

# TURNING CAPACITY INTO IMPACT:

Powering Student Voice, Building  
Community, and Leading Change



**LONG RANGE PLAN**  
2025 - 2030

WATERLOO UNDERGRADUATE  
**WUSA**  
STUDENT ASSOCIATION

**“WUSA has supported me socially and professionally... brought to light many issues that we as students have faced and have fought to turn those issues into actions.”**

PARTICIPANT, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

## **CONTENTS**

---

- 02** Letter to the Community
- 03** Our Vision and Mission
- 04** Our Values
- 05** Long Range Plan Vision
- 06** Strategic Objectives
- 15** Our Advocacy Priorities
- 16** Measuring and Reporting on Our Work
- 18** Glossary / Definitions

## LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

---



At WUSA, the next five years represent a pivotal turning point in elevating student experience. The increased participation we've seen in clubs, student elections, and events signal the need to match this momentum with a bold, forward-facing plan. This moment marks more than just a new chapter – it's a chance to take an ambitious approach to becoming the best version of what a student association can be.

To guide us forward, we knew we needed more than just a static document that collects dust on a shelf. We needed a long range plan that could live and breathe, one that evolves with student needs and stands as a practical guide for both staff and student leaders over the years to come.

Together with our partners at Overlap, we built this plan in a student centred and collaborative environment. Student consultation was central to our process. We connected with members through in-depth focus groups, interviews, and feedback sessions that helped refine the plan as it took shape. We also anchored our work in ongoing research and emerging trends, ensuring this plan is grounded in the realities of a constantly changing university setting.

Over the course of this plan, it became clear that students want to see us aim higher and think bigger. That's why in addition to the six strategic objectives outlined below, we have also included WUSA's newly refined mission, vision, and values. Including these guiding statements alongside our long range plan objectives clearly outlines what we stand for and what our members can count on us to deliver.

As students, we owe it to ourselves to drive a student association that propels us forward. As Chair of Long Range Planning, I'm confident that our 2025-2030 Plan, Turning Capacity into Impact, has the ability to do just that. The time has come for WUSA to fully step into its role as a powerhouse for students, and this plan serves as a helpful roadmap to guide us through the path ahead.

Whether you're a student, staff member, campus partner, or just someone curious in seeing where we're going – I invite you to explore this plan and see where you fit into the journey. This plan is more than just a document – it's a shared vision of how we expect to transform the lives of our members. To those students, staff, collaborators at Overlap and everyone involved in the creation of this plan, I extend my deepest thanks to you. Without your hard work, we wouldn't be ready to take on these next steps.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex C.".

**Alex Chaban**  
Chair, Long Range Planning Committee

## **OUR VISION**

---

A university experience where every member has the opportunity to thrive.

## **OUR MISSION**

---

We serve, empower, and represent the undergraduate students of the University of Waterloo.

## **SUPPORTING DEFINITIONS**

---

### **Serve**

We serve students by ensuring the provision of accessible services, spaces, and supports that make campus life safer, more connected, and easier to navigate—from food and transit to events, businesses, and study spaces. We listen actively and act responsively, using practical tools to meet real student needs.

### **Empower**

We empower students by helping them grow their voice, leadership, and confidence. Through advocacy, self-representation, and support for clubs and communities, we foster a culture where students shape their own outcomes—and the future of campus life.

### **Represent**

We represent students by making their needs and perspectives visible in decisions that affect them. Through strong governance, evidence-based advocacy, and partnerships across campus and beyond, we ensure students are heard, respected, prioritized and treated fairly at every table.



## **OUR VALUES**

We strive to be:

### **Supportive & Compassionate**

Cheering you on and having your back, we know it's not always easy being a student and we're here to connect you with what you need to be successful both personally and academically.

### **Community-Focused & Inclusive**

We strengthen our community by bringing undergrads together through opportunities that celebrate our differences, embrace our similarities and create an environment where everyone can thrive.

### **Knowledgeable & Approachable**

As a straight-forward source of information, you can count on us to provide the resources you need to inform your decisions and turn them into action.

### **Accountable & Honest**

We maintain a responsible student government with sound financial practices, focused on the needs of undergrads through a member-driven decision-making process and regular updates on our progress.

### **Responsive & Adaptable**

We listen to your concerns, protect your rights, and bring your ideas forward to innovate in the face of ever-changing needs of the student body and university environment.

### **Engaging & Relatable**

We get where you're at because we've been there too. We provide opportunities outside the classroom to shape your student experience and make your time with us your own.



## OUR PLAN VISION

---

# Turning Capacity into Impact: Powering Student Voice, Building Community, and Leading Change

WUSA has built real strength—growing its team, expanding services, and advancing systems and spaces to support our members with greater depth and reach. With this capacity in place, the next chapter is about elevating its impact: translating operational strength into student-driven influence and outcomes.

As the post-secondary sector undergoes disruption, and students face increasing complexity, WUSA must become a platform where members shape their own future. This means stepping forward as an advocate, a community builder, and a trusted voice on what students need to thrive. It means creating space for student leadership, amplifying diverse perspectives, and ensuring students are at the table—defining the decisions that shape their lives.

