

Summary Report of Campus Consultations: Strengths and Challenges of the University

Introduction

The University of Windsor launched the Aspire online survey between February and March 2022 as the first step in the strategic planning process. The survey was accessed by more than 2,000 respondents, with 1,534 usable responses. The Aspire Café Conversations were the second step in the consultation process. These sessions provided students, staff, and faculty with the opportunity to provide their input through in-person, discussion-based, consultation sessions targeted at key topics identified through the Aspire survey. A total of 665 students and nearly 200 staff and faculty participated in these events. The Aspire online survey and Café Conversations aimed to gather respondents' perceptions of where the University of Windsor should be and how the University can best get there. The results presented in this report focus on the Aspire survey and Café Conversation questions regarding the University's key strengths and challenges.

It is important to note that these consultations were intended for broad, community-based input. The University also implemented separate consultations with approaches that are appropriate for specific communities whose voices must be heard. For example, while questions about Indigenization and Decolonization and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) were included in consultation questions, dedicated consultations with community members using informed and appropriate methods were also needed to ensure that this priority was supported by rich and informed processes.

Key Strengths and Best Features of UWindsor

As part of the Aspire survey, respondents had the opportunity to answer the following question: **What do you consider three (or up to three) strengths of the University?** Respondents submitted nearly 4,010 individual answers to this question. However, as single words or short phrases were provided, contextual analysis of these data was limited. A set of 93 themes were developed to meaningfully organize and group the responses into larger themes and subthemes. Figure 1 presents the fifteen most common themes identified in these responses.

The three most frequent themes regarding the University's strengths were: 1) Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI); 2) Location; and 3) Culture and Atmosphere of the University. The University's ongoing efforts regarding EDI were mentioned 420 times. These included the university's significant focus on diversity (e.g., diversity of students) and multiculturalism, new EDI initiatives, creation of new positions supporting EDI, leadership support of EDI, acknowledgement of anti-Black racism and publication of anti-Black racism reports, and the

formation and work of Racialized Academics & Advocates Centering Equity and Solidarity (RAACES).

The location of the University was identified as a strength 330 times. This theme included comments regarding the University’s proximity to the United States and Windsor as a border city, affordability, climate, lack of competition in the area, access to the Great Lakes, and the University’s connection to the local agricultural and automotive industries. The culture and atmosphere of the University was brought up as a strength 307 times. Faculty and staff were described as kind, helpful, approachable, friendly, and empathetic. In addition, the University was perceived to have a culture that supports a strong sense of community, teamwork, engagement, inspiration, and open mindedness.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (420)	Location (330)	Culture and Atmosphere of University (307)	Size (257)	Course and Program Options (225)
Professors/Faculty Members (213)	Research (148)	Infrastructure (133)	People (131)	Teaching and Learning (121)
Campus (Physical, as a whole) (117)	Student Centred/Experience (117)	Community Impact (114)	Specific Programs (86)	Campus Life (80)

Figure 1. Fifteen most frequent themes regarding the University’s strengths.
 Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme

Responses differed based on the role of the respondent at the University (i.e., staff, faculty, undergraduate student, or graduate student). Staff most frequently commented on the location of the University, EDI, and the size of the University, while Faculty most commonly mentioned the location of the University, the size of the University, and research. Undergraduate and graduate students were most likely to bring up EDI and the culture and atmosphere of the University; however, undergraduates more often identified the size of the University as a strength, while graduate students more often mentioned professors and faculty members. See Figure 2 for a visual representation of these group differences.

