Laurier Digital Strategy

LAURIER

WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

Table of Contents

> "Laurier should maintain a balance between accessibility, cost-efficiency, and quality of service."

Introduction

Our motivation and purpose

A digital strategy sets the stage for how Wilfrid Laurier University will thrive in an increasingly digital world. It provides a lens that is informed by digital considerations and impacts all aspects of our university's mission, and the academic, research and business strategies. Laurier's digital strategy will focus on making changes to the way we as an institution use technology to improve activities, processes, and the services we provide.

Since March 2020, higher education institutions have been forced to adapt to unprecedented changes and demands accelerating digital transformation within the sector. As we look forward, a digital strategy will help us determine how we can make the most of this momentum to build new pathways between teaching and learning, research, administration, and technology.

Laurier's Digital Strategy provides clear and realistic expectations of technology, services, and operational practices, and ensures that the solutions we implement are approached purposefully and meet the needs of the communities that we serve. This will enable individual and institutional success, help us to understand the potential of digital technologies and associated services, prioritize our investments, and readily apply them to better serve our diverse community. These values are embedded in the three strategic priorities that form the core of our strategy and align with the teaching, research, and community focus of the Laurier Strategy.

Our **strategic pillars** were developed through extensive consultations with students, faculty, staff, and members of the university's leadership team. Through these engagements, three key priority areas for Laurier's Digital Strategy were determined for the next five years.

Strategic Pillars:

1) Accessible and Equitable Access to Services, Tools and Resources

2) Communication, Collaboration and Connections

3) Purposeful Transformation in Learning, Teaching, Working and Research

Each of these priorities encompasses high-level goals selected for the significance of their impact on our university community and specific activities that will be necessary for Laurier to achieve its broader objectives.

Achieving these objectives will require support from leaders and a collaborative effort within the Laurier community to implement projects and initiatives that work towards these goals. It will also require proper project prioritization and an understanding that we have limited resources and must work collectively to ensure an appropriate balance between enterprise-level solutions and services that serve business units and/or functional needs.

For the next five years, we recognize that our priorities and decisions will continue to be informed by innovation, demographics, budgetary constraints, and the increasing pace of innovation and change. Laurier's Digital Strategy will assist us in selecting the right combination of technologies, tools and strategies that can be combined to create these experiences. Laurier's Digital Strategy is not a standalone initiative. We see it as an integral part of Laurier's current priorities, projects, and strategic plans, and essential for all future initiatives.

> "Our digital strategy is the thread that holds it all together."

Quotes throughout the document are unattributed comments from focus groups and interviews.

Developing Our Strategy

Mission and Values

Our Mission

Our Digital Strategy will provide a shared vision to enhance teaching, learning, research, administration, and service through sustainable digital innovation for Laurier and for our community of partners. In developing our approach, the Digital Strategy Working Group has identified a series of values that will drive its development.

"We need to provide the option to participate virtually or in-person which increases participation, is easier to fit into schedules, and removes unnecessary travel."

Our Values

Technology has been a cornerstone of our ability to meet new challenges and will remain instrumental to our development and growth. As we look forward, the institution needs to have clear and realistic expectations of technology and ensure that the solutions we implement are strategic and meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve. We have established the following goals and objectives that Laurier should strive to achieve in our digital projects and initiatives.

Implement: Smart and Responsive Tools and Services

- Services are easy to find, accessible, personalized and provide timely assistance.
- Easy-to-use digital tools.
- Tools and services that integrate with existing infrastructure and institutional culture.

Facilitate: Data-Informed Culture

- Collect and use data dynamically and securely to inform our strategy and priorities.
- Harness information to drive user experience and service design.
- Analyse and use key performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of activities, services, and programs.

Enable: Collaboration and Connectivity

- Introduce technology and services that enable innovation, creativity and collaboration.
- Equitable engagement between all members of our communities.
- The ability to share, collaborate, and work easily and securely.

