



Learning in Action

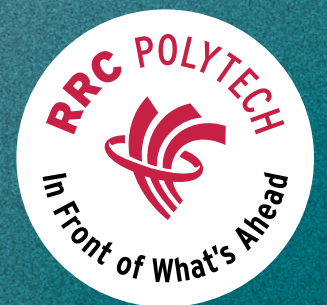
ACADEMIC PLAN 2022-2026



Red River College Polytechnic (RRC Polytech) is committed to ensuring First Nations, Métis and Inuit knowledge, cultures and traditions are embraced and reflected in the pursuit of its mission.

Through ongoing dialogue with Indigenous communities, RRC Polytech is fostering a new relationship based on the principles of mutual trust, respect and reciprocity.

We respect the Treaties that were made on these territories, and we dedicate ourselves to moving forward in partnership with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration.



Our Mission

To elevate people, industry and community in Manitoba through future-focused polytechnic education, research and partnerships.

Our Vision

Manitoba's polytechnic: your partner in shaping the future.

Our Values

- Learning
- Respect
- Inclusiveness
- Integrity
- Sustainability
- Collaboration

These values shape how we work with our students, our partners and our colleagues.



Strategic Plan

In 2021, RRC Polytech unveiled its Strategic Plan, *In Front of What's Ahead*, charting a bold course forward over the next five years. This plan serves as a roadmap of the steps we must take to embed agility into our learning models, foster a culture committed to reconciliation and respect, and strengthen the partnerships that help us shape the future for our students and province. We are committed to transforming today's learners into a force for change, creating a positive impact on the next seven generations.



Academic Plan

As Manitoba's largest institute of applied learning and research, RRC Polytech works alongside employers to find innovative solutions to real-world challenges, while also providing students with the theoretical and applied knowledge to succeed in their future careers. We approach our work with humility and a desire to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of all Manitobans. We help Manitoba businesses build the talented, diverse and culturally aware workforce they need to face disruption and compete on the global stage.

We are Manitoba's largest institute of applied learning and research – and its only polytechnic institute – focused on strategic workforce development, enhanced by strong applied research capacity.

We are unique in Manitoba, blending deep, theoretical learning with applied, experiential opportunities, to give our students more choices in their education paths and connect them directly with Manitoba's labour market.

For our partners, working with us means exclusive access to an array of resources – including state-of-the-art applied research facilities and expertise – to help them innovate in a time of technology disruption and increased global competition. It also means graduates who enter the workforce equipped to thrive amidst rapid change, and ongoing training to support the upskilling and reskilling of existing employees.

CHANGING NEEDS

In our 2016-2021 Academic and Research Plan, we committed to exploring development of new models of program design and delivery. We could not have foreseen how crucial this would become with the onset of the global pandemic in early 2020. Our objective is always to meet and exceed the needs of students and employers, and that expectation was both tested and overcome through the significant dedication and efforts of faculty and staff as we pivoted to online learning for much of our programming. As a result of the pandemic, where we learned – and in some cases, how we learned – changed. While our operating context changed, the previous strategic directions set forth in the last Academic and Research Plan, though accelerated, allowed us to move forward with confidence.

The academic transformation journey that began with our former plan remains essential and will continue through implementation of this plan over the next five years.

Academic program delivery adapted nimbly to offer crucial training during the pandemic and

created opportunities to develop new program offerings, including short-term training as a timely solution to emerging needs.

RRC Polytech is well-positioned to support government and business investment in training and education as an essential step in workforce re-deployment and development to support pandemic recovery.

Labour shortages have accelerated in recent years, a challenge the pandemic worsened in certain sectors. RRC Polytech responded by getting in front of these trends. While some sectors faltered during the pandemic, others thrived. We expect some sectors to require particular attention as they replenish or retool their workforces to meet new opportunities. Evolving our academic programs to respond to sectoral changes is critical in supporting the needs of students and employers. This includes our apprenticeship programs, where we work in partnership with Apprenticeship Manitoba to provide programming that meets the need for skilled journeypersons.



