

Challenges: Not Attaining Enrolment Goals



Reputation/Institutional Brand

- Aligning reputation with partners' expectations and experiences in all interactions is a challenge.
- Brand and reputation must also be robust enough to sustain confidence in and support during a crisis.
- Use of limited resources to address reputational issues negatively impacts efforts to improve and increase recruitment and retention.
- Need to overcome Memorial's perceived "less than" reputation in NL and rest of Canada.
- Incorporating unique branding of individual campuses with a coherent and recognizable institutional brand.



Infrastructure

- Inadequate infrastructure may result in service interruption, loss of teaching or research time, harm to reputation, student/faculty/staff dissatisfaction, and unplanned expenses and/or loss of revenue.
- Includes parking and transit efficiencies (to and between Memorial facilities).
- Includes the additional space requirements of our growing graduate student population.
- Of particular concern is the need for the entire campus infrastructure to be accessible.



Financial, Administrative & Academic Structures

- Some existing organizational structures and policies impede the ability to attract, retain and graduate students.
- Includes but is not limited to policies and procedures surrounding financial payments and refunds, admissions, approval of new programs/courses, teaching capacity, faculty load, library resources and a budget allocation system that does not account for changing enrolment patterns.



Multiple Campuses & Geographic Locations

- There exists competition within the campuses for limited resources which creates internal tensions and inefficiencies.
- There is a need for greater consistency in academic delivery/programming.
- Coordinating resource allocation, maintaining infrastructure, developing cohesive communication and branding plans, and maintaining a consistent student experience for all Memorial students are essential.



Student Preparedness and Persistence

- Includes student preparation to successfully participate in post-secondary studies, retention, graduation rates and time to completion.
- Memorial's perceived open access mandate at the undergraduate level impacts the likelihood of admitted students to persist in their program.
- The need for extra academic and health and wellness supports for entering students puts a strain on resources and can impact program quality and sustainability.
- Concerns with writing and literacy skills of undergraduate and graduate students, as well as program specific writing needs.



Memorial's Fiscal Situation

- Memorial is obligated to balance its budget each year.
- Balancing its budget has come at a cost – significant budget cuts over a number of years.
- Units that support recruitment and retention efforts (e.g., Marketing and Communications and the Office of the Registrar) have seen continuous cuts to its operating budget which impacts the ability to invest broadly in marketing, outreach and retention efforts.
- Memorial does not have a substantial financial aid and scholarships budget. Graduate student funding must be competitive to be attractive.
- The proposed new budget model is felt to cause competition amongst the faculties and schools.



Housing and Student Affordability

- Students are facing an increased cost of living due to higher rent, increased grocery costs, high gas prices and an overall spike in the cost for basic necessities.
- Escalating costs of living in 2023 pose a major issue for students hoping to study abroad (IDP Global Survey 2023).
- While Memorial offers competitive on campus housing options for undergraduate and graduate students, the supply is not meeting the demand for graduate students with families.
- There is a provincial shortage of rental and housing options for students which is anticipated to exist for the next 2-3 years.
- As the number of undergraduate and graduate students at the Labrador campus grows, housing may become an issue there as well.



High School Population

- There continues to be an increase in the percentage of NL high school graduates eligible to attend Memorial but there is concern due to policy changes within the K-12 system in NL (i.e. removal of Public Examinations) with the preparedness of the students.
- University academic performance data indicates that students entering with admission averages with less than 80% are more likely to not continue their students than those students admitted with an average of greater than 80%.
- Is there an obligation of Memorial to fully understand the potential gaps that exist for incoming high school students, and what supports, if any, should be put in place to address these gaps (e.g., opportunities to complete remedial math)?



Academic Rigidity

- For some programming at Memorial, the academic regulations are seen to be confusing or rigid.
- Students may feel this makes it difficult to tailor their education to specific needs or interests or to switch programs (especially between campuses).
- It can be administratively burdensome to oversee rigid or confusing regulations and it makes high quality academic advising and degree audit technology difficult to maintain.
- Academic programming needs to be more flexible in its delivery options to meet needs of today's students.



International Recruitment

- Introduction of the provincial attestation letters for international students will increase steps required to recruit, admit and enrol international students.
- Loss of ACOA funding for international recruitment activities will strain an already low international recruitment budget.