This marks a shift: from delivery to direction, from reaction to leadership, and from working behind the scenes to centering student voices in what comes next.

## **OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

---

Objective 1.0

**Better Understand What Students Need—and Be Known For It**

Objective 2.0

**Strengthen Student Trust, Voice, and Impact in WUSA**

Objective 3.0

**Revitalize Social Life and Belonging at Waterloo**

Objective 4.0

**Strengthen Operational Monitoring and Student-Focused Partnerships**

Objective 5.0

**Be a Place People Are Proud To Work**

Objective 6.0

**Advocate for the Collective Interests of Students**

## **OBJECTIVE 1.0**

---

# **Better Understand What Students Need—and Be Known For It**

This objective is about more than gathering data—it's about becoming the go-to source for understanding student life at Waterloo. WUSA will deepen its insight into the evolving needs of our members, while also formalizing its role as the expert on student experience. Through strengthened feedback systems, internal knowledge-sharing, and a renegotiated operating agreement with the university, WUSA will not only serve students better—it will be recognized for doing so. This work positions WUSA to lead with credibility, inform institutional decisions, and build stronger accountability between the university and its students.

## **Key Results**

### **1.1—Clarify and Define the Relationship Between WUSA and UW**

Working to have UW define and formally acknowledge the relationship between WUSA and students and student groups.

### **1.2—Go-To Insight Source**

Staff, student leaders, and campus partners consistently rely on WUSA's insights to shape services, advocacy, and decision-making.

### **1.3—Feedback in Action**

Feedback from members directly informs updates to systems, supports, and service offerings across the organization. between WUSA and students and student groups.



## **OBJECTIVE 2.0**

---

# **Strengthen Student Trust, Voice, and Impact in WUSA**

Trust and transparency are preconditions for collective impact. This objective focuses on building deeper relationships between WUSA and students—rooted in openness, representation, and shared purpose. WUSA aims to be an organization that students trust to reflect their needs, include their voices, and act in their interest. This includes intentional steps to advance Indigenization on campus by ensuring Indigenous students are represented, included, and heard across WUSA's systems, structures, and services. A thriving culture of dialogue, participation, and critical engagement will anchor this work.

## **Key Results**

### **2.1—Breaking Down Barriers in the Boardroom**

Student leaders and groups feel meaningfully engaged in shaping WUSA's direction, with shared ownership and support across the organization.

### **2.2—Clear & Credible**

Students can see how decisions are made, how their input is used, and how WUSA holds itself accountable to the people it serves.

### **2.3—Space for Student Voice**

Open dialogue and critical discourse—through journalism, advocacy, and outreach—are actively supported and reflected in WUSA's work.



**“WUSA has added an extra somethin’  
somethin’ to my experience... even  
just walking past events makes me  
happy to know people are enjoying  
their experiences.”**

**PARTICIPANT, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

## **OBJECTIVE 3.0**

---

# **Revitalize Social Life and Belonging at Waterloo**

This objective is about creating a more connected, joyful, and inclusive student experience—one where people have reasons to show up, stay engaged, and build lasting memories. It includes redesigning spaces and events to prioritize community, investing in student-led groups and initiatives, and making it easier for everyone to find their place. Social life at Waterloo should feel vibrant, safe, and welcoming, with WUSA as a key builder of culture and belonging across all campuses.

## **Key Results**

### **3.1—Social Infrastructure That Works**

Spaces and systems are intentionally designed to support connection, community, and student-led expression—as spelled out in the SLC Plan.

### **3.2—Events That Thrive Slap**

A renewed slate of events that welcome member participation and have a reported impact that students feel welcomed, connected, and excited to engage.

### **3.3—Student Groups That Thrive**

Student groups represent the premier gateway for students explore passions and interest for students and are supported with robust systems and resources.

### **3.4—Shared Roadmap for Campus Life**

Create a clear, community-informed roadmap to guide how WUSA supports social life, club development, and engagement over time.

## **OBJECTIVE 4.0**

---

# **Strengthen Operational Monitoring and Student-Focused Partnerships**

This objective is about ensuring WUSA's operations deliver real value to members—not just as customers, but as co-creators and partners. It includes monitoring performance across student-serving enterprises, listening to student feedback, and refining services to meet evolving needs. At the same time, it opens the door for new models—like student-run co-ops and innovative partnerships—that prioritize community wellbeing, access, and experience. This is about running businesses with students, not just for them.

## **Key Results**

### **4.1—Be a Market Leader in Product**

Students experience WUSA-run commercial service as responsive, high-quality, and aligned with what they care about most.

### **4.2—Expanded Network of Partnerships**

We've increased the number of partnerships that directly benefit members, and can point to new or deepened collaborations that enhance services, affordability, or access across campus life.

### **4.3—Unlocking Student Economies of Scale**

WUSA is exploring creative, student-centered business models—like co-ops and collective partnerships—that leverage students' buying power to increase access, affordability, and community benefit.