Manitoba's diverse and growing population – fuelled by increased immigration, as well as a fast-growing Indigenous youth demographic – is driving our response to labour market shortages and economic growth. Flexible learning options are necessary to address the lifelong learning needs of these students, many of whom balance family and work commitments alongside school. Our diverse mix of programs – including micro-credentials, apprenticeships, certificates, diplomas and degrees – will effectively meet their evolving needs.

The relationship between human skills and automation – known as Industry 4.0 – continues to disrupt many sectors, affecting their ability to recruit and retain employees with advanced skills, upskill existing workforces, or take advantage of the new opportunities for innovation brought about by digital technology. At the same time, the pandemic has created a shift in expectation around flexible and remote work – all of which require our academic delivery models to adapt accordingly.

Along with the understanding that education happens within an ecosystem – and that we are stronger when working together to leverage our strengths – there is now a clear trend in Canada towards the creation of hubs and partnerships, with many post-secondary institutions working together on key initiatives and partnering to share best practices. These range from national consortia to strengthened collaborations and pathways within provinces. As a polytechnic, we are well-situated to be both the bridge and pathway between other institutions, given the mix of credentials we provide to students.

Finally, climate change and an increasing awareness of the need to move to a low-carbon economy is impacting our organizational decisions, and our broader society. Climate change affects the economy broadly, as well as the ways that governments invest. As particular sectors are impacted, the content of some of our academic programming may also need to adjust as we respond to changes in industry and other sites where our students go to work.

ENROLMENT TRENDS

In building our Academic Plan, we looked to understand who currently attends RRC Polytech.

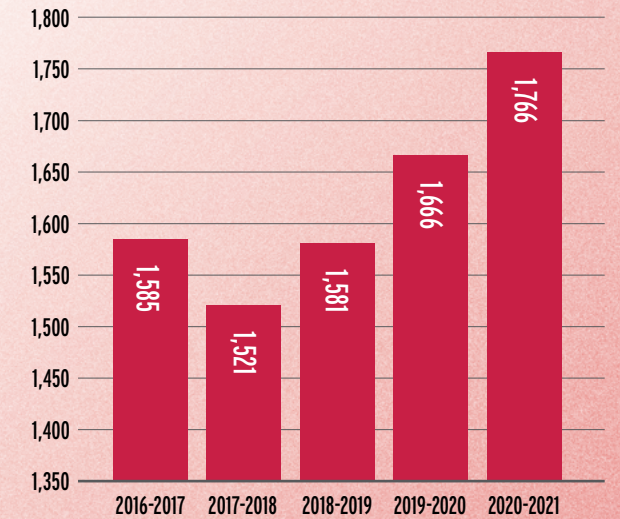
Since 2016, overall full-time enrolment has flattened but we have seen growth in two key groups: international students and Indigenous students, though these numbers have not yet increased at a pace that reflects Manitoba's population. This flattening of full-time enrolment fits with what employers and students have been telling us: that while full-time study works for some students, it doesn't for all. Currently, we are not well-structured to enable part-time study in many programs.

Our average student age is older – between 26 and 35, depending on the program of study – than other Manitoba post-secondary institutions. Over 40 per cent of students come to RRC Polytech following previous post-secondary education. Many participants in Language Training Centre and Continuing Education offerings come to us with significant career and life experience. Apprenticeship enrolment declined significantly during the pandemic, but due to continued labour shortages in the skilled trades, we expect this to rebound.

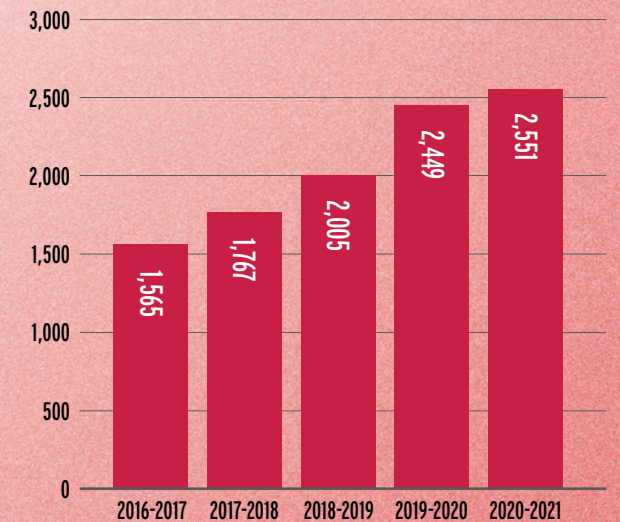
We know that RRC Polytech is often the place students seek out when they know where they want to be in the workforce and need help getting there. We are also the destination for current workers seeking new skills and technologies.

