

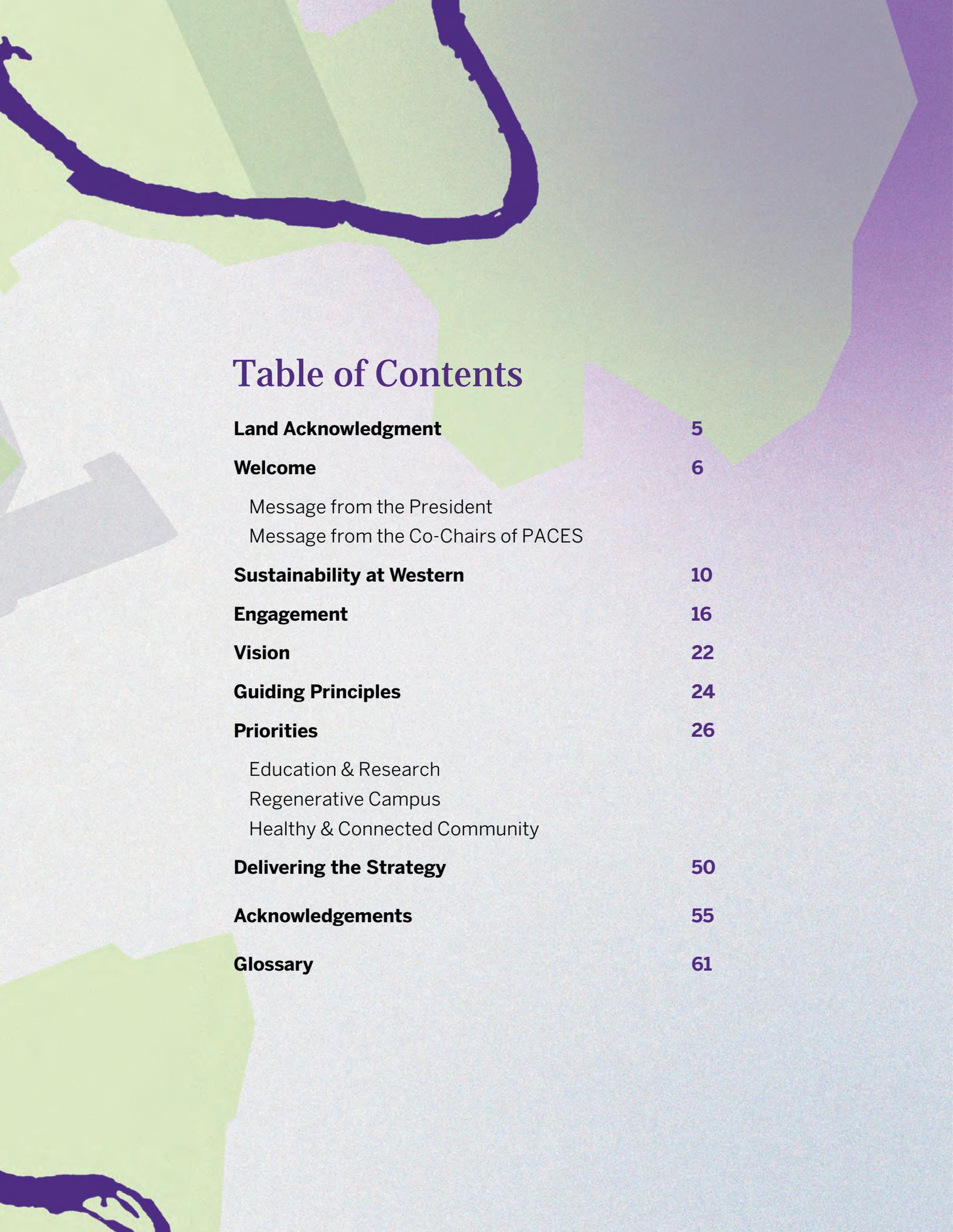


# Climate and Sustainability Strategy

2025

Western UNIVERSITY • CANADA 





# Table of Contents

<b>Land Acknowledgment</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>6</b>
Message from the President	
Message from the Co-Chairs of PACES	
<b>Sustainability at Western</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Engagement</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Priorities</b>	<b>26</b>
Education & Research	
Regenerative Campus	
Healthy & Connected Community	
<b>Delivering the Strategy</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>61</b>





## Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge that Western is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, and Lunaapéewak Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. In addition to a local urban Indigenous community, three local Indigenous communities which are located 30-45 minutes southwest of Western include: Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames and Munsee Delaware First Nation. Each community is distinct in its culture, history, ceremonies, stories and languages.

We acknowledge and respect the enduring relationship Indigenous Peoples have to this beautiful land, recognizing them as stewards of the land for generations and being at the forefront of environmental conservation and climate change mitigation.

As we launch our new [Climate and Sustainability Strategy](#), we appreciate that we have much to learn from Indigenous knowledges. We must reflect critically on the past and accept truth before moving towards reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. With this mindset, we look to create a regenerative future together where everyone can thrive.



Medway Creek

# Welcome

# Message from the President

**As we embark on this new Climate and Sustainability Strategy, I'm excited to introduce a new chapter for sustainability at Western. Each of you cares deeply about our community and our planet. You have fantastic ideas, and because of that, collectively, we can make a big impact.**

This work has never been more important. The problem of climate change is enormously complex. It's not just about the environment – it affects health, economics, social justice, public policy, geo-politics, and a host of other issues.

The complexity is well represented in the Sustainable Development Goals – or SDGs – launched in 2015. The SDGs continue to be an urgent call to action for our global community, and they serve as our guidepost for sustainability at Western.

We are proud of the progress we've made in the past decade. From deep energy retrofits to building low-carbon infrastructure to creating a living lab on campus, we've seen our vision of a more sustainable Western come to life. These advancements have been made through the dedication of our campus community and the ongoing innovation and research within our faculties.

The Western Strategic Plan, *Towards Western at 150*, captures our community's collective commitment, energy, and aspirations, recognizing sustainability as an imperative. This new Climate and Sustainability Strategy will shape the university and our campus for generations. It will allow Western to move beyond sustainability and embrace a regenerative approach – one where we not only sustain life but actively enhance and restore it. We need your energy, ideas, and collaboration to reimagine the future and make it happen.

Finally, I want to thank the members of the President's Advisory Committee on the Environment and Sustainability (PACES) and the leaders across campus for the work you've already done and the work that is to come as we continue our journey towards a regenerative future.

**Alan Shepard**

President & Vice-Chancellor

# Message from the Co-Chairs of PACES

**Western plays a crucial role within a broader ecosystem. Therefore, we have a responsibility to exemplify promising practices in campus operations, education, and research innovation.**

Our community recognizes the profound connection between the health of our planet and our society. We understand we are all catalysts for change, empowered in our individual and collective efforts to support all forms of life.

With the introduction of our new Climate and Sustainability Strategy, we are proud to share how our community — students, faculty, and staff — has collaboratively engaged in a thorough process to redefine and enhance our vision to nurture the next generation of changemakers.