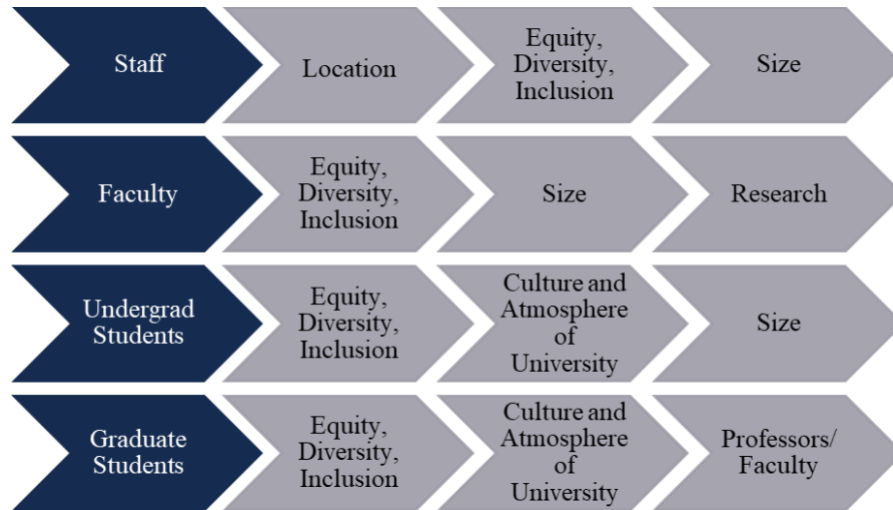


Figure 2. Differences in respondent groups (strengths).

The same question was posed at the Faculty council meetings across campus, with nine Faculties and units participating in these brief consultations. A total of 62 responses to this question were collected at these sessions. The location (e.g., being a part of a “border city,” its “proximity to the US,” and the “great city and surroundings”) and “small” size of the University were both identified as key strengths of the University. Both of these characteristics were mentioned seven times. In addition, the University’s community impact was mentioned six times as a key strength of the University with respondents specifically mentioning that the University’s “strong community collaborations and employer partners,” ability to provide “access to higher education to local students,” and that it is “grounded in - and serving - a working class community.” In addition, the University’s EDI efforts were discussed as a key strength of the University with recognition of its “commitment to EDI,” “emphasis on diversity- as a work in progress,” and “new direction towards EDI issues.”

As part of the Aspire Café Conversations, students were asked **What is UWindsor’s Best Feature?** while staff and faculty were asked **What is UWindsor’s key strength?** See Figure 3 for a visual representation of the most common topics for responses to these questions by respondent group. The most common topics brought up by faculty and staff included the location of the University, EDI, and the size of the university. Staff mentioned the location of the University 22 times specifically mentioning the campus’s “proximity to the US.” EDI was mentioned by staff 12 times with specific comments regarding the “diversity of campus” and the University’s “EDI focus.” The size of the University was brought up by staff 10 times with comments mentioning the faculty-to-student-ratio and that the size of the University “affords positive” and “affords increased opportunities”. Faculty discussed EDI, the location of campus and the size of campus 16 times each during their event. In regard to EDI, faculty members mentioned the University’s “ability to respond to change,” “willingness to change,”

and the fact that we are “working on diversity, equity, and inclusion.” When discussing the location of campus, factors such as the campus’s “proximity to the US,” “connection to the Great Lakes,” “internationalization,” and that “there is a sense of importance of place” were brought up by the faculty members. Comments about the size of the University emphasized that it is “small enough to create a sense of community and belonging,” “allows for closer interaction/relationships between students and faculty,” that “student learning is prioritized,” and that it provides greater “opportunities for students.”

Student responses differed from those of the staff and faculty when identifying the University’s best feature as student responses focused on areas related to student experience and campus life at the University. Students mentioned the infrastructure of the University 87 times across the consultation events noting the significance of spaces such as the Leddy Library, CAW, CEI, and study spaces in addition to campus “improvements.” Factors related to campus life were mentioned 34 times by students at these events with students specifically identifying the “campus community,” “club opportunities,” and “networking and CAW events” as some of the best features of the University. Students discussed campus athletics and sports opportunities 32 times, specially mentioning the “athletics training,” “fitness centre,” and “Lancer events.”

