

Western rolls out refocused campaign

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Paul Mayne, Western News
Richard M. Ivey greets Western campaign chairman Geoff Beattie as Western president Amit Chakma watches on prior to the Leaders Forum Tuesday in the Great Hall. The event spotlighted Western's refocused fundraising campaign.

The University of Western Ontario highlighted a refocused fundraising campaign this week with hopes of raising \$750 million by 2018 toward a new series of realigned goals.

At this week's formal campaign event with key volunteers and donors, branded Passport Western, campaign chairman Geoff Beattie stressed the importance of finding out where Western is today as well as where it is going in the future. He pointed to the number of important – and impressive – stories the university needs to tell the outside world about itself.

"We need to move beyond saying 'Western is a good place. You have money. We would like some of it,'" says Beattie, LLB '84.

Beyond the big number, the rebuilt campaign features a new set of goals, rooted in Western's global aspirations. They touch on four key areas: students, faculty, research and infrastructure. Among the expressed targets:

- Support a tripling of student undergraduate scholarships, from 10 per cent to 30 per cent of students holding a donor-funded award of \$1,000 or more;
- Provide more than 2,000 endowed or expendable graduate student awards;
- Add 100 new endowed chairs;
- Build internationally significant research clusters and develop academic programs that span faculties and disciplines; and
- Provide an environment of support and enrichment for our students to shape and enhance their ability to act as leaders in their disciplines and communities once they leave Western.

The breakdown of the numbers signals the university's order of priorities for this campaign – \$267 million for students, \$218 million for faculty, \$163 million for programs and \$102 million for infrastructure.

Accounting for \$430 million, student scholarships and programs, Kevin Goldthorp, vice-president, external, points out, top the list of priorities for a reason.

This represents a major swing for Western – and many Canadian universities – in terms of fundraising. No longer focused on what Goldthorp called "the extras," the refocused campaign lasers in on what matters.

"It's not the extras; it's the core," Goldthorp says. "When people give money, they give as a validation of the vision and mission of the organization. We want them to give to the core."

Janice Deakin, provost and vice president, academic, echoed those sentiments.

“Gone are the days that campaigns are about the nice-to-haves,” she says.

The shift is also a nod to the changing financial landscape in terms of post-secondary education, which has seen its provincial support drop from 90 per cent to 47 per cent in a generation. “It’s all about who funds higher education,” Goldthorp says.

Officially launched in 2007, the campaign has been refocused after a change in university leadership, from former president Paul Davenport to current president Amit Chakma. The original campaign, according to Goldthorp, lacked a unifying goal or vision. In his position, he heard the confusion.

“We didn’t have a cohesive story. People wondered, ‘Where are we going?’ Our volunteers and donors didn’t know where we were going,” he says.

This two-day Passport Western event, in part, was to showcase Western’s story to the external community. Guests got front-row exposure to everything from a 3D Virtual Reality Theatre in the Faculty of Health Sciences to a mission to the Moon with the Faculty of Science, among numerous other areas of the university.

Thus far, the campaign has secured \$255 million in commitments (as of the end of October) toward the \$750 million goal. But Goldthorp says, while the dollar values are important, it’s important as we go forward to celebrate success around the individual objectives – and the impact they have on students, faculty and research – as well.

“We’re not just raising money for a big goal,” he says. “We want donors to be inspired by real substance, not inspired by the goal.”