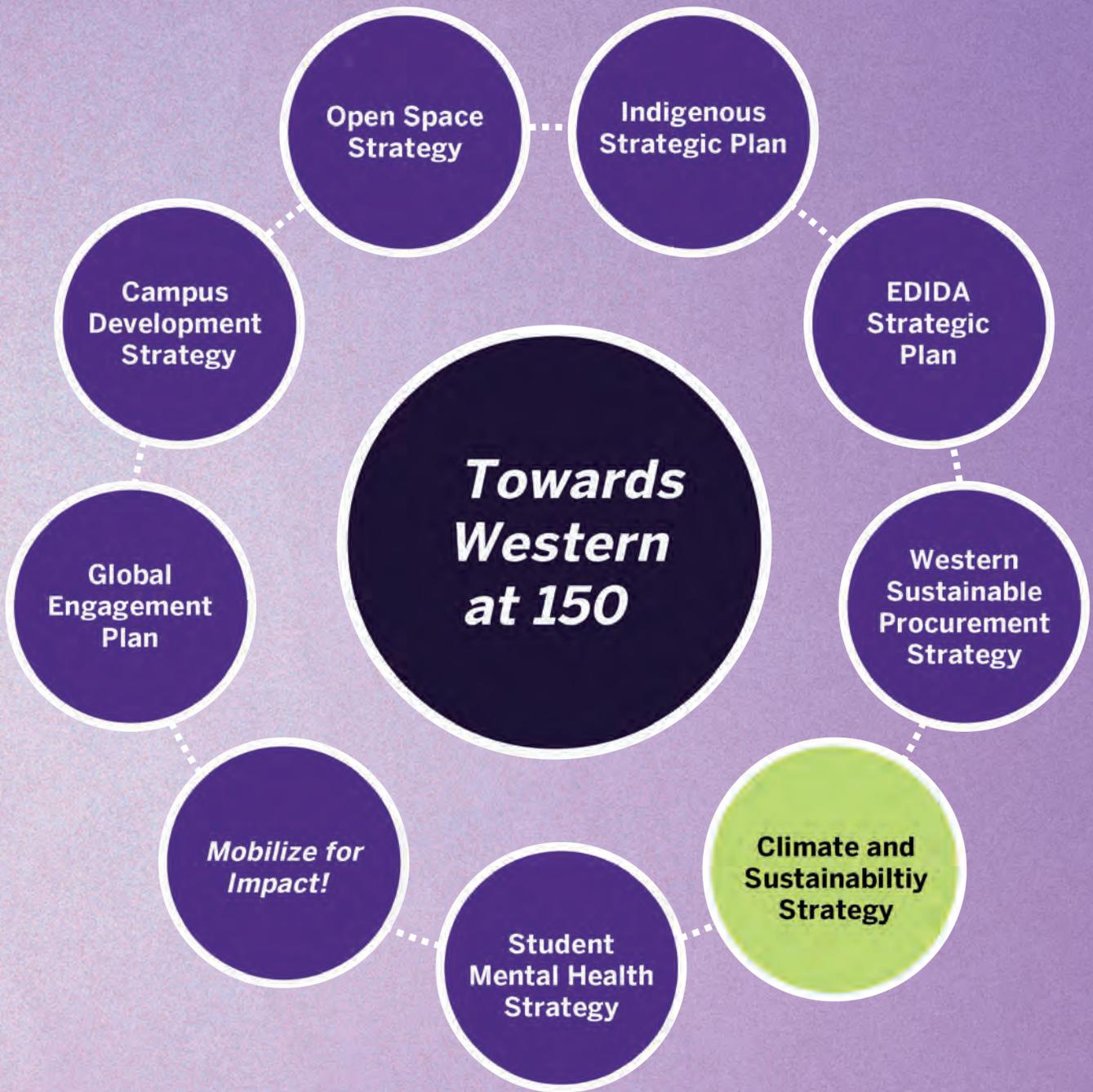
This strategy is anchored by six guiding principles that reflect our shared commitments and core beliefs. These principles emphasize the importance of learning from historical contexts, protecting the environment, fostering thriving ecosystems, and empowering individuals and communities to work together in pursuit of transformative change. Together, they provide a foundation for aligning our actions with the university's strategic vision and shaping a healthy, just, and regenerative future.

Building upon Towards Western at 150 and other supporting strategies at Western, our Climate and Sustainability Strategy defines key priorities and ambitions for collaborative problem-solving, equipping future leaders with the essential skills and knowledge to address the climate and sustainability challenges of our time, and advancing our operational initiatives to enhance ecological systems, decarbonize campus operations, and promote a circular economy. The strategy underpins our teaching, research, and the student experience, as well as our connection with London and our region. It will guide our partnerships around the world.

With a renewed commitment to planetary health and contributing to a regenerative future, this transformation calls for a behavioural shift within our community that will permeate our educational, research, and operational practices. We invite you to join us in activating this strategy and becoming agents of positive change.

**Lynn Logan**  
Vice-President  
Operations & Finance

**Florentine Strzelczyk**  
Provost & Vice-President  
Academic



# Sustainability at Western



# Sustainability by the Numbers (2025)

32%

**GHG Emissions Reduction**

Between 2005 and 2024, Western has reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 32% while campus grew in size by 39% during the same period.

13

**LEED Certified Buildings**

1,900+

**Research Projects Related to SDGs**

40%



**of Western's residence menus are plant based**

11



**Years**

For the past 11 years Western has maintained a Gold STARS rating, and in 2025 became the second Canadian university to achieve a STARS Gold rating under the new, more stringent version of STARS.

39%

**Waste Diverted from Landfill**

1,694 MT of waste diverted from landfill in 2024.



85%

**Future Ready**

In 2023/24, over 85% of undergraduate degrees included sustainability-focused learning requirements.

2,700+

**Sustainability Courses**

Western offers more than 2,700 undergraduate courses that relate to the SDGs.



25+

**Projects**

Western's Campus as a Living Lab program has supported more than 25 unique projects across 6 different faculties.

61

**Projects**

Over the last two years, Western's \$1M Sustainable Impact Fund supported 61 student, faculty, and staff led projects advancing sustainability on campus.

14<sup>TH</sup>

**In the World**

In 2025, ranked 14th globally in *Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings, tied for third in Canada.

33

Student Groups & Clubs form the Western Environment and Sustainability Network and are advancing sustainability on campus.

## Western by the Numbers

**106**

**Buildings**

**40,968**

**FTE Students**

**460**

**Hectares of Land**

**\$1.7**

**Billion in Revenue**

**894,900 m<sup>2</sup>**

**Built Space**

While we've made significant investments in our physical infrastructure to improve energy efficiency, decarbonize our assets, regenerate biodiversity, and reduce our environmental impact, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment and there is much more to be done.

Feedback from our community tells us that advancing climate action, promoting circularity, regenerating ecosystems, and supporting the health and well-being of our lands and communities is paramount.

In response, our new Climate and Sustainability Strategy provides the foundation for bold action — enabling us to take courageous steps, foster innovative interdisciplinary approaches, and equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to address our most urgent sustainability challenges, accelerate progress, and foster positive change both on campus and in the broader community.

