Realizing Our Ambition: Defining a New Era at Dalhousie Medicine

2023-2028
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The Faculty of Medicine is embarking on a new era, one defined by ambition, boundless possibilities, and our commitment to impact. For the last several years, we have worked tirelessly toward fulfilling our vision of becoming an international leader, responsive to health needs across the Maritimes. Now, poised for even greater accomplishment, we will build upon our strong foundations, and forge ahead, guided by our new strategic plan – Realizing Our Ambition.

The plan signals the Faculty of Medicine’s long-term aspirations while providing a clear, actionable strategy to guide us through the next five years. It builds on our achievements, while guiding us in new, and exciting directions.

Realizing Our Ambition was developed to guide and engage our students, staff, and faculty and chart our course to where we hope to be over the next five years. Realizing Our Ambition, shows respect and appreciation for where we have been, with an understanding of the new standard of excellence and accountability to which we will be held. With our collective efforts, foundational and enduring change is possible and attainable.

The people, and programs, that make Dalhousie Medical School a desirable place to work and learn, and an internationally recognized leader in research, education, and collaboration, are guided by infinite ambition. In the Faculty of Medicine, we aren’t content with the status quo. We are innovators and changemakers, and as we look forward, we strive for a new era in Dalhousie Medicine, one that sees healthier Maritime and global communities, and equitable healthcare for all.

Our new strategic plan could not have been developed without the significant contributions from the Faculty of Medicine community. As we begin the implementation of the plan’s action items, which fall under four core streams: Educational Excellence, High-impact Research, Serving and Engaging Society, and Valuing People, your input and collaboration will be critical to our success.

With the incredible work of our faculty, staff, and students, in collaboration with each other and our partners, we will achieve our vision of healthier communities.

I am proud of all we have accomplished so far, and excited to see where we’ll go next.

Kindest regards,

Dr. David Anderson
Dean, Faculty of Medicine
Overseeing Development

Throughout the development process, staff, students, faculty, and external stakeholders were giving of their time and thoughts, playing a crucial role in the plan’s development. Overseeing the entire process was a team who deserves special recognition. The Strategic Planning Oversight Committee guided us on our journey, sharing insights and perspectives, and dedicating hours in their already busy schedules. Our sincere thanks to each of them for their contributions.

Dr. David Anderson, Dean, Faculty of Medicine

Dr. Darrell White, Senior Associate Dean, Faculty of Medicine

Ms. Linda Penny, Chief Operating Officer, Faculty of Medicine

Dr. Jennifer Hall, Associate Dean, Dalhousie Medicine New Brunswick

Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed, Associate Dean, Serving and Engaging Society

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Dr. Christopher Sinal, Department Head, Department of Pharmacology

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Mr. Jason Bremner, Director, Communications, Faculty of Medicine

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Ms. Jillian Slevin, Interim Operations and Policy Manager, Faculty of Medicine

And going above and beyond, a special thanks to our stream leads.

Ms. Linda Penny, Valuing People

Dr. Jennifer Hall, Excellence in Education

Dr. Gaynor Watson-Creed, Serving and Engaging Society

Dr. Eileen Denovan-Wright, High-impact Research
Realizing Our Ambition was developed through the most in-depth consultation process for any Faculty of Medicine strategic plan to date. It is the product of our shared vision for the Faculty, articulated through broad engagement of the Medical School community, and grounded in input from our faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders.

In October 2021, Assistant and Associate Deans, Department Heads, and administrative leaders across the Faculty of Medicine gathered for our first planning session for the development of our new strategic plan. Over the next 14 months, we consulted broadly to gain insight into your unique perspectives and understand how we can better support you leading into the development and implementation of Realizing Our Ambition.

With Realizing Our Ambition, our consultative approach reached beyond the Faculty of Medicine. Input was gathered through a mix of internal and external consultation sessions, surveys, interviews, and four focus groups, one for each of the four major streams of work. By including key external stakeholders, we were able to gain insight into their expectations of what drives systems change and explore potential priorities and partnerships for the next five years.

