Our Promise
The Work We Take Up

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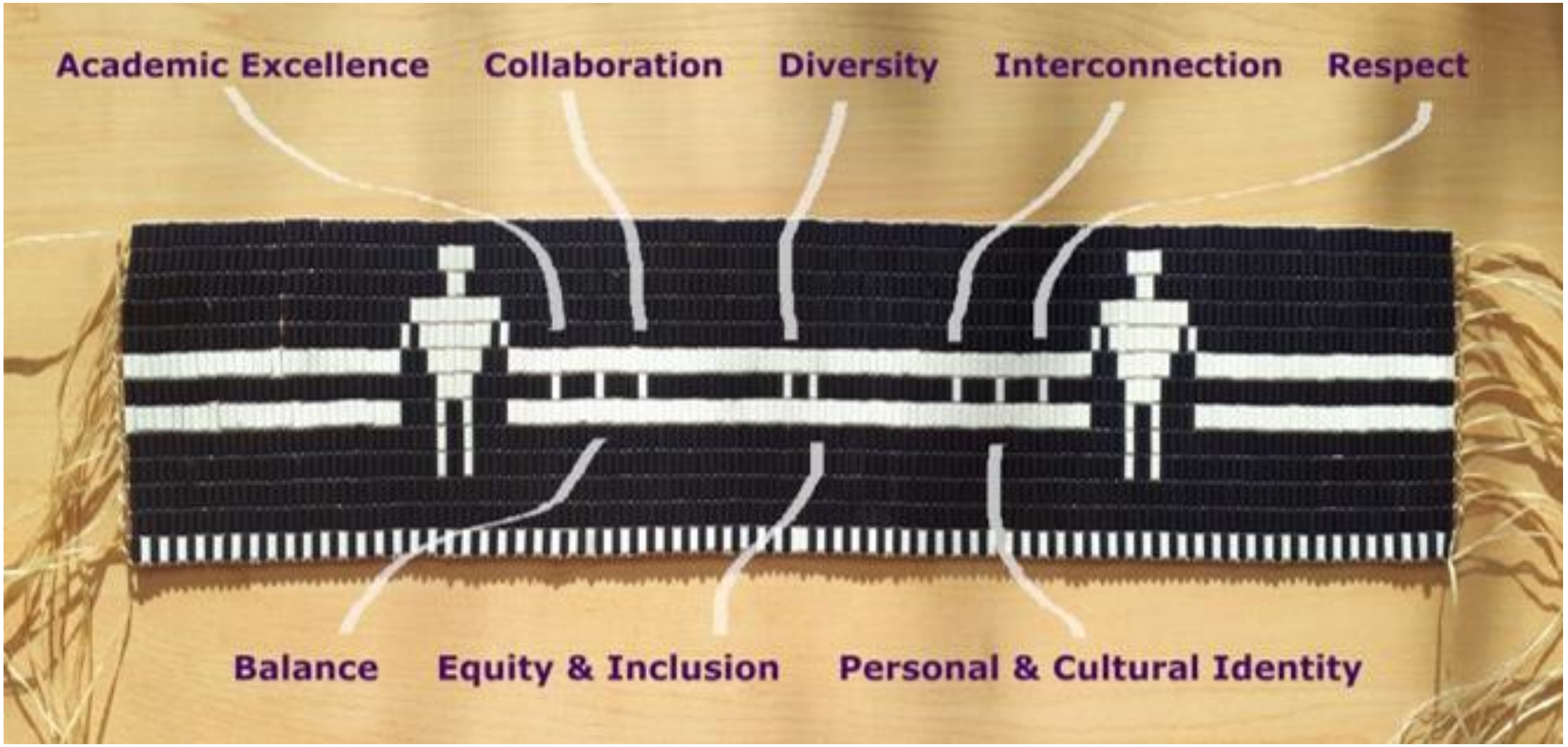
Office of Indigenous Initiatives

Western

Indigenous Initiatives


Academic Excellence
Collaboration
Diversity
Interconnection
Respect
Balance
Equity & Inclusion
Personal & Cultural Identity

Our top priority…*relationships*

- *With potential, and current students, as well as alumni*
- *With in our campus, off campus partners, Indigenous communities, on and off reserve and urban*

Healthy, reciprocal relationships allow us the tools to serve our students to the best of our abilities.