*“Through our collective efforts and personal commitments, we can bring our highest aspirations to life.”*

**Heather Hyde**

Director of Sustainability

# Get Involved & Learn More!

## Sustainable Commitments

- [Academic Health Institutions' Declaration on Planetary Health, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry](#)
- [COU Pledge - Ontario Universities Committed to a Greener World](#)
- [Forward Food Pledge](#)
- [Investing to Address Climate Change: A Charter for Canadian Universities](#)
- [Paris Pledge for Action](#)
- [Talloires Declaration](#)
- [United Nations Institute for Training and Research \(UNITAR\) agreement to support sustainable development through education and research](#)

## Courses & Research

- [Certificate in Climate Change & Society](#)
- [Connecting for Climate Change Action](#)
- [Ecological Justice and Climate Certificate](#)
- [Experiential Learning](#)
- [Master's in Environment and Sustainability](#)
- [Masters and PhD theses](#)
- [Research Projects](#)
- [Sustainability Courses](#)

## Related Strategies

- [Campus Development Strategy](#)
- [EDIDA Strategic Plan](#)
- [Global Engagement Plan](#)
- [Indigenous Strategic Plan](#)
- [\*Mobilize for Impact!\*](#)
- [Open Space Strategy](#)
- [Responsible Investing](#)
- [Student Mental Health Strategy](#)
- [\*Towards Western at 150\*](#)
- [Western Sustainable Procurement Strategy](#)

## Sustainability Reports & Initiatives

- [Campus as a Living Lab](#)
- [Free Store](#)
- [GHG Emissions](#)
- [Gold STARS Ratings](#)
- [Green Buildings](#)
- [Riverfest](#)
- [Student Network Groups](#)
- [The SDGs at Western](#)
- [Waste Reduction & Diversion](#)
- [Western Sustainability](#)
- [Western Sustainable Impact Fund](#)



# Engagement



## Shaping the Strategy Together

During the 2024 – 2025 academic year, nearly 4,000 students, staff, and faculty from all areas of campus participated in consultations on a new Climate and Sustainability Strategy. Over 3,200 individuals responded to the campus input survey, representing all faculties at Western.

PACES has demonstrated leadership by actively shaping this strategy and setting priorities, guiding a meaningful cross-campus consultation that included a survey, keynote, and panel event, and six targeted workshops engaging students, staff, and faculty in each session.

*“I would like to see more opportunities for students across all programs to learn more about sustainability and gain skills that can be applied in our careers.”*

— **Ethan Milroy**  
Student



*“To be a part of the Western community is to care about strategic plans like this one, and starting education and awareness early is key to that mindset.”*

— **Emilie Kalaydjian**

University Students' Council (USC) President - 2024-2025

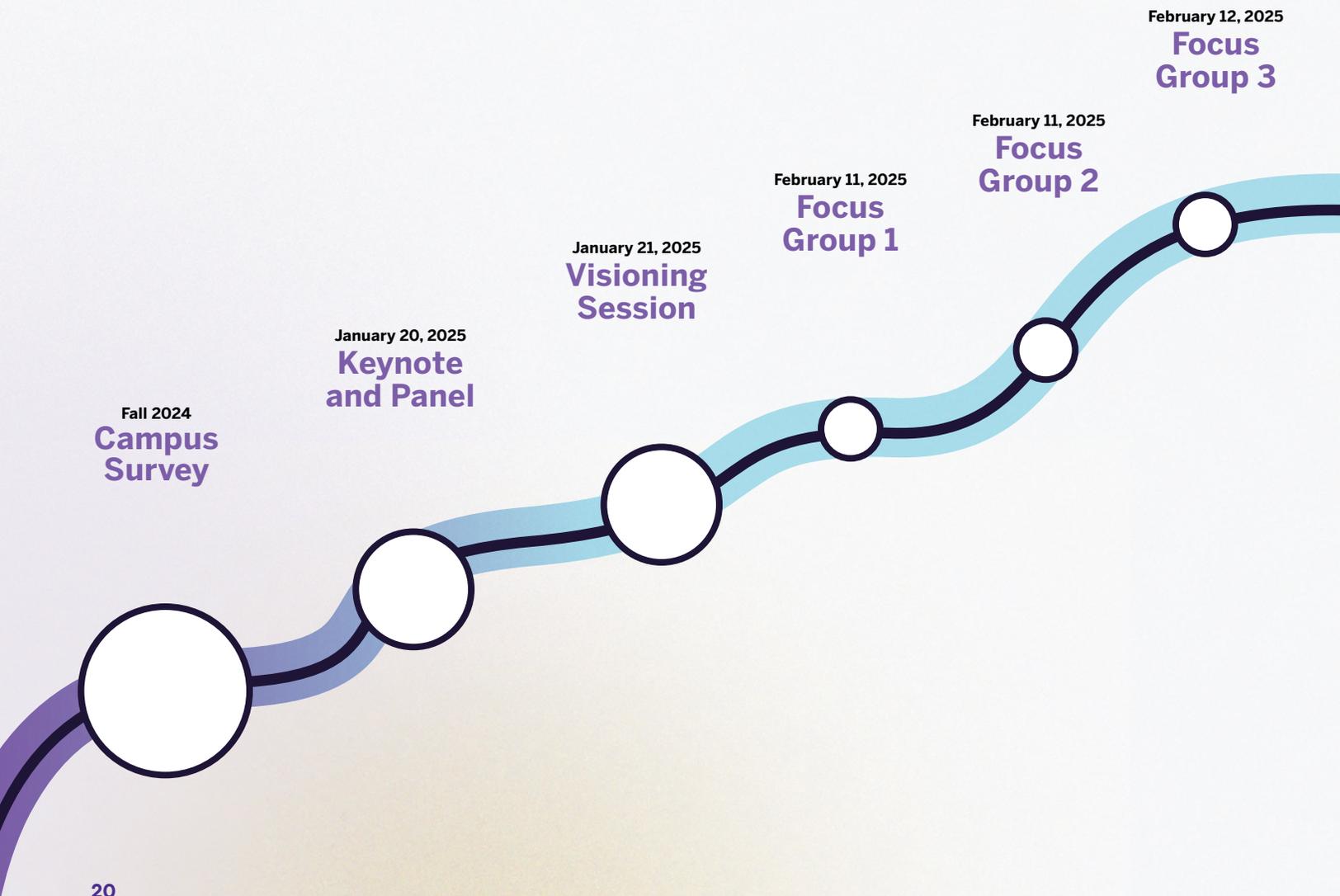
*“Wisdom from heart is integral. If you're making solutions from a place of fear and anxiety, what kinds of solutions will those be, compared to solutions created from a place of love, understanding, of land, and nature.”*

— **Nicole Redvers**

Associate Professor



# Engagement Timeline





# Vision

Rooted in our culture of curiosity and innovation, we strive for a regenerative future that supports the health and well-being of the planet, its natural systems, and our community.

We will equip the next generation of changemakers with the knowledge and tools to address the most pressing climate and sustainability challenges of our time.



# Guiding Principles

# Guiding Principles

## Planetary Health

Recognize the health of natural systems and humans is intrinsically linked. Thus, safeguarding the environment and supporting thriving ecosystems is our collective responsibility.

## Stewardship

Honour reciprocal relationships with the natural world by behaving in ways that enhance ecosystems, advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, and respect future generations.

## Courage

Lead with heart, respect, empathy, and humility. Individually and collectively, uplift curiosity, take risks, and support transformative ideas and actions to influence all areas of university life.

## Purpose

Choose deliberate action, set clear targets, and align with Western strategies to advance and measure progress on our climate and sustainability ambitions.

## Interdisciplinarity

Strengthen connections across the university to embed sustainability as an imperative in all that we do.

## Collaboration

Build and deepen relationships with local and global partners as they are vital to achieving greater societal impact.