We learned a great deal from this considerable engagement, and input derived from this process contributed to the addition of significant key features, concepts and convictions to our refreshed mission, vision, and values, and strategies for achieving our goals in research, education, serving and engaging society, and valuing people. Faculty of Medicine leadership, and invited external stakeholders, convened at the Annual Dean’s Retreat in mid-November 2022 for final consultations before finalizing the plan.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in the development of Realizing Our Ambition. Your thoughtful feedback and insight throughout the process has allowed us to develop a plan that is truly reflective of the Faculty of Medicine community and will guide our activity over the next five years. With your help, we look forward to continuing the tradition of training scientists and medical professionals with a commitment to lifelong learning, excellence in patient care, high ethical standards, and accountability to communities we serve, while respecting the new standard of excellence and accountability to which we will be held.
Our **Mission, Vision, & Values**

**MISSION**
To drive excellence in health and health care through world-class medical education and research, and our commitment to social accountability.

**VISION**
Healthier communities.

**WHAT WE VALUE**
- **RESPECT**—Work and learning environments grounded in high regard for the aspirations, rights, and traditions of all. Collegial, professional relationships that build feelings of trust, safety, and wellbeing.
- **INCLUSION**—A diverse mix of outstanding students, scholars, researchers, and staff who share an enriched sense of belonging and commitment to action. The power of diversity demonstrated through inclusive engagement with our communities.
- **COLLABORATION**—Genuine appreciation for what is important to one another, our partners and those whom we serve. Strong, productive relationships.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY**—Providing people with the tools, time, and other resources they need to do their work. Setting the bar for integrity in transparent communication. Setting new standards for high-quality and equitable approaches to medical education, research, and clinical practice.
- **EXCELLENCE**—Striving for enduring improvement in individual, community, population, and planetary health. An ongoing commitment to sustainable quality improvement.
Our **Strategic Streams** and **Priorities**

**EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION**

Dalhousie Medical School is pivotal for quality health care in the Maritimes. Whether in the classroom, in the lab, at the bedside at a distributed learning site, or participating in continuing professional development, the Faculty of Medicine works to improve patient care and advance medical research, while reflecting the values and character of the Maritime people we serve. From providing administrative and operational support, maintaining facilities, or directly teaching or learning in an academic or clinical setting – all members of the Faculty of Medicine play a critical role in producing the next generation of physicians and scientists.

**Focus Area 1: Building on Excellence in Education**

*We will achieve this by:*

1. **Graduate and Postdoctoral Training:** Continuing to provide high quality research training opportunities for the leading scientists of tomorrow.
   - 1.1 Showcase and celebrate graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.
   - 1.2 Enhance orientation for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.
   - 1.3 Give appropriate attention to wellness, including mental health issues.
   - 1.4 Devise strategies to support financial stability of graduate students.
   - 1.5 Strengthen administrative resources including space.
   - 1.6 Structure and review graduate student curriculum to provide high quality core offerings across departments and programs.
   - 1.7 Ensure curriculum provides training to prepare graduate students for employment opportunities beyond academia.
   - 1.8 Enhance graduate student engagement and opportunities in innovation.
   - 1.9 Facilitate collaborative opportunities for graduate students between the Faculty of Medicine and the health authorities.
   - 1.10 Facilitate enrollment of equity-deserving groups, including Black and Indigenous students, in graduate programs through BMedSci and other undergraduate program initiatives.
   - 1.11 Engage the assistance of graduate students to encourage local youth to pursue a career in discovery science at Dalhousie.
   - 1.12 Development of a professional development program to promote teaching excellence among PhD faculty.
   - 1.13 Recognize excellence in graduate student education teaching and programs.