Methodology

To determine the key priorities and goals for our strategy, the Digital Strategy Working Group organized a series of community engagement sessions for students, faculty, and staff across the university. A wide-representative group of students, faculty, and staff took part in individual consultations and discussions organized by the the Digital Strategy Working Group to ensure that the widest spectrum of opinions and needs were incorporated into the plan. Responses were collected and aggregated to determine trends and areas of focus. Goals were created for each of the priority areas that were a and vetted by the Digital Strategy Working Group and were linked to the Laurier Strategy.

1. Winter 2021 - Formation

The Digital Strategy Working Group was formed in December 2020 with leaders from across the university. We then went through an exploration phase, with several introductory sessions held with Gartner and other higher education institutions to learn about their approaches. ICT compiled a draft inventory of key digital projects and initiatives over the past year that were planned, completed and in progress, as well as new initiatives that were forthcoming.

2. Spring 2021 - Finding our North Star

Members of the Working Group, and our sponsors, were asked to share their vision of what a "digital Laurier" will look like in three to five years. Responses were collected, aggregated, and synthesized to help shape our goal of where we were heading.

3. Summer 2021 - Creating our Mission Statement

The Digital Strategy Working Group worked to define our mission and values of our digital strategy and developed our engagement strategy to reach out to our wider community.

4. Fall 2021 - Community Engagement

During this community engagement phase the Digital Strategy Working Group organized a series of engagement sessions for students, faculty, researchers, and staff across the university.

The purpose of our engagement was to:
- Provide an opportunity for community members to contribute and help to shape the Digital Strategy.
- Raise awareness about the initiative and create a vested interest in the work that we are doing.
- Ensure that the digital strategy we create reflects the diverse needs of our community.

To accomplish this, we embraced three primary methods for engagement:

- Focus groups
- An online survey
- Interviews with the university's leadership team

We had very high participation from community members, holding a total of 12 focus group sessions involving 118 participants, 11 interviews with senior leaders, and collecting more than 2,600 responses to our online survey. The following is a report on the outcomes of these engagements as well as recommended strategic priorities, goals and how they tie into other strategic priorities at Laurier.

5. Winter 2022 – Drafting our Strategy

With the information we had collected from our focus groups, surveys, and interviews with the president's cabinet, the Digital Strategy Working Group aggregated responses into key strategic priorities and goals.

"Digital transformation shouldn't be a steam-roller. We need to find a balance between in-person and online. We need to learn what can be improved and made digital and what can stay within that physical space."

Laurier Digital Strategy

Priorities

Through engagement with the community and work within the Digital Strategy Working Group, three key priorities were identified as being the most important to our diverse community and imperative to our strategic success. These themes are:

1) Accessible and Equitable Access to Services, Tools and Resources

Laurier is committed to providing equitable access to digital services, tools, and resources, recognizing our community members' breadth of lived experiences.

Goals Include:

1.1   Ensure that services, tools, and resources are accessible and available to all the communities we serve.

1.2   Provide equitable digital experiences to our students, faculty, and staff.

1.3   Adopt people-focused services, systems and applications that are easy to use.

2) Communication, Collaboration and Connections

Laurier understands communication is critical for our internal parties and for engagement with the diverse communities that we serve. Communication can help us break down barriers between physical and virtual environments and support connections both internally and externally to drive engagement and collaboration.

Goals include:

2.1   Optimize technology and services that enable communication and collaboration within our institution and with our wider community.

2.2   Proactively engage and elicit feedback from our community regarding projects and initiatives that support our strategic efforts.

2.3   Integrate software, systems and infrastructure that ensure a balance between security, privacy and usability.

3) Purposeful Transformation in Learning, Teaching, Working and Research

Laurier recognizes the strong desire from our community to reinforce and mature transformative policies, procedures, tools, and resources. This purposeful transformation includes embracing technologies and pedagogies that enrich working, research, teaching, and learning experiences across both in-person and virtual environments.

Goals include:

3.1   Invest in people, processes, and technology that will enable current and future strategic initiatives at our institution.

3.2   Connect virtual and physical environments to support diverse modalities for working, teaching, learning and research.

3.3   Empower our workforce, students, faculty, and researchers through training and upskilling.

These strategic pillars and their associated goals will serve as a basis for selecting and prioritizing projects and initiatives at our institution in the coming years. They will be incorporated into our project prioritization process and the associated governance bodies within both ICT and our wider community engagements.