# Priorities

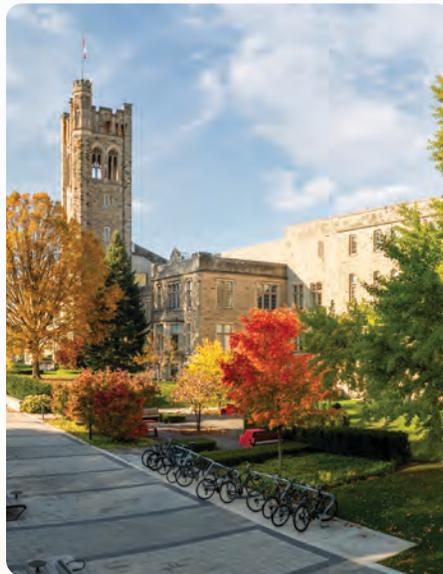
# Priorities

Western’s new Climate and Sustainability Strategy is organized around three priorities that reflect our greatest opportunities towards a regenerative future — one that supports the health and well-being of the planet, its natural systems, and our community.

**Education & Research**



**Regenerative Campus**



**Healthy & Connected Community**





### **WindEEE**

The Wind Engineering, Energy and Environment Research Institute (WindEEE RI) was established in 2011 as a clear recognition of novel opportunities in wind research at Western related to the emergence of the world's first three-dimensional testing chamber, the WindEEE Research Facility, and the potential to promote innovative research and extensive collaborations nationally and internationally.

# Education & Research

Western will advance research and knowledge that drives societal progress toward a more regenerative future, while equipping students across all disciplines with the knowledge, experience, skills, and expertise to lead in climate and sustainability.

This priority builds on Western's Strategic Plan, *Towards Western at 150*, and the Research Strategic Plan, *Mobilize for Impact!*

Bringing greater focus on fostering stronger collaboration, advancing sustainability knowledge, and cultivating the conditions necessary for developing interdisciplinary solutions to address climate change.

## Ambitions

- Increase student access to sustainability education and enhance course and program offerings.
- Secure experiential learning opportunities in sustainability that empower students to drive meaningful climate action.
- Catalyze thought leadership in sustainability research and innovation, building towards a Western Institute for Sustainability.

## Big Moves

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### CAMPUS AS A LIVING LAB

expanded and leveraged to apply faculty and student expertise in shaping sustainable outcomes for Western

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### COMMUNITY IMPACT

opportunities are cultivated for all students to lead climate and sustainability action

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### INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

established over the long term to advance interdisciplinary knowledge on complex climate and sustainability challenges

## Increase student access to sustainability education and expand course and program offerings

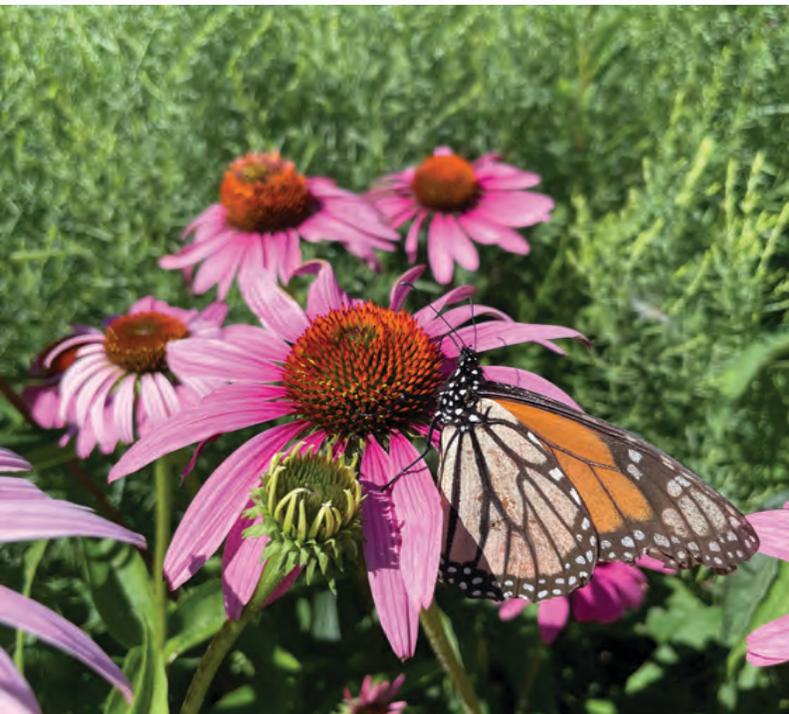
At Western, we are determined to advance sustainability education and prepare students to create a regenerative future.

Over time, we will continue to grow a generation of climate and sustainability changemakers, ready to tackle the complex challenges ahead.

With over 2,700 courses and 2,000 masters and PhD theses linked to the SDGs across our campus, our commitment is clear. The education and opportunities encountered at Western will equip students with the skills and knowledge to make a lasting, positive impact on society, positioning them to enter a competitive job market with specialized skills and up-to-date knowledge on sustainability and climate issues.

Building on this robust foundation, we will:

- Continue to enhance existing programs and develop new ones related to climate and sustainability that are innovative, interdisciplinary, and closely aligned with industry and community needs, such as the Certificate in Climate Change & Society and the Ecological Justice and Climate Ethics Certificate.
- Work with industry and community partners to identify key skills in demand and integrate these insights into sustainability curricula when designing new programs and innovating existing ones.
- Collaborate with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the Centre for Teaching and Learning to introduce a sustainability theme, expand scholarship opportunities, and update curricula to embed climate and sustainability topics.



## Secure experiential learning opportunities in sustainability that empower students to drive meaningful climate action

We will continue to foster hands-on, interdisciplinary experiences that encourage students and researchers to apply knowledge, strengthen local and global partnerships, and accelerate progress toward a more sustainable future.

In Western's strategic plan, *Towards Western at 150*, we pledged to offer every undergraduate student intensive experiential learning opportunities, such as the Master's in Environment and Sustainability program — an accelerated, interdisciplinary course-based Master's degree program with a co-operative work placement term.

In recent years, Western researchers have participated in over 1,900 projects aligned with the SDGs. By making this work more visible and interconnected, we will empower students and researchers to break down silos, build on each other's insights, and accelerate progress in the climate and sustainability arena.

To enrich the student experience and broaden opportunities, we will:

- Expand land-based, experiential, and work-integrated learning opportunities that inspire environmental stewardship and strengthen the connection between communities and the natural environment.
- Seek partnerships with sustainability-focused industries, businesses, and organizations to offer internships, co-ops and work-integrated learning opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Engage industry and community partners in student-led research projects addressing climate and sustainability challenges.



## Catalyze thought leadership in sustainability research and innovation, building towards a Western Institute for Sustainability

We aspire to position Western as a go-to destination for sustainability research, innovation, funding, and partnerships by strengthening collaboration across all disciplines and building upon current programs and clusters of excellence. These platforms will serve as a stepping stone for our long-term ambition of establishing a Western Institute for Sustainability.

As a founding member of the U15 — Canada's leading research universities — Western recognizes the critical role of research and innovation in addressing the challenges of climate change and sustainability.

Clusters for transformative, interdisciplinary research have emerged at Western — such as the Canadian Severe Storms Laboratory (CSSL), the Wind Engineering, Energy and Environment Research Institute (WindEEE RI), the Centre for Sustainable Curating, and others — uniting scholars, students, and external partners to spark innovation, drive knowledge exchange, and accelerate real-world solutions.