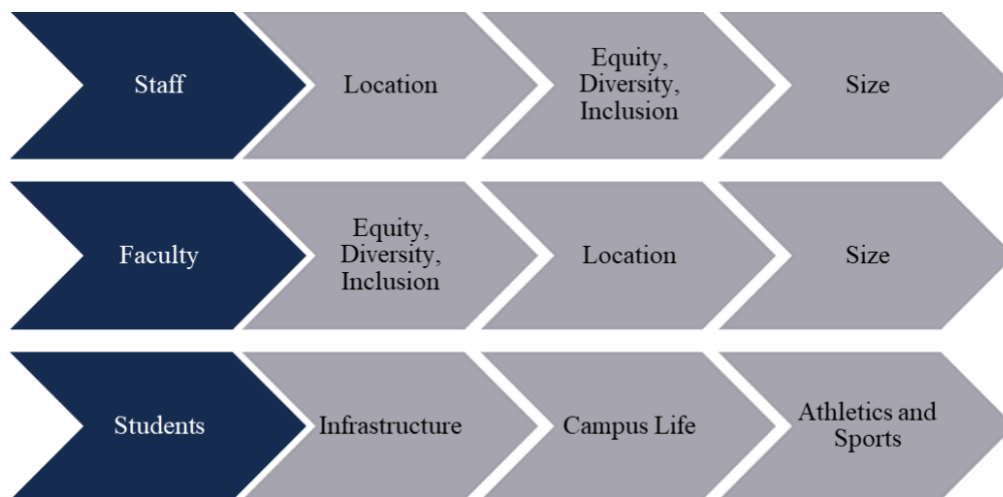


Figure 3. Most common topics discussed at Aspire Café Conversations by role.

Key Challenges at UWindsor

Respondents had the opportunity to respond to the following question in the Aspire survey, **What do you consider three (or up to three) key challenges that the University needs to focus on over the next five years?** Approximately 3,850 responses were made to this question. Similar to the question regarding the University’s strengths, only single words or short phrases were provided. These data were assessed using the same thematic tagging process as the strengths data. Figure 4 presents the fifteen most common themes identified in these responses.

The three most frequent themes regarding the University’s challenges were: 1) Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; 2) Infrastructure; and 3) Culture and Atmosphere of the University. Challenges related to EDI at the University were mentioned 284 times. Respondents noted a lack of equity, diversity, and inclusion at the University including in hiring practices and training. Specifically, racism and discrimination, anti-black racism, homophobia, and ablism were noted as specific issues at the University. Comments related to the University’s infrastructure were noted 239 times. Respondents noted that the buildings are aging and expressed concern regarding unfinished projects, disrepair, upkeep, and cleanliness of University spaces. The need to modernize University infrastructure, renovations and updates, as well as the desire for more outdoor spaces were also expressed by respondents. Specific spaces mentioned included classrooms and study spaces, the Leddy Library, Essex Hall, and Dillion Hall. There were 77 comments related to the culture and atmosphere of the University. Descriptions included comments regarding low morale, incivility, disengagement, divisiveness, and toxicity at the University. In addition, respondents noted that there is a great need for empathy and kindness and remarked on the workplace climate.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (284)	Infrastructure (239)	Reputation and Ranking (185)	Tuition and Afforability (158)	Course and Program Options (140)
Professors/Faculty Members (121)	Pandemic (120)	Student centred/Experience (107)	Budget and Finances (105)	Modes of Delivery for Courses (93)
Campus Life (85)	Services (84)	Research (81)	Teaching and Learning (78)	Culture and Atmosphere of University (77)

Figure 4. Fifteen most frequent themes regarding the University’s challenges.
Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the frequency of the theme

Responses for challenges faced by the University also differed based on the role of the respondent at the University. EDI and the University’s reputation and ranking were both included in the top three challenges mentioned by staff and faculty. However, the University’s infrastructure was included as one of the top three challenges by staff, while research was included in the top three challenges identified by faculty. Like staff and faculty, EDI was included as one of the three most frequently reported challenges identified by undergraduate and graduate students. Both student groups also indicated that course and program options were a challenge that the University needs to focus on. Undergraduates often indicated that the University’s infrastructure was a challenge, while Graduate students expressed concern

regarding tuition and affordability of attending the University of Windsor. See Figure 5 for a visual representation of the themes for the top three most frequently mentioned themes by respondent groups.

