



In April 2011, a response to the question “What will the UW of the 21st Century look like?” was drawn from Two Years to Two Decades (2y2d) Initiative focus group responses. This vision of the future helped the 2y2d Sustainable Academic Business Plan steering committee identify drivers of change, set related goals and launch priority initiatives.

The UW of the 21st Century

...is more competitive

It will be a more competitive environment with competition from other universities for the best students and faculty. Competitors will include traditional institutions of higher education; those that more quickly update infrastructure to offer online, distance and hybrid options; for-profit institutions; and international institutions that are increasingly viable options to our traditional student base. Individuals and organizations will think more globally about their choices, will be more knowledgeable about alternatives, and will increasingly see themselves as customers with options.

...is more collaborative

There will be greater collaboration within the university across units and disciplines; with other universities, as institutions become more niche but partner to offer breadth; and with the public and private sector locally, nationally and internationally. Interdisciplinary activities and partnership development and engagement will grow in importance. The nature of disciplines may change as study shifts towards both virtual and face-to-face learning and research communities. Learning will include more project-based, experiential activities and research will focus on solving specific societal problems.

...is more technology-reliant

Students will expect technological infrastructure and related university interfaces to provide ubiquitous, fast and fully integrated access 24/7 and on demand to the devices of their choice and with convenient, personalized content delivery. Faculty will increasingly be made up of digital natives as well with expectations of more and better collaborative tools, networks to support research, and more sophisticated teaching technologies. Physical location and schedules will provide fewer constraints as teaching, research and supporting administrative activities can be accessed at all hours from remote locations and will make use of cloud computing, social networking and emerging technologies.

...is more nimble, leading our way through change

More nimble structures and coordinated efforts will be required to maintain high quality teaching, research and service as the people, infrastructure, and communities change within and around the UW. Anticipating and planning will be key to responding to changing societal trends, demographics, diversity, globalization, technologies, etc. to meet the needs, interests, and expectations of internal and external communities. In addition to our traditional student profile, students of the future will also include more students who are over the age of 25, from diverse backgrounds, non-native speakers of English, part-time students, less textbook-reliant, and attending classes taught off-campus or online. Administrative functions shift focus away from bureaucracy towards service.

...is supported by a more diversified funding base

The funding base of higher education will rely more heavily on student-based, research and entrepreneurial revenue streams. Students will expect more value and service for their higher contribution and will be more likely to value convenience in everything from the application process to student services to learning. Faculty will notice a shift in culture towards more entrepreneurial incentives and earning their salary through a balanced mix of instruction, research and service, where a drop in one means an increase in another. Administrative units will be under increased pressure to become more efficient and effective and will explore alternative ways of organizing activities, units and work. Donors and the state will emphasize impact and accountability.