2. **Education Scholarship:** Advancing higher learning by producing scholarly material that reflects the innovation in education at the Faculty of Medicine.
   - 2.1 Attract and retain faculty who are skilled educators.
   - 2.2 Develop a community of scholars to facilitate and enhance education.
   - 2.3 Facilitate the presentation of faculty innovations in education.
   - 2.4 Encourage scholarly projects related to innovations in curriculum, curriculum delivery and assessment, especially in the distributed environment.
2.5 Continue to lead and participate in international and national education research and other scholarly activities, particularly in targeted focus areas.

3. **Optimizing Training Capacity in Distributed Environments**: Providing research and medical education opportunities across the Maritimes.

   3.1 Work with regional health authorities and other stakeholders to facilitate clinical training for undergraduate and postgraduate learners in communities large and small.

   3.2 Ensure distributed learning environment expansion is carried out in a planned coordinated manner.

   3.3 Integrate medical education as a core activity of physicians practicing in the Maritimes.

   3.4 Ensure adequate faculty recruitment and development.

   3.5 Ensure appropriate, affordable housing for students and residents in communities.

   3.6 Ensure appropriate learning environments for students and residents are free from intimidation and harassment.

   3.7 Ensure appropriate teaching space for learners in community hospitals and offices.

   3.8 Create a space for distributed faculty and staff to contribute, collaborate and lead Faculty of Medicine initiatives.

   3.9 Expand Longitudinal Integrated Clerkships and distributed residencies.

   3.10 Promote and encourage distributed undergraduate and postgraduate electives.

   3.11 Involve distributed faculty in curriculum leadership roles.

   3.12 Utilize IT resources to enhance curriculum delivery.

   3.13 Support and facilitate the connection of Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine graduate students and postdoctoral fellows irrespective of the campus on which they work.

**Focus Area 2**: Medical Education Responsive to the Health Needs of the Maritimes

*We will achieve this by:*

1. **Focusing on Family Medicine Training**: Providing excellent family medicine training opportunities across the Maritimes.

   1.1 Enhance exposure to family medicine experiences and family medicine faculty during the undergraduate MD program.

   1.2 Increase family medicine contribution to undergraduate curriculum.

   1.3 Effectively address the hidden curriculum regarding family medicine.

   1.4 Update Family Medicine Program Charter to reflect changing family medicine education challenges and directions.

   1.5 Prepare for three-year Family Medicine residency program.

   1.6 Develop family medicine training incubators across the Maritimes to enhance resident readiness for Maritime practice.

2. **Focusing on Community Engagement**: Growing relationships with Maritime communities such that they see Dalhousie as their medical school.

   2.1 Seek significant input from community-based faculty in Faculty of Medicine curriculum delivery and leadership.
2.2 Engage with community-based faculty so they see their context in the undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum.

2.3 Engage with community-based faculty so they see Faculty of Medicine scholarship and leadership as career goals, irrespective of geography.

2.4 Partner with communities to embrace medical education as a mechanism to enhance recruitment and retention.

2.5 Work with communities to address issues of housing, and community integration for learners.

2.6 Partner with other faculties, universities, and health authorities to enhance training supports.

2.7 Proactively recruit Black and Indigenous students using strategies such as PLANS and the Indigenous student pathway.

2.8 Enhance Faculty of Medicine outreach to underrepresented communities.

2.9 Engage the assistance of medical students and residents working in Maritime communities to encourage local youth to pursue a career in medicine.

2.10 Enhance collaboration with Indigenous and Black communities.

2.11 Enhance collaboration with urban and rural communities.

2.12 Explore partnership opportunities for community engagement with other faculties/health authorities.

3. **Focusing on Residency Training Positions:**
   Working with stakeholders to allocate resources to deliver the training programs to support the health needs of Maritimers.

3.1 Create a strategy for development of residency training program allocation to meet human resource needs.

3.2 Work with departments of health to facilitate the allocation of residency positions.

3.3 Ensure residency programs consider students with strong links to the Maritimes in determining selection criteria.

3.4 Facilitate access to residency training positions for Black, Indigenous, and other equity deserving groups.

3.5 Ensure residents in our postgraduate programs reflect the communities in which they work.

**Focus Area 3: Health Systems Transformation**

*We will achieve this by:*

1. **Education in Health System Change:** Developing capabilities across the education continuum to leverage medical education and accelerate health system transformation.