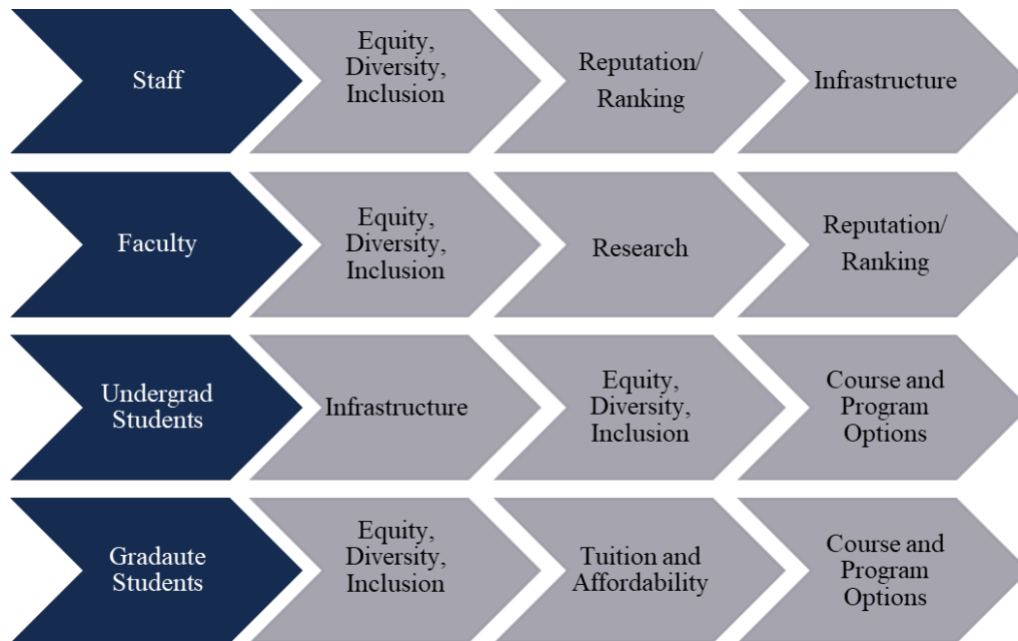


Figure 5. Differences in Respondent Groups (Challenges).

As part of the Aspire Café Conversations, students, staff, and faculty were asked: **Imagine that we successfully implemented this strategic plan. Now it's 2027. Looking back, what was the one biggest, most impactful change that occurred at the University of Windsor as a result of Aspire?** Figure 6 presents a visual representation of the three most frequently discussed topics to this question by respondent group. These topics varied considerably by the role at the University. Staff brought up aspects of the culture and atmosphere of the University 10 times specifically mentioning that they would like to see the University “build a stronger community,” have “customer service that is more positive,” experience “greater alignment across the U community,” and that it “becomes a lively, fun, curious place to learn and work at.” They mentioned EDI 8 times, indicating that they would like to see “more diverse students, faculty, and staff,” “equity representation across leadership among faculty and staff,” “nobody needing diversity training as it is second nature,” and a “review/audit of policies.” Aspects of the University’s reputation and ranking were mentioned 5 times by staff during these consultations specifically stating that they would like to see “improved reputation on the national and global stage.”

The University’s reputation and ranking was discussed by Faculty 25 times during their consultation, specifically stating that they would like to see “distinctive programs recognized across province and country,” “enhanced institutional reputation, better reputation,” and “improving reputation in tri-county.” Recruitment and retention of students was mentioned 14 times noting that faculty would like to see “local and provincial school councilors recommend us” and the “student amount increased” Faculty mentioned EDI at the University 12 times noting they would like to see more “diversity” and “inclusive policies, practices, etc.” and “making U of W a more just and equitable place, openly equitable and diverse with decolonization practices, better culture, and a safe campus for all!”

Students wanted to see impactful change to the cost of tuition and the affordability of University by 2027 as this topic was mentioned 104 times. Specially, students would like to see “less tuition fees” for domestic and international students, “more scholarships” for international and Master of Engineering students, and “reduced cost of living” for students. Aspects of campus life were discussed by students 63 times specifically mentioning the University having “more active clubs,” “more cultural clubs,” “more cultural events,” and more “social events.” University services were brought up by students 58 times, mentioning that they would like “better food options for students on campus,” “more cafés on campus,” and longer hours for services at Leddy Library and the athletics Centre.