**“Involvement in WUSA boosts  
my confidence a lot and trains  
my leadership skills.”**

**PARTICIPANT, STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**



## **OBJECTIVE 5.0**

---

# **Be a Place People Are Proud To Work**

This objective is about creating a healthy, supportive, and growth-oriented work environment at WUSA—one where staff at all levels feel valued, respected, and invested in. It includes building clear pathways for development, managing workloads with care, and supporting part-time staff in envisioning long-term careers within the organization. When WUSA is a place people are proud to work, it strengthens not only the team, but the culture that supports students every day.

## **Key Results**

### **5.1—Sustainable Work Culture**

Staff experience their workloads as fair and manageable, and feel they have the time and support to do their jobs well.

### **5.2—Clear Growth Pathways**

Team members can see defined opportunities to grow within WUSA—including pathways from part-time to full-time roles—and feel encouraged to pursue them.

### **5.3—Planned for the Future**

Succession plans are in place across key roles, with staff supported to build leadership capacity and continuity over time and lessen impact of turnover.

## **OBJECTIVE 6.0**

---

# **Advocate for the Collective Interests of Students**

This objective is about elevating WUSA's advocacy from responsive to strategic—shaping policies, systems, and narratives that impact the student experience. It recognizes that advocacy is both what WUSA does and how it leads: making student needs visible, influencing decisions across sectors, and leveraging its collective voice to push for change. It also includes strengthening internal capacity—developing the skills, systems, and credibility needed to lead advocacy efforts confidently and sustainably.

## **Key Results**

### **6.1—Strategic Advocacy Priorities Identified and Socialized**

WUSA has clearly articulated 4–6 advocacy priorities at the strategic level (e.g. affordability, educational quality, housing, future of education) and integrated them into long-range planning and external communications.

### **6.2—Capacity Strengthened To Do Timely and Student-Led Advocacy**

Staff and student leaders feel more confident and equipped to lead advocacy efforts, supported by onboarding, documentation, and a shared approach to advocacy planning.

### **6.3—Collective Advocacy Influence Demonstrated**

WUSA is collaborating with other student associations, community partners, or public bodies on at least three major advocacy themes—showing visible traction on issues like funding, accessibility, or student experience reform.

## OUR ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

---

Based on input from members we have identified four Broad Categories for our Advocacy Efforts moving forward:

1. **Affordability and Cost of Living, including;**
  - **Housing**
  - **Food Insecurity**
2. **Co-Op and Employment**
3. **Mental Health and Wellness**
4. **Academics/Quality of Education including;**
  - **Academic Fairness**

WUSA remains committed to gathering timely and nuanced input from members to guide our ongoing efforts in these categories. Part of the work of the Advocacy Department is to build annual advocacy plans based on this ongoing input.

While here we highlight only four advocacy themes, this is by no means an exhaustive list. These are among the most frequent we hear, which for us makes them some of the most meaningful to address.

# MEASURING AND REPORTING ON OUR WORK

---

## Measurement Tool #1

Progress updates on OKRs and Annual Action Plans

## Measurement Tool #2

Strategic Metrics

Strategic Metrics are another way we measure and report the impact of our work. These will be built out and specified during our annual planning process. There are three types:

### Effort

- What We Do (e.g. number of workshops, policies created). Otherwise known as Quantity.
- How Well We Do (e.g. client satisfaction, NPS scores, etc) Otherwise known as Quality.

---

### Effect

- What changes because of our work (like better service or more engagement).

---

### Finances

- The money impact (like saving money or bringing in more revenue).

## DRAFT EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIC METRICS

---

### Effort Metrics

- Yearly WUSA Impact Reports
- Securing a particular advocacy outcome
- Total events and club activities coordinated, co-hosted, or funded by WUSA
- Online engagement metrics
- Expanded options, locations and hours of service of commercial operations

### Effect Metrics

- Amount of references WUSA research / content (RSP research data)
- 4.5+ feedback rating score of commercial services
- 50% Increase in TOTAL Commercial Transaction Count by 2030

### Finance Metrics

- Cost savings or added value generated through student-driven purchasing strategies (e.g. collective buying or co-op models)
- \$5M annual Commercial Revenue Target 2030
- 10% Net Income by Commercial Units Target 2030





## **GLOSSARY / DEFINITIONS**

---

### **Organizational Vision Statement**

An aspirational change you want to make in the world or future state you want to create, it should feel slightly out of reach to stretch the us to achieve it.

### **Mission Statement**

What you do, who you do it for and a bit about how you do it. This is what you do in service of your vision / goals.

### **Organizational Values**

Behaviours, principles, ways you show up for each other and your interestholders.

### **Plan Vision**

The journey or story that we envision for the organization over the lifespan of the long range plan.

## **OBJECTIVES & KEY RESULTS (OKR'S)**

---

### **Objectives**

Qualitative aspirational goals, destinations we aim to travel too, intended to inspire and provide direction.

### **Key Results**

Qualitative, measurable outcomes that indicate progress toward our objectives, signposts/milestones along our route.

**Want to learn more?**

Visit [wusa.ca](https://wusa.ca)

@yourwusa



WATERLOO UNDERGRADUATE

**WUSA**

STUDENT ASSOCIATION