   1.1 Adapt curriculum in UGME and PGME to be responsive to emerging health care needs.

   1.2 Engage and support undergraduate and postgraduate learners to identify health system gaps and bring system solutions to health system leadership using change management principles.

   1.3 Develop new residency programs such as Public Health that address health care needs.

   1.4 Ensure learners across the continuum have core curriculum in CQI and patient safety.

   1.5 Create Continuing Professional Development activities that support CQI and patient safety curricula into practice.

   1.6 Collaborate with health faculties and health authorities in curricular opportunities related to system change.

   1.7 Grow opportunities for interprofessional education.

   1.8 Contribute to health systems research to inform stakeholders of context-relevant transformation opportunities.

   1.9 Train learners to carry out health systems research in support of systems change.

   1.10 Create and evaluate innovative interprofessional practice and teaching models.
Focus Area 4: Health and Wellness
We will achieve this by:

1. **Focusing on the Learning Environment**: Creating a learning/working environment that fosters learner, faculty and staff health, engagement, and respect.
   
   1.1 Creation of the Office of Professionalism
   
   1.2 Implement the recommendations of the Learning Environment Task Force.
   
   1.3 Work with health authorities and other partners to achieve a healthy learning environment.
   
   1.4 Develop ongoing mechanisms to sustain and grow diversity and inclusion across the continuum.
   
   1.5 Ensure that the hidden curriculum of racism and oppression is labeled and addressed in all settings.
   
   1.6 Integrate anti-oppression and anti-racism training into the CPD activities of all faculty.
   
   1.7 Develop collaborative opportunities with other faculties and health authorities to advance EDIA.
   
   1.8 Operationalize the elements of the Okanagan Charter and endorsed by AFMC and Dalhousie University.

HIGH-IMPACT RESEARCH

With over $450 million in research funding secured over the past five years, and 31 current endowed or Canada Research Chairs, the Faculty of Medicine is performing internationally leading health research. Dalhousie medical researchers are committed to solving serious health challenges impacting people in the Maritime Provinces and beyond, which would not be possible without the collaborative and collective efforts of research teams and support staff, strong infrastructure, and the operational supports provided by the Faculty of Medicine community.

Focus Area 1: Partner to establish focus and momentum that is responsive to emerging areas of research and community need.
We will achieve this by:

1. **Optimizing resources and aligning research priorities**: Eliminating barriers that reduce the time that researchers spend in creative work and ensure that strong interdisciplinary teams address the research priorities of the institution, health authorities, and government.

   1.1 Engage academic, healthcare and industry partners within and outside the university to reduce barriers to research and increase utilization of programs for the research community.
   
   1.2 Work with other faculties and healthcare partners to complement available resources to achieve excellence in discovery, preclinical translation, clinical research, knowledge dissemination and evaluation of impact, and to catalyze new research collaborations.
1.3 Work with Serving and Engaging Society to ensure that communities are involved in prioritization of research and that equity is embedded in all aspects of research and knowledge translation.

1.4 Work with Centres, Institutes, and research groups to develop tools and approaches for wider engagement of talent across the faculty and improve knowledge implementation.

1.5 Partner with other faculties and health authorities for research in health system science.

**Focus Area 2: Identify and Mobilize Research Potential**

We will achieve this by:

1. **Meaningful engagement:** Collectively realize the full potential of people across disciplines and career stages involved in, and supporting, research.
   
   1.1 Facilitate the development of strong, collaborative teams based on areas of research strength.
   
   1.2 Identify emerging areas of research strength in collaboration with internal and external partners and stakeholders.
   
   1.3 Support established research teams and Institutes to sustain research growth, productivity, and impact in collaboration with Office of Research Services, Dal Advancement and Office of Commercialization and Industry Engagement

1.4 Support researchers and research teams in the integration of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility priorities and perspectives across all research activities.