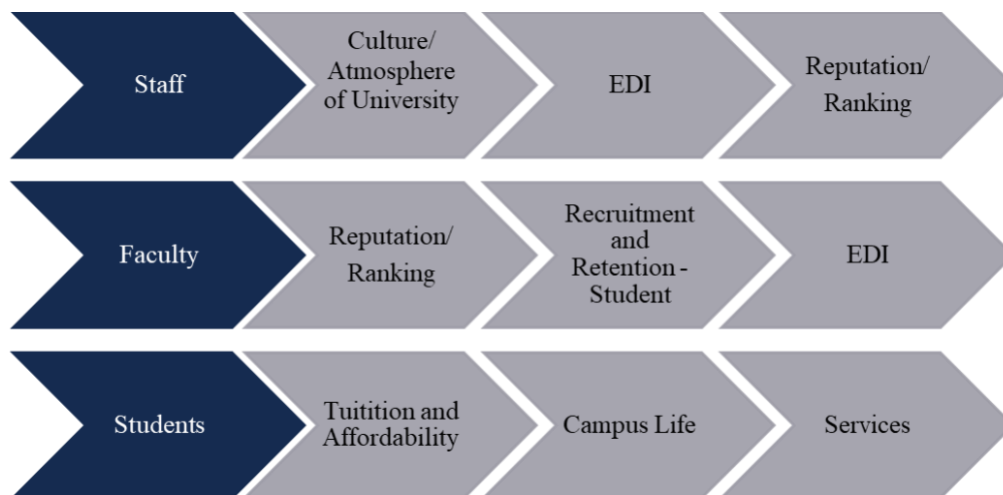


Figure 6. Most common topics discussed at Aspire Café events by role.

Overlap Between Strengths and Challenges at UWindsor

There was significant overlap in the themes identified in these responses. For example, nine of the top fifteen themes in the Aspire survey data were the same between the strengths of the University and the challenges that the University should focus on over the next 5 years. See Figure 7 for a complete list of overlapping themes between these two response sets. This reflects the polarized opinions expressed by the respondents. For example, the culture

and atmosphere of the University was described as being a “toxic environment” and as providing a “sense of tight knit community.” In addition, some respondents expressed concern over the “lack of responsiveness from faculty”, while others felt that the faculty were “highly qualified professors with 24*7 assistance.”

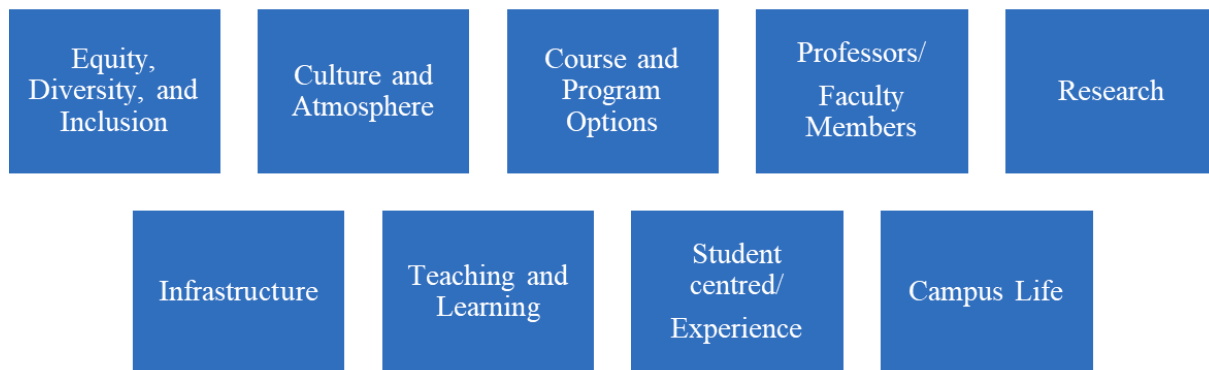


Figure 7. Overlapping themes in strengths and challenges identified from Aspire survey.

Next Steps

Elements from the strengths and challenges data were incorporated into the discussion sessions that occurred in June as well as some of the faculty council conversations. Recognizing the self-identified strengths and challenges allow us to align resources to tackle the challenges in a systematic manner while building on our existing strengths.