By building on this work, Western will:

- Cultivate a culture of sustainability research across disciplines, encouraging scholars to set ambitious goals that address climate and sustainability challenges, using sustainable methods.
- Continue to catalog and publicize research activity to enhance visibility, promote collaboration, and break down disciplinary silos.
- Support and connect researchers through internal funding, dedicated Undergraduate Summer Research Internships, and convening events (e.g., think tanks, symposia, working groups) focused on sustainability themes.
- Advance research capacity in sustainability through strategic selection of Canada Research Chairs, collaborative faculty appointments, and support for postdoctoral fellows and graduate students.
- Align sustainability research efforts with institutional goals, identifying areas for improvement and setting measurable targets that elevate Western's visibility and impact.





**Sustainable Resource Management Living Lab**

Photo credit: Danielle Petti

The Sustainable Resource Management (SRM) Living Lab is a community garden area with its own hydrological catchment so that environmental parameters such as nutrient losses via runoff, erosion, and leaching can be monitored. Monitoring will happen year-round to document how phosphorus and nitrogen cycle seasonally under a changing climate. The site will help bridge scientific research, artistic inquiry, and real-world gardening practices to advance evidence-based approaches for urban sustainability.

**Canadian Severe Storms Laboratory**

The Canadian Severe Storms Laboratory (CSSL) was founded in 2024 as a partnership between Western and social impact fund ImpactWX, beginning a new era in severe storms research and strengthening Canada's reputation globally as a leader in the field.





# Regenerative Campus

Western aspires to operate and maintain a campus that has a positive impact each day.

Our actions have impact. We recognize that alongside climate change, biodiversity loss is one of the most pressing crises of our time. The health of our world depends on the protection of nature. Considering nature in daily decisions on how we build, operate, and maintain our campus means we can start to regenerate natural systems, adapt to a changing climate, and restore habitats for living and non-living species.

For our daily operations and interactions to contribute to a vibrant and resilient environment, we will:

## Ambitions

- Strengthen long-term climate resilience across campus.
- Enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity across campus.
- Decarbonize campus infrastructure and built assets.
- Measure and curtail Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions through more sustainable operations.
- Foster a culture of material circularity, ensuring waste generation decreases even as campus grows.

## Big Moves

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### ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

completed for priority areas such as along Medway Creek, Thames River, and Medway Valley Heritage Forest

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### NET ZERO EMISSIONS

from campus operations by 2050 and 45% reduction by 2030, compared to 2005 levels aligned with *Towards Western at 150* (2021)

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### 60% WASTE DIVERSION

by 2035 through adoption of circular practices and collaborative waste management initiatives

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### SCOPE 3 EMISSIONS

baseline and reduction plan established

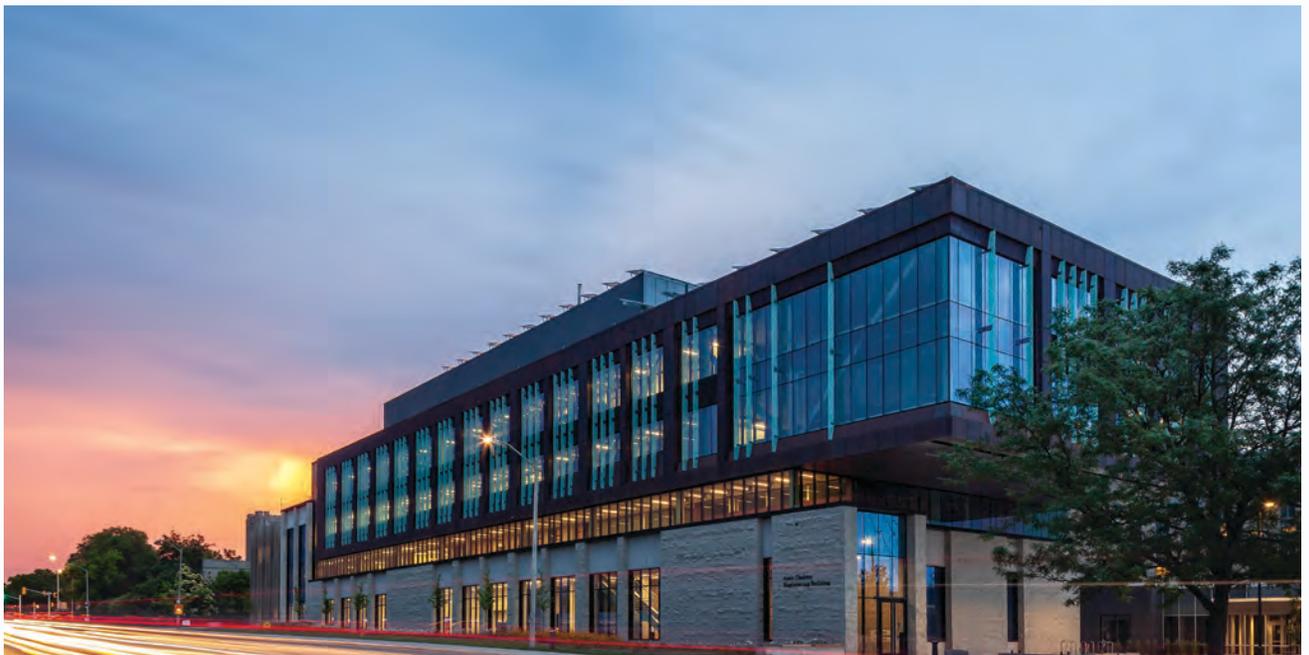
## ● Strengthen long-term climate resilience across campus

Our objective is to identify and assess climate risks, chart adaptation pathways, and strengthen campus resilience to ensure long-term operational continuity.

Globally, nations, organizations, communities, and individuals are facing the impacts of climate change, which are projected to intensify in both gravity and scale over the coming decades. We have already observed a rise in annual temperatures, an increase in the severity and consequences of storms, and a heightened vulnerability of local energy infrastructure.

As critical next steps to improve Western's climate resilience, we aspire to:

- Define resilience and desired outcomes in the context of Western and determine the climate scenario used for resilience risk assessments.
- Assess the resilience of key campus infrastructure and built assets against unpredictable climate changes, flooding, and fluctuations in energy sources.
- Incorporate resilience requirements into planning and [Sustainable Design Guidelines](#) for new construction projects, major renovations, and existing building upgrades.
- Identify student and other campus populations most vulnerable to acute shocks, particularly those affected by socioeconomic, health, housing, and demographic disparities, and integrate their needs into resilience planning and support systems.



## ● Enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity across campus

We will encourage ecological regeneration and enhanced function of priority habitats on campus over time.

A holistic approach to ecosystem health gives us a clearer picture of how campus landscapes function and creates opportunities for research, teaching, and engagement. It aligns with our academic mission and focuses on indicators we can responsibly influence, while collaborating on broader watershed health through partnerships with the City of London, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, and other organizations.



Ecological health supports the overall resilience and functionality of natural systems. It includes biodiversity as a key indicator, but also considers habitat quality, soil and water health, ecological processes like carbon sequestration and pollination, and reducing stressors such as invasive species and pollution.