1.5 Enhance undergraduate and graduate student supports and engagement in research in collaboration with departments and other stakeholders.

1.6 Increase recruitment, retention, and engagement of postdoctoral and early career PhD clinician scientists within the research enterprise.

**Focus Area 3: Strengthen Research Translation and Impact**

We will achieve this by:

1. **Increased capacity:** Supporting knowledge translation plan development and communication of research results and successes.
   
   1.1 Support activities that use research findings and best evidence to develop and enhance treatments and practices in medicine.
   
   1.2 Build and strengthen partnerships with basic and clinical departments in Faculty of Medicine, across faculties in Dalhousie, with the Office of Vice President Research and Innovation, with health authorities, and with communities to promote meaningful knowledge exchange.

   1.3 Facilitate the development of thoughtful and inclusive knowledge translation plans for priority research teams and initiatives.

**Focus Area 4: Strengthen Infrastructure and Financial Supports**

We will achieve this by:

1. **Infrastructure and community:** Seeking active participation in processes to determine needs and to work on applications to acquire infrastructure, skilled support staff, and financial supports.
   
   1.1 Establish user groups and overall governance of Centralized Operations of Research Equipment and Supports (CORES) facilities to make strategic investments that support world-class research.
   
   1.2 Improve grant facilitation and peer-review.
   
   1.3 Catalyze researchers and research teams to proactively seek new funding opportunities.

   1.4 Coordinate infrastructure availability and priority gaps/needs across the Faculty of Medicine and other faculties.

   1.5 Support research teams to plan and mobilize for major funding opportunities.

   1.6 Work with Advancement and Communications to build strong cases for research support based on research excellence and impact.
Focus Area 1: Transformed Internal Systems  
We will achieve this by:

1. Recruitment and Training: Developing internal systems that reflect our core values of diversity and inclusion, and serve to model our commitment to the public, our stakeholders, and our partners.
   1.1 Create a renewed and formal EDIA and Anti-Oppression policy in collaboration with the Office of Professionalism.
   1.2 Facilitate EDIA systems work across Faculty of Medicine departments.
   1.3 Facilitate dedicated pathways for recruitment and hiring of staff and faculty.
   1.4 Create and deliver mandatory content in EDIA and in reflexive anti-oppressive practice.

SERVING AND ENGAGING SOCIETY

The Faculty of Medicine can improve health in the Maritimes in ways that exceed its traditional roles of educating physicians and conducting leading-edge research. Our intentions are to examine and redefine the medical school’s interactions with historically marginalized communities, and to work with our government partners and external stakeholders to meaningfully catalyze system change.

Focus Area 2: Transformed Graduates  
We will achieve this by:

1. Developing Motivated and Competent Graduates: Training confident and competent graduates in the skills related to systems thinking and anti-oppression.
   1.1 Implement inclusive recruitment and admissions policies.
   1.2 Redesign curricula to expose normative assumptions by removing oppressive biases.
   1.3 Embed anti-oppression training across medical education and graduate studies.
   1.4 Embed health systems science and other complexity and systems learning across medical education.
   1.5 Partner with other faculties and institutions to enable greater interprofessional and health system science collaborations.

Focus Area 3: Transformed Faculty and Staff  
We will achieve this by:

1. Empowering Faculty and Staff: Developing faculty and staff to be world-leading in skills related to systems thinking, systems transformation, and anti-oppression.
   1.1 Embed training on systems change, and anti-oppression across departments through faculty and staff development.
1.2 Facilitate regular dialogue on key systems issues.
1.3 Connect our work broadly to the emerging (US) conversation on Health Systems Science.

VALUING PEOPLE
Regardless of role or location, we believe that people and culture can set us apart; starting with a “people first” approach, anything is possible. The strides we have made over the past five years would not have been possible without the extraordinary actions and varied expertise of the people who comprise our Faculty.