Strategies during a pandemic…*Office of Indigenous Initiatives*

The creation of the broader office has allowed ISC to focus on their roles and the students. This timing was integral to our ability to shift quickly and adapt to suit the needs of our students during a pandemic.

Without the establishment of the broader office, the strategic work would have fallen by the wayside during the pandemic.

Ensuring that there is campus-wide foundational knowledge of the Indigenous specific supports and why culturally relevant supports are a necessity.

Strategies during a pandemic…*Indigenous Student Centre*

Consistent support and programming = PEOPLE!!

- **Director**
- **Manager Admission and Enrollment**
- **Financial Aid Coordinator**
- **Part-time Art Therapist**
- **Academic Advisor**
- **Student Opportunities Coordinator**
- **Community Enhancement Coordinator**
- **Visiting Elders**

Due to our ability to focus on our work, and to the roles that we have in place, we have been able to:

- Provide virtual and in-person support, academically and personally.
- Online programming with all supplies included and social aspects
- Quickly shift our youth programming to virtual and create new pathways
- Ensure that staff are practicing self-care

Strategies during a pandemic…*Indigenous Student Centre*

Actively fostering new relationships, maintaining existing and filling the gaps. Example:
The Indigenous Academic Tutor Program in partnership with Thames Valley District School Board. Filling the needs of community, while increasing pathways to post-secondary education and providing employment to our Indigenous post-secondary students.

Creative, thorough and CONSISTENT communication

- Thrutext platform, social media direct messages and groups.
- Regular check ins through email and phone

Reinforcing our messaging consistently that we are here for ALL needs and letting them know that we are open to criticism and flexible.

Indigenous Financial Aid

The formation of a permanent Indigenous Financial Aid role…

- Allows Indigenous students to have a culturally relevant support which is less stress for them
- Allows us to ensure that no student will have to terminate their studies due to financial need.

Relationship building with…

- Third party funding contacts in communities
- The registrar and their financial aid staff

…has created great efficiency for ISC and our students.

Both are ESSENTIAL because….

- **Case by case, each student has their own set of needs**

- **And the parameters around funding change regularly**

The Options….

National Indigenous Scholarship Program

- For ***incoming*** Indigenous students who plan on attending Western University's main campus
- ***Three*** awards:
  - Two for students applying from a Canadian high school at $50, 000 each ($20,000 for year- one, $10,000 for year's two to four based on ongoing registration)
  - One for a student applying from a post-secondary institution at $50,000 ($20,000 for year-one, $10,000 for year's two to four based on ongoing registration)

Deadline: March 14th, 2021 (11:59pm EST)

https://indigenous.uwo.ca/students/future-students/national-indigenous-scholarship.html

The Options….

OSAP

- Difficult online application, students need 1:1 support to navigate
- Can create barriers if changes need to be made and if identity documentation is not accessible

Work study

- An opportunity for students in financial need gain valuable work experience part-time, mentorship, and training.
- Available to full time students during the academic year (September- April) and during the summer term to student who are registered in summer classes (June-August)

https://indigenous.uwo.ca/students/programs/financial-aid.html

The Options….

Sponsored Students (Band Council/various third parties)

The organization/agency must:

- Send a sponsorship letter is sent to the university.
- Ensure that the letter is received by the tuition payment due date by fax/email to accounts receivable.
- Pay the student fees once they have received an invoice from Western University.

The student must:

- Provide the correct information to their organization/agency of sponsorship
- Make sure to check their Student Centre to see if tuition and fees have been paid and should make sure to contact accounts receivable or support staff to have that resolved as soon as possible to avoid any complication or late fees.

Dependent on the source of funding the coverage varies (some include living, books etc. others do not) and the largest barrier is created by the variation in expectations and student responsibility:

- Some require a maximum course load of 5 despite the institutions full time requirement of 3.5 +
- Consequences for falling below the average grade requirement for each course, failing 1 or more classes or a term
- When dropping classes, they must contact their funding agency

This creates significant stress and anxiety for our students.

The Options….

External Bursaries and Scholarships

- Indspire
- Métis Nation of Ontario Bursary
- Dream Catcher Fund
- Kathleen Blinkhorn Aboriginal Student Scholarship
- Scholarships for LGBTQ2S
- Indigenous Mentorship Network of Ontario (IMN)

Our best advice for all students...

CONNECT with US!!

Questions?