To chart a course for student retention and future enrolment growth, and to attract learners from different backgrounds and experiences, we need to continue providing ways for students to determine the pace at which they complete programs.

INDIGENOUS STUDENTS SELF-DECLARED



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



CONSULTATION EVENTS

28

key interviews

126

academic roundtable participants

40+

student consultations

150

ThoughtExchange participants

6

Strategic Council meetings

30

"Dr. Watson Is In" sessions

12

group consultations

PROCESS

The development of this plan was led by the joint steering committee of the Academic Plan and the Research Plan, and supported by an Indigenous Advisory committee who provided guidance to ensure the plan was developed to align with our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

While our Strategic Plan provides broad direction to the Academic Plan, we also knew the detail of how to achieve what we wanted would be driven by input from staff and students, as well as RRC Polytech's Strategic Councils. The plan that follows has been built through the contributions of a wide variety of stakeholders through individual, group and College-wide consultations, including with the Knowledge Keepers Council. In total, more than 300 people contributed to the development of this plan.



LOOKING FORWARD

Our Strategic Plan embraces our role as Manitoba's polytechnic. This Academic Plan charts our path forward, outlining our priorities and informing decision-making throughout its five-year implementation.

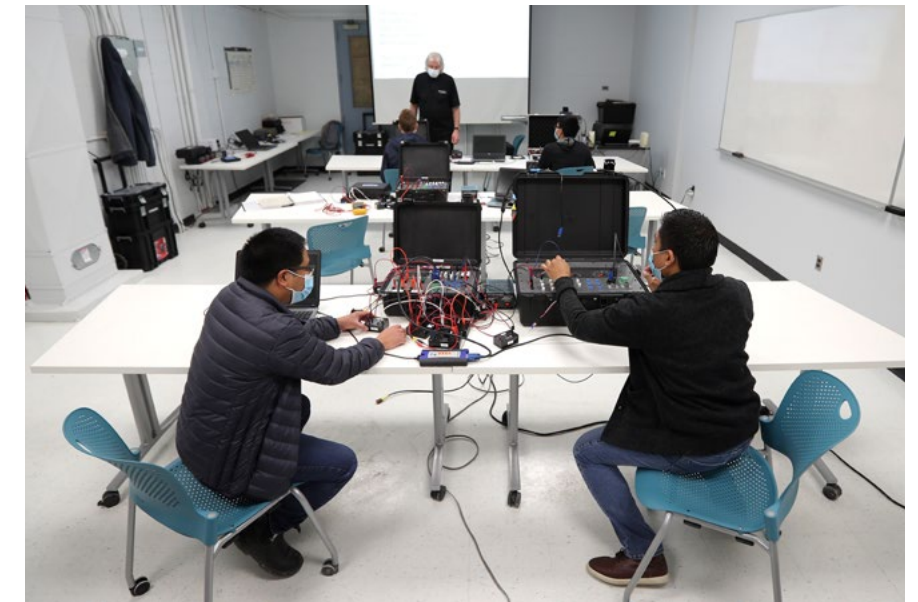
RRC Polytech's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation – and the pursuit of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in everything we do – is our collective responsibility, and underpins all elements of the Academic Plan. So too does our commitment to developing and deepening partnerships wherever appropriate.

This is the context in which we have developed our Academic Plan and to which the following priorities seek to respond.

Priority One

To strengthen pathways to and from RRC Polytech, we will:

- Enhance admissions, recognition of prior learning (RPL) and recruitment strategies
- Grow our partnerships with other educational institutions and Indigenous communities
- Extend our relationships with employers in academic program renewal and work-integrated learning (WIL) opportunities



Students take various routes to RRC Polytech. Our intention is to make more prospective students feel a sense of belonging through their early interactions as they contemplate post-secondary education, and welcome more diverse learners who may come with different education or employment experiences. Achieving this requires us to look inwards for possible barriers in our admissions policies. As part of this work, we will enhance our recognition of prior learning activity to ensure students who come to us with existing skills can focus on the learning they need. We will also expand our recruitment strategies, ensuring we reach out through Indigenous organizations, through the K-12 system, through international communities and through newcomer-serving organizations to build on established and new connections.