Our campus contains natural areas which hold significant ecological and cultural value. It is important that we work to strengthen their integrity and health, so they continue to function as resilient ecosystems that support biodiversity and provide opportunities for learning and connection. As such, we will:

- Complete an ecological assessment of priority areas such as along Medway Creek, Thames River, and Medway Valley Heritage Forest.
- Collaborate with faculty, students, and staff across campus to enhance the ecological functions of priority habitats through programs like Campus as a Living Lab.
- Incorporate ecological health and biodiversity into overall campus planning, in alignment with the [Open Space Strategy](#), [Campus Development Strategy](#), and other planning guidelines.
- Connect the existing natural areas on campus by introducing smaller natural features such as pollinator gardens and bird-friendly windows.

## Decarbonize campus infrastructure and built assets

We are dedicated to achieving net-zero emissions for campus operations by 2050 and at least 45% reduction (over 2005) by 2030.

In 2025 we achieved a 32% reduction in GHG emissions compared to 2005 levels, putting us on track to meet our 2030 target.

With the unwavering commitment and dedication of our capital planning and facilities management teams, we continue to do our part to reduce global emissions and mitigate climate change effects. Our commitment to a net-zero transition involves transforming our campus energy system, designing low-carbon buildings, and extending the life of our existing buildings.

To meet our 2030 and 2050 targets, we will:

- Continue the deep energy retrofit program to enhance the long-term performance of existing building assets, making them more energy-efficient and resilient.
- Advance the decarbonization of campus energy infrastructure by transitioning to cleaner, more efficient fuel sources and incorporating renewable energy solutions.
- Update Sustainable Design Guidelines for new construction projects and existing building upgrades, optimizing space utilization, and set performance limits for energy use, operational carbon, and embodied carbon emissions.
- Educate building users on green building principles and the performance outcomes of sustainable buildings on campus.



## Measure and curtail Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions through more sustainable operations

We aim to measure and benchmark our Scope 3 emissions. With this knowledge, we can inform and empower our community to make better decisions that reduce our emissions.

Working towards decarbonizing daily operations is a priority for Western. We recognize that we can influence the supply chain through our procurement practices and acknowledge our responsibility to continually improve these practices to reach more sustainable outcomes.

To understand and curb our Scope 3 emissions related to commuting, business travel, the goods and services we purchase, waste disposal, and investments, we strive to:

- Identify sources of Scope 3 emissions to understand the greatest opportunities for reductions.

- Enhance campus infrastructure to support adoption of active and sustainable transportation in alignment with the Campus Development Strategy (formerly Campus Master Plan) and Open Space Strategy.
- Encourage the reduction of single-occupancy vehicle use on campus by promoting sustainable commuting and active transportation options.
- Develop, implement, and monitor programs, tools and resources aimed at reducing emissions from business travel.
- Continue to strengthen sustainable procurement by integrating carbon and environmental metrics alongside qualitative factors into cost analyses and decision-making for major goods and services, prioritizing environmentally friendly products with lower carbon footprints.
- Continue to integrate responsible investing practices throughout our investment processes and decision making, committing to reducing the carbon intensity of our Operating & Endowment Fund by at least 45% by 2030.



## Foster a culture of material circularity, ensuring waste generation decreases even as campus grows

We are committed to achieving 60% waste diversion by 2035 and fostering a culture of material circularity, reuse, and resource sharing on campus.

In 2024, our waste minimization and diversion initiatives led to a 39% diversion rate and we remain committed to improving our diversion rate and transparency around waste and circularity data. Key efforts included standardized signage at waste stations, provision of green bins at all campus eateries, enhancements to waste collection and storage systems, and the Choose2Reuse (C2R) program in residence dining halls.

Our ongoing efforts to reduce waste and eliminate single-use plastics in eateries will be strengthened through effective communication and heightened awareness of our initiatives and their outcomes.

While these programs mark important progress, we recognize more work is needed. Waste reduction and material reuse continue to be top priorities for our students, faculty, and staff.

To build on this progress, we will:

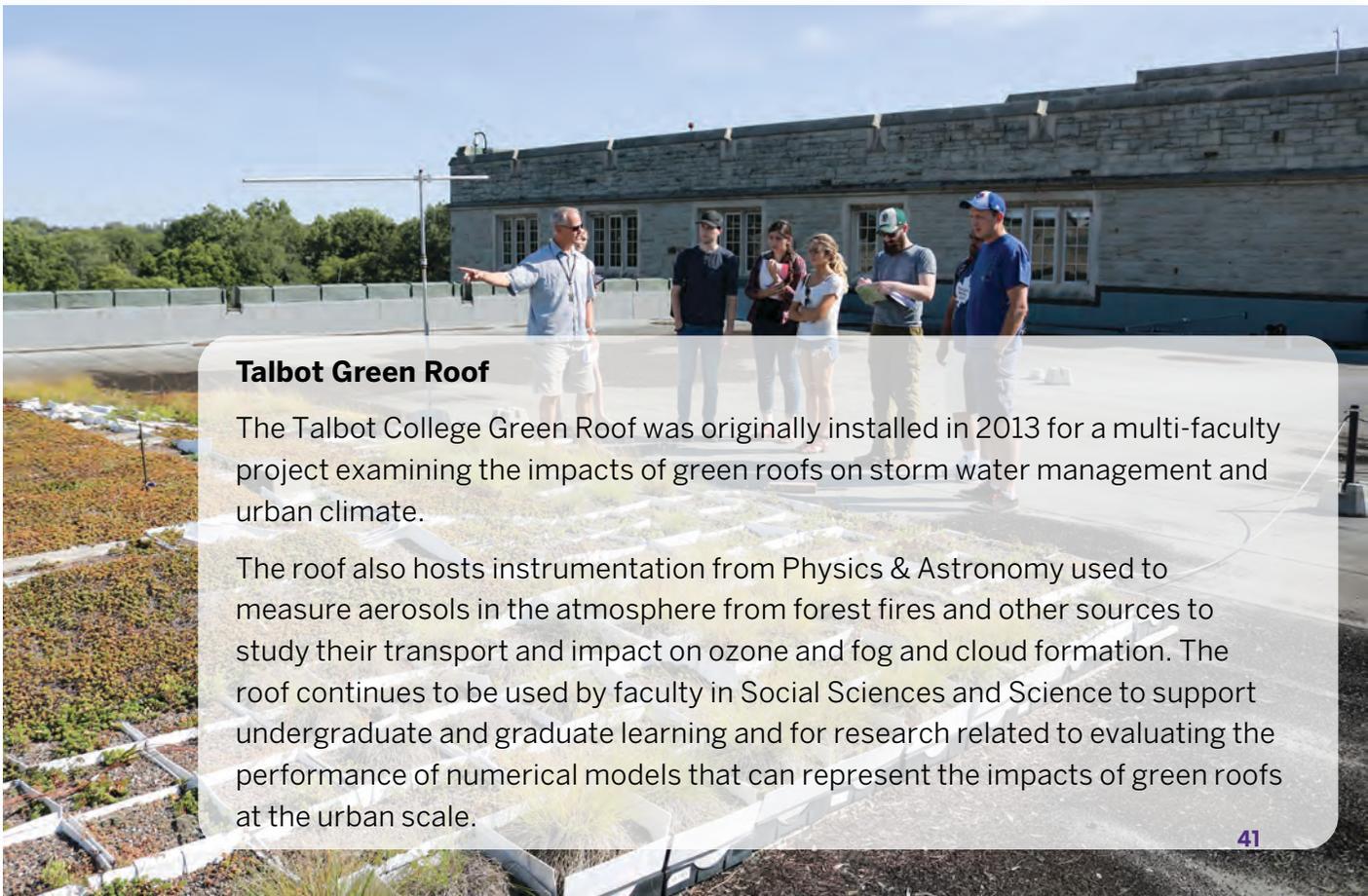
- Increase community awareness and participation in waste reduction, reuse, recycling and diversion through a sustained campaign promoting best practices.
- Create a mechanism for academic resource sharing and reuse to eliminate redundant purchases and wasted materials, as part of a comprehensive resource circularity plan.
- Promote student awareness, participation, and access to reuse and waste diversion programs on campus.
- Phase out single-use plastics and other disposable items through expanded programming and engagement with partners and service providers.
- Expand organics collection and composting across campus and food services to increase participation and reduce landfill waste.