Focus Area 1: Create Positive Work Environments
We will achieve this by:
1. Constructive Working Relationships and Inclusive Physical Environments: Supporting a culture that empowers individual and team purpose, creates a sense of belonging, ignites energy, and elevates faculty-wide performance.
   1.1 Establish and model a safe environment for people to share feedback and suggest changes to simplify processes, create more consistency and more efficient bureaucracy, administration, and meetings.
   1.2 Work with Dalhousie University to streamline administrative processes.
   1.3 Improve reporting and access to data.
   1.4 Develop open, transparent, and equitable processes around the support of faculty, staff, and students.

Focus Area 4: Transformed Community Partnerships
We will achieve this by:
1. Increasing Community Voices: Gaining a high degree of trust with our partners in our processes and in the outcomes of collaborations with the Faculty of Medicine.
   1.1 Develop specific engagement practices and expertise, with a focus on relationship building as a cornerstone of collaboration.
   1.2 Engage with communities to strengthen the Maritime engagement in Faculty activities.
   1.3 Seek community voices in medical education, curriculum changes, and faculty and staff training.
   1.4 Develop international health and planetary health strategies or policies.

Focus Area 5: Trusted Health System Intervener
We will achieve this by:
1. Engagement and Commitment: Contributing broadly to health system dialogue in a meaningful way that our Maritime health systems partners will seek us out for our skills related to systems thinking and systems transformation.
   1.1 Develop education strategy around health system intervention.
1.4 Develop a process for succession planning.

1.5 Develop processes for ongoing renewal of tenure and promotion criteria reflecting Faculty of Medicine priorities.

**Focus Area 3: Foster Wellbeing**

*We will achieve this by:*

1. **Enhancing Wellness Programs and Support**
   
   **Work-Life Balance:** Striving for optimal flexibility with respect to where, when, and how faculty, learners, and staff do their work.
   
   1.1 Support flexible working arrangements.
   
   1.2 Enhance wellness support programming.
   
   1.3 Celebrate successes.
   
   1.4 Commit to culture of respect.
   
   1.5 Address hidden culture of overwork.

**Focus Area 4: Maintain an Affirming Organizational Culture**

*We will achieve this by:*

1. **Recognition and Reinforcement:** Prioritizing actions that reflect our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.
   
   1.1 Address EDIA/anti-oppression concerns including appropriate representation to address diversity in meetings.
   
   1.2 Ensure the diversity of our students, faculty and staff reflects the population we serve.
   
   1.3 Address accessibility issues.
   
   1.4 Provide attractive, functional, inclusive workspaces.
Cross-cutting Themes

*Realizing Our Ambition* will integrate cross-cutting themes and catalyze interactions across streams of work, departments, and with partners, that will resonate with everything the Faculty of Medicine does. These themes will be continually evaluated and assessed to ensure our work is reflective of our Mission, Vision, and Values.

- Equity, diversity, inclusion & accessibility (EDIA) will be the cornerstone by which decisions are made. The Faculty of Medicine will take a leadership role to address inequities and integrate accountability across the spectrum.

- With a focus on the unique role the Faculty of Medicine holds in the Maritimes, it is important that we work to understand what students, staff, faculty and our partners require from us, and in doing so, harness the power we possess to influence system change and improve quality of health.
Next Steps

This plan is reflective of our collective ambition to bring the Faculty of Medicine into a new era, and to do so, it will require the continued effort and dedication that our students, staff, and faculty have always demonstrated.

Now is the time to put months of consultation and hard work into action. As we move forward, it is our commitment to provide annual status updates on the four streams of work and the focus areas that comprise them. This transparent approach will ensure that we remain accountable to each other and allow us to alter our course if needed.

This is an exciting time in the history of the Faculty of Medicine, and with the strategic plan guiding our direction for the next five years, the true work now begins.