Attracting students to RRC Polytech is only part of this journey. We also need to strengthen student pathways from the College to additional education, their first job, or their next step in employment. We will work with employers and our partners in post-secondary education to develop relationships, articulation agreements and joint programs that benefit our students.

We know that employer networking and mentorship help RRC Polytech students make the connections they need to find their right-fit employment opportunity. As a result, our work with employers will be an area of focus – so that students are assured their education is grounded in what they will need to transition successfully to the workforce. This will be further developed by engaging with employers through program advisory committees and in extending work-integrated learning opportunities to all students.



Priority Two

To create high-quality learning opportunities, we will:

- Transform academic content, design and delivery to meet evolving needs
- Strengthen resources and training opportunities for faculty
- Offer opportunities for all students to develop technical and 21st-century skills through experiential learning

Our academic programs are the core of what we do. The content of these programs will continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our environment, and so will their delivery. We will expand our academic schedule and our modes of delivery to meet the needs of a wider range of learners. Evolving our academic schedule and program delivery model will enable more part-time

programs, micro-credential courses and learning options directly in communities.

As part of that evolution, we will maintain our commitment to experiential learning, which we know is the best way to provide students with opportunities to practice skills they will need for their future success. Technical skills will remain important, but program content will also increasingly address the “21st-century skills” of communication, critical thinking and problem solving, digital fluency, innovation and creativity, and intercultural literacy and collaboration.

Academic programs cannot exist without our faculty, who bring the content to life and inspire our students through supportive and stimulating learning environments. To support this essential role, training and other kinds of resources for faculty will be developed.

Priority Three

To enhance student experiences, we will:

- Foster a learning environment where everyone feels seen and heard, and knows they belong
- Provide high-quality and inclusive support services that facilitate student engagement and retention
- Improve our service delivery model to promote consistency, efficiency and effectiveness

The Strategic Plan sets a strong direction for RRC Polytech to see significant progress in advancing our commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and creating learning environments that embrace equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We are on a learning journey to improve practices within our systems, processes and classrooms. Reconciliation and embedding EDI will not be addressed overnight, and will require a concerted, ongoing effort – something we are committed to.

We want students to know they belong and are welcome at RRC Polytech, whether they're learning at one of our Winnipeg campuses, regional campuses, through community-based delivery throughout Manitoba, or in their own homes. This will require us to ensure our curriculum is inclusive and to provide supports to faculty and student services staff to extend this work into every aspect of our academic operations.

We know our student population is diverse and has varied academic and non-academic needs that must be addressed in order to promote holistic well-being and success. Student services need to reflect that variety and to reflect best practices in facilitating student engagement and retention, in order to support students in successfully achieving their goals.

Finally, we will provide systems and processes that are predictable, easier to navigate and more consistent, resulting in an improved student experience.



Academic Plan

This plan was informed by and aligns with RRC Polytech's Strategic Plan 2022-2026, *In Front of What's Ahead*, and will guide our academic activities during the next five years.

As a community, we look forward to working together to achieve the goals of this plan for the betterment of Manitoba and all Manitobans.

To strengthen pathways to and from RRC Polytech, we will:



Enhance admissions, RPL and recruitment strategies



Grow our partnerships with other education institutions and Indigenous communities



Extend our relationships with employers in academic program renewal and WIL opportunities

To create high quality learning opportunities, we will:



Transform academic content, design and delivery to meet evolving needs



Strengthen resources and training opportunities for faculty



Offer opportunities for all students to develop technical and 21st-century skills through experiential learning

To enhance student experiences, we will:



Foster a learning environment where everyone feels seen and heard, and knows they belong



Provide high-quality and inclusive support services that facilitate student engagement and retention



Improve our service delivery model to promote consistency, efficiency and effectiveness



rrc.ca