### **Agrovoltaics**

The purpose of the Agrovoltaics project, in partnership with Food Security Structures Canada (FSSC), Green Magic Homes, Adragone Aeroponics, Vertical Green, and SolarCities is to develop and demonstrate an integrated, solar-powered agrivoltaic-agrotunnel hybrid system that provides zero carbon and zero waste sustainable nutritious food all year, anywhere in Canada.



### **Talbot Green Roof**

The Talbot College Green Roof was originally installed in 2013 for a multi-faculty project examining the impacts of green roofs on storm water management and urban climate.

The roof also hosts instrumentation from Physics & Astronomy used to measure aerosols in the atmosphere from forest fires and other sources to study their transport and impact on ozone and fog and cloud formation. The roof continues to be used by faculty in Social Sciences and Science to support undergraduate and graduate learning and for research related to evaluating the performance of numerical models that can represent the impacts of green roofs at the urban scale.



# Healthy & Connected Community

Guided by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous knowledges, Western is committed to fostering a healthy and connected community where individuals have a meaningful connection to nature and feel a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for the environment.

We recognize a sense of belonging motivates people to take care of themselves and each other, engage with sustainability efforts, and build community through shared experiences.

Opportunities to connect with the natural environment – both on and off campus — deepen our understanding of ecosystems and the interdependence of all living things. These experiences enhance mental, emotional, and physical well-being, while strengthening the bonds within our community.

To support a healthy, vibrant, and thriving community, we aim to:

## Ambitions

-  Integrate Indigenous land-based learning by working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to deepen understanding and connection to place.
-  Promote mental, emotional, and physical well-being through meaningful experiences in nature.
-  Help people find relief from, and cope with, eco-distress and climate anxiety.
-  Broaden awareness of Western's climate and sustainability initiatives, programming, and networks to encourage greater engagement and participation.

## Big Moves

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### NATURAL SPACES

celebrate biodiversity and ecosystem functions through signage, education, and stewardship, and connect the community to nature

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### LAND-BASED LEARNING & EXPERIENCES

advanced through collaborative partnerships with Indigenous leaders and others in support of mental health, well-being, and planetary health

---

### STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

is established

## Integrate Indigenous land-based learning by working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to deepen understanding and connection to place

We aim to cultivate meaningful and reciprocal relationships with local Indigenous communities, Elders, and Knowledge Keepers to share traditional ecological knowledge, guide preservation and restoration of natural environments, and deepen connections to the natural world.

Western's Indigenous Strategic Plan sets out the priority to nurture an inclusive campus culture that values Indigenous Peoples, perspectives and ways of knowing. Embracing aspects of longstanding practices in Indigenous communities, such as land-based learning, connects us to place and offers healing and comfort.

In collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, we will:

- Further land-based learning opportunities, resources, and awareness to integrate cultural teachings, and advance intergenerational knowledge transfer.

- Amplify the visibility of sustainability-related activities and events organized by the Office of Sustainability and the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.
- Increase reach and evolve courses like Connecting for Climate Change Action, a course that uses a storytelling approach to bring western and Indigenous Sciences together to educate and motivate action on climate change.



## Promote mental, emotional, and physical well-being through meaningful experiences in nature

We will encourage our community to spend time in nature, in the hopes these experiences build stronger community connections and deepen our appreciation of how closely our lives are intertwined with the natural world.

High-quality natural environments — prominent, interconnected, and accessible year-round across campus — offer significant benefits for mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Time spent in nature can reduce stress, improve mood, enhance cognitive function, and encourage physical activity, which in turn supports healthier lifestyle choices.

Western will continue to promote engaging with nature in ways that encourage learning from and caring for the land we are situated on.

To improve health outcomes and support holistic well-being across our community — and in alignment with Western's [Open Space Strategy](#) — we will:

- Enhance access to natural environments across campus in all seasons, and expand outdoor spaces for work, study, relaxation, and recreation.
- Promote nature-based programming through formal and informal activities that encourage enjoyment, experiential learning, and research, such as the [Campus as a Living Lab](#),
- Strengthen health education and support services beyond the classroom to encourage lifelong healthy habits and holistic well-being.
- Continue to provide [sustainable food options](#) and raise awareness about the connections between food, human health, and environmental health.



## ● **Help people find relief from, and cope with, eco-distress and climate anxiety**

Building on the efforts of the [Student Mental Health Strategy](#), we will continue to support students, faculty, and staff through a community of care, including counselling and mental health services.

We will work to develop, update, and share resources designed to support those experiencing eco-distress and climate anxiety.

There is growing awareness that individuals can feel overwhelmed and powerless in the face of environmental challenges such as forest fires, extreme weather events, habitat loss, pollution, and other events. We recognize the impact of eco-distress and climate anxiety on the academic, professional, and personal well-being of Western's community, and the barriers these challenges can pose to success.

To help people find relief and build personal resilience, we will:

- Work with mental health professionals to understand training, resources, and outreach needed to address climate-related mental health challenges.
- Offer the wider Western community accessible, self-directed resources and peer-to-peer support to help manage climate-related mental health concerns.



**Broaden awareness of Western's climate and sustainability initiatives, programming, and networks to encourage greater engagement and participation**

To support this ambition, Western will launch a comprehensive campaign to raise greater awareness about our long-standing climate and sustainability initiatives and invite active involvement.

From the moment new students, staff, and faculty join Western, they will be introduced to our sustainability goals and encouraged to take part in shaping a more regenerative future. This ongoing campaign will ensure sustainability remains a core value throughout their journey at Western, fostering a culture of environmental stewardship and collective agency.

To increase awareness, interaction, and participation in Western's sustainability efforts, we will:

- Establish a student engagement working group.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive communication strategy aimed at increasing reach, engaging with the community, promoting sustainability initiatives, and encouraging adoption of sustainable practices.
- Embed sustainability priorities into orientation and onboarding processes to reach every new community member at Western.
- Collaborate with faculty to highlight and integrate Western's sustainability initiatives, groups, and events into classroom discussions and learning experiences.
- Engage the broader community in sustainability education, training, events, activities, and peer-to-peer support outside the classroom to reinforce a common understanding and commitment to sustainability, climate action, regeneration, and planetary health.





## Big Moves

To ensure communication, transparency, and accountability, the Office of Sustainability will publish reports that measure progress, highlight milestones, and track key metrics in alignment with the strategy.

