They serve on advisory councils, the Board of Governors and the Senate; they are active in University Advancement initiatives, contributing both their time and financial resources, and they play an active role in the programs from which they graduated. They are also significant ambassadors for the University in many different ways.

The University takes pride in the achievements of its graduates and respects the passionate engagement of many such graduates, particularly at the level of their individual academic programs. In this respect some who have earned bachelor’s degrees at Ryerson express a link back to their program but less so to the University itself, which is unlike the pattern at most other universities, perhaps because Ryerson students so strongly identify as a student in a particular program.

Yet there are many additional ways alumni can help build Ryerson’s quality and reputation, and toward that end, a Ryerson Alumni Association has been established. It is hoped that the Association will play a vital role in helping Ryerson renew its bonds with its graduates, so that alumni become even more engaged, and in new ways that expand their engagement with current students and University initiatives.

**Strategy 23:** University Advancement will take the lead in creating new university-level opportunities and pathways for alumni to become even more engaged in the life of the University, and will collaborate with faculties as appropriate.

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

Ryerson's mission commits it to engagement with the world that surrounds it—locally, nationally, internationally. Partnerships have a key role to play in building a strong Ryerson reputation, utilizing and showcasing the University's strengths and the expertise and knowledge of its faculty, staff, and students.

The provision of experiential learning opportunities is a Ryerson hallmark, and one of the areas of greatest partnership strength at present.

As post-secondary education itself becomes more global, and as government funding models in Ontario and Canada continue to encourage institutions to make meaningful partnerships in areas of research in particular, partnerships will become substantially more consequential to the success of institutions than ever before.

Ryerson enjoys many important partnerships now, and it will be a priority over the next five years to boost the significant opportunities that partnership brings. The Provost and VPRI will help to facilitate institutional partnerships that touch both academic programs and the University's research priorities, such as the exploratory partnership with St Michael's Hospital that has begun.

Partnerships can leverage the University's resources and expand the impact of members of our academic community, and will become a higher priority as the University seeks to compete with other comprehensive universities.

**Strategy 24:** Ryerson will foster local, national, and international partnerships and collaborations with organizations that share the University's goals and enhance its mission.

## REPUTATION

Ryerson's reputation has steadily developed in concert with the evolution that has led us to be a comprehensive university. The number of students who now apply to Ryerson as their first choice has increased more than at any other university in the province, and entering averages continue to rise; the number of high quality faculty with doctoral or terminal degrees in their field who join Ryerson continues to rise steadily; SRC funding and output continue to grow; the number of high quality undergraduate and graduate programs has increased.

All of this is an indication of Ryerson's reputation as an academic institution. Ryerson's Master Plan will carry it into the future and support its role as a City Builder. Alumni and their contributions to society, as well as effective marketing and communication, will keep the University in the public eye and enhance the success of its fundraising efforts. Ryerson's reputation will allow it to build on what it already has with a view to what it will become in the future.

**Strategy 25:** Ryerson will ensure that it communicates effectively to its many internal constituents and external stakeholders the value and quality of its academic programs, its research, and its community. Ryerson will publicly celebrate major achievements, successful initiatives, and other signal accomplishments to add to the University's reputation.

## NEXT STEPS IN PLANNING

### Faculty, Department, School, and Academic Area Planning

The strategies in this Plan are intended to establish a general framework from which every academic or support area can build its own plans in support of its vision and its obligations to the University.

Toward that end, each of the faculties, working in conjunction with their departments and schools, and other academic areas as appropriate, will develop or renew academic plans of their own. Vice Presidents, Vice Provosts, and Deans will be asked to develop strategic plans that encompass all the units reporting to them. These university- and faculty-level plans, to be presented to the Provost in January 2009, will address strategies relevant to the areas of responsibility. There will be an annual report on the Plan that will require each unit to assess how successful they have been in meeting the University's priorities and their own. The University Planning Office will develop instruments and timelines for the development of and the reporting on the Plan.

## POSTLUDE

Academic planning is as much an art as it is a science. *Shaping Our Future* is the result of listening to the many voices that are Ryerson University. The energy and enthusiasm— Ryerson hallmarks—are evident. Everyone is passionate about what they do, and that communal passion is what drives Ryerson forward so successfully. The ideas and enthusiasm of the Ryerson community seem boundless.

Today Ryerson possesses great momentum, a wonderful thing. The community has built that momentum together, and we look forward to a bright future.



## *Appendix*

### **ACADEMIC PLANNING CONSULTATION**

An Academic Plan involves the entire university, and thus the thoughts and visions of all of its constituents must be heard.

Initially, the Provost drafted a consultation paper to guide the discussion and held several general Town Hall meetings, including a lively, well-attended Town Hall especially for students, a Special Senate Meeting, consultations with the Chair/Director groups in each faculty, general consultations with clusters of departments and schools, and area consultations with: the Registrariat and Student Services; Graduate Studies; Scholarly, Research and Creative Activities representatives group; Senior Director's group; and the executive committees of the Ryerson Faculty Association (RFA), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), devoted to the discussion of that paper. The Provost also formed an Academic Plan Advisory Group to assist him as the Plan developed. And the Academic Planning Group, consisting of the Vice Provosts, Deans, and senior advisers, was regularly engaged in the development of the Plan.

The consultations were very informative and constructive, and it was clear that all areas of the University have given their future and priorities, as well as Ryerson's future, a great deal of thought.



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