Alignment

Between the Digital Strategy and Laurier Strategy

Our Digital Strategy has overarching and integrated themes across all the strategic areas of Laurier Strategy (2019-2024) and will be essential to helping the university be successful in achieving its objectives including:

"Accessibility should be at the forefront when creating or updating software."

Enriching Partnerships

Implementing supportive software and technical solutions that enable collaboration and communication.

Inclusive Community

Ensuring that the services, tools, and resources that we provide are accessible and available to all the communities we serve.

Indigeneity

Fostering engagement of Indigenous groups and communities through access to technology and training.

Intellectual Climate

Support the generation and dissemination of knowledge and engagement of wider communities beyond our own.

Internationalization

Enabling the availability of software, services and resources that will fit around students' lives and schedules.

Credential Innovation

Providing adaptive platforms and resources to support various modalities of instruction.

Enduring Skills

Supporting our workforce, students, faculty, and researchers through continuous training and upskilling

Engaged Research

Tools and platforms that support the creativity and research within our institution and engagement of wider communities beyond our own.

Experiential Learning

Adopting new technologies and connecting student experience to employers and community service partners.

Sustainability

Reviewing, renewing, or retiring technologies depending on the needs of our institution while reducing our carbon footprint.

Achieving our Goals

How the strategy will be brought to fruition

In order to operationalize Laurier's digital strategy, we are developing a roadmap of projects and initiatives that will help us achieve our goals. There are many initiatives that have been identified as part of our current project intake process, but there continues to be opportunity to better capture the ambitions of the community. Subject matter experts from across the university will be asked to contribute by sharing their plans, or dream projects, that would support our community and help Laurier succeed as an institution.

These projects and initiatives will be collected and aggregated based on similarities to determine potential additions that could fit into our digital strategy road map. Throughout this process we will determine potential key performance indicators (KPIs) that will measure our progress towards meeting the various goals of our strategy.

Members of the Digital Strategy Working Group

MEMBERS

Gohar Ashoughian, University Librarian

Dan Dawson, Assistant Vice President Student & Ancillary Services

Charity Parr-Vasquez, Assistant Vice President, Research

John Fraser, Assistant Vice President, Integrated Planning and Budgeting

Nela Petkovic, Chief Information Officer

Mary Wilson, Vice Provost, Teaching & Learning

Kyle Harris , Manager ICT Digital Transformation Strategy
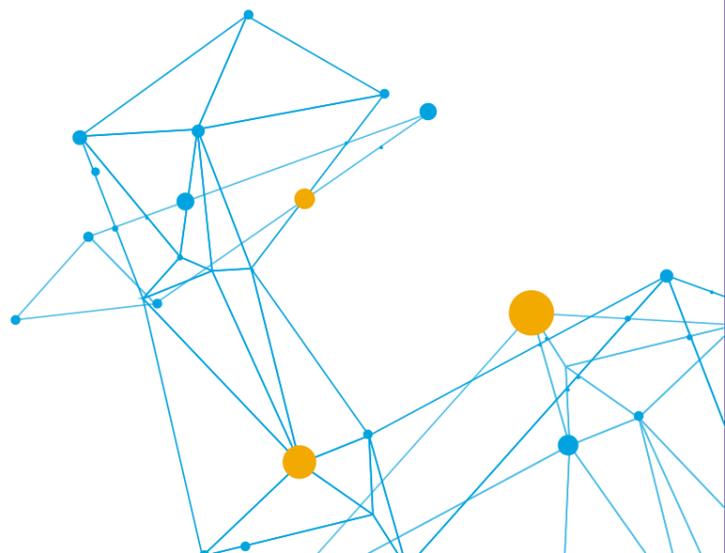
SPONSORS

Jonathan Newman, Vice President Research

Lloyd Noronha, Vice President Finance & Administration

Anthony Vannelli, Provost & Vice President Academic

SUPPORT

Chris Pasierbski, Administrative Assistant ICT

Laurier Digital Strategy

Created in 2021–2022 by Laurier's Digital Strategy Working Group