### Education & Research

#### CAMPUS AS A LIVING LAB

expanded and leveraged to apply faculty and student expertise in shaping sustainable outcomes for Western

#### COMMUNITY IMPACT

opportunities are cultivated for all students to lead climate and sustainability action

#### INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

established over the long term to advance interdisciplinary knowledge on complex climate and sustainability challenges

### Regenerative Campus

#### ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

completed for priority areas such as along Medway Creek, Thames River, and Medway Valley Heritage Forest

#### NET ZERO EMISSIONS

from campus operations by 2050 and 45% reduction by 2030, compared to 2005 levels aligned with [Towards Western at 150](#) (2021)

#### 60% WASTE DIVERSION

by 2035 through adoption of circular practices and collaborative waste management initiatives

#### SCOPE 3 EMISSIONS

baseline and reduction plan established

### Healthy & Connected Community

#### NATURAL SPACES

celebrate biodiversity and ecosystem functions through signage, education, and stewardship, and connect the community to nature

#### LAND-BASED LEARNING & EXPERIENCES

advanced through collaborative partnerships with Indigenous leaders and others in support of mental health, well-being, and planetary health

#### STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WORKING GROUP

is established

# Delivering the Strategy



## Dynamic By Design

Western's Climate and Sustainability Strategy reflects our commitment to practical, collaborative action to advance sustainability both on campus and beyond.

Rooted in academic excellence and community engagement, our [Climate and Sustainability Strategy](#) supports efforts to deepen our understanding of environmental challenges and develop impactful, long-term solutions.

We are dedicated to managing our campus in ways that enhance ecological health, reduce our environmental footprint, and promote well-being for all who study, work, and live at Western.

This strategy will continue to evolve as we refine our priorities, set measurable goals, and respond to emerging knowledge, technologies, and challenges.

The [Climate and Sustainability Strategy](#) will be supported by a framework that outlines responsibilities, expands on Big Moves to achieve each ambition, and defines intended outcomes across short-, medium-, and long-term horizons.

## Governance and Accountability

The President's Advisory Committee on Environment and Sustainability (PACES) plays a key role in guiding the university's sustainability direction. It advises on the implementation of the Climate and Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan. With representation from students, faculty and staff from across the university, PACES helps ensure sustainability is thoughtfully integrated into research, teaching, campus operations, and partnerships. Co-chaired by the Provost & Vice-President (Academic) and the Vice-President (Operations & Finance), and supported by the Office of Sustainability, PACES enables cross-campus collaboration and accountability.

The Office of Sustainability leads the day-to-day coordination and advancement of Western's sustainability efforts. It works closely with academic and operational units to embed environmental responsibility into core practices, support innovation, and guide the implementation of the Climate and Sustainability Strategy. The Office also manages sustainability reporting, and supports long-term improvement through education, engagement, and strategic planning.

The success of this strategy depends on leadership that is shared across the university — empowering faculties, departments, student groups, and administrative units to contribute to sustainability in ways aligned with their roles and expertise. Strong governance and open communication support this model, ensuring sustainability remains a central part of decision-making.

Students at Western are active contributors to the university's sustainability journey. A new Student Engagement Working Group, facilitated by the Office of Sustainability, will bring together student voices from diverse disciplines and programs to inform initiatives, strengthen engagement, and amplify campus-wide momentum on key issues such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and sustainable transportation.

Positioning Western as a destination of choice for sustainability-related funding, partnerships, and innovation will be key to advancing research, strengthening collaboration, and supporting interdisciplinary dialogue on the most pressing environmental challenges.

We will also continue to collaborate with Indigenous leaders, the City of London, and other organizations to realize the vision set in this strategy.

**Through a dynamic and collaborative research ecosystem, we will bridge academic knowledge with actionable solutions, driving impact both locally and globally.**



**VISION**

Rooted in our culture of curiosity and innovation, we strive for a regenerative future that supports the health and well-being of the planet, its natural systems, and our community. We will equip the next generation of changemakers with the knowledge and tools to address the most pressing climate and sustainability challenges of our time

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- Planetary Health
- Stewardship
- Courage
- Purpose
- Interdisciplinarity
- Collaboration

**PRIORITIES**

<p><b>Education and Research</b></p> <p>Western will advance research and knowledge that drives societal progress toward a more regenerative future, while equipping students across all disciplines with the knowledge, experience, skills, and expertise to lead in climate and sustainability</p>	<p><b>Regenerative Campus</b></p> <p>Western aspires to operate and maintain a campus that has a positive impact each day</p>	<p><b>Healthy and Connected Community</b></p> <p>Guided by both non-Indigenous and Indigenous knowledges, Western is committed to fostering a healthy and connected community where individuals have a meaningful connection to nature and feel a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for the environment</p>
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|---|--|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Increase student access to sustainability education and enhance course offerings</p> | <p>Secure experiential learning opportunities in sustainability that empower students to drive meaningful climate action</p> | <p>Catalyze thought leadership in sustainability research and innovation, building towards a Western Institute for Sustainability</p> | <p>Strengthen long-term climate resilience across campus</p> | <p>Enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity across campus</p> | <p>Decarbonize campus infrastructure and built assets</p> | <p>Measure and curtail Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions through more sustainable operations</p> | <p>Foster a culture of material circularity, ensuring waste generation decreases even as campus grows</p> | <p>Integrate Indigenous land-based learning by working with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to deepen understanding and connection to place</p> | <p>Promote mental, emotional, and physical well-being through meaningful experiences in nature</p> | <p>Help people find relief from, and cope with, eco-distress and climate anxiety</p> | <p>Broaden awareness of Western's climate and sustainability initiatives, programming, and networks to encourage greater engagement and participation</p> |
|---|--|---|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|---|

**ACTION PLAN & ANNUAL REPORTING**

# Acknowledgements

# Contributors to the Climate and Sustainability Strategy

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# Glossary

**Ecological Health**

Describes the overall condition of an ecosystem, reflecting its functionality, resilience, and integrity of natural processes such as nutrient cycling, energy flow, and species interactions.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG)**

Gases released into the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat, contributing to the greenhouse effect and global warming. The primary greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), which are largely produced by human activities such as burning fossil fuels.

**Holistic Health**

An approach to well-being that considers the whole person — including their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social health.

**PACES**

President's Advisory Committee on the Environment and Sustainability.

**Planetary Health**

An approach that emphasizes the interdependence between human health and the health of the planet. It recognizes that environmental degradation impacts the lives and health of marginalized and underserved populations globally. This approach calls for health-care professionals and systems to be prepared to address these challenges by integrating the health of the planet into their practice and research.

**Regeneration**

The process of renewal, restoration, and growth, making ecosystems, communities, or organisms more resilient and sustainable. In a broader context, it can refer to the revitalization of urban areas, the recovery of ecosystems, or the healing of biological tissues.

**Scope 1, 2, and 3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Scope 1: Direct GHG emissions from sources owned or controlled by the university.

Scope 2: Indirect GHG emissions from the generation of purchased electricity, steam, heating, and cooling consumed by the university.

Scope 3: All other indirect GHG emissions that occur in the university's supply chain.

**SDGs**

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a universal call to action adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure peace and prosperity for all. Each goal addresses a broad range of interconnected global challenges, including economic inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice

**STARS Rating**

The Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS®) is a transparent, self-reporting framework developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). It is designed for colleges and universities to measure and report their sustainability performance across a broad range of areas, including academics, engagement, operations, planning, administration, and innovation.



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