



## CASE STUDY:

### FOSTERING A CULTURE OF SERVICE EXCELLENCE

“Janet LeBlanc’s experience with other large organizations was extremely helpful. She worked closely with us, providing guidance on what to focus on next and where to put greater emphasis. Janet had the knowledge and expertise to help us move forward, create momentum, and make noticeable improvements to the student experience.”

**Lucie Mercier-Gauthier**

Associate Vice-President, Student Services  
uOttawa



uOttawa

## UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA— STATS

Students: **42,500+**  
Staff members: **8,300+**  
Alumni: **190,000**  
Undergraduate programs: **200**  
Graduate programs: **185**  
Classrooms: **280**  
Teaching laboratories: **304**  
Research laboratories: **812**

[www.uottawa.ca](http://www.uottawa.ca)

## University of Ottawa (uOttawa)

### OVERVIEW

uOttawa is the largest French-English university in the world, earning additional recognition as a top 200 university globally, a top 10 Canadian research-intensive university, and a top employer in the National Capital Region. The main campus of uOttawa is located on more than 100 acres of land adjacent to the historic Rideau Canada and walking distance from Parliament Hill.

In 2010, uOttawa unveiled a 10-year strategic plan, Destination 2020, which aims to differentiate the university in multiple areas to meet provincial funding requirements, protect its financial sustainability, and improve its programs, processes and practices. Four primary areas of focus emerged as part of the Destination 2020 roadmap and scorecard: place students at the centre of the educational mission (student experience), create and share knowledge (research excellence), promote and strengthen the Francophone communities (bilingualism), and open up to the world while contributing to Canadian ideals (internationalization).

### CHALLENGES

Specific to the student experience, uOttawa had already determined that improvements and enhancements were warranted. Surveys and other feedback revealed inconsistencies in how services or information were being delivered. Facing financial pressures and fierce competition, uOttawa recognized how critical it was to grow its reputation as a university of choice by strengthening every element of the student connection.

uOttawa dedicated itself to transforming the student experience and becoming a leader in Service Excellence. The goal was to develop a common vision of Service Excellence and an action plan that was supported, implemented and prioritized at every level. With over 8,300 academic and support staff to mobilize in a highly decentralized environment, it would prove challenging to build consensus, awareness and consistency. For one, not all teams interacted with students, making it more challenging for some to understand why they needed to be involved or how they could make a difference.

Lucie Mercier-Gauthier, Associate Vice-President of Student Services, explains, “One of our biggest challenges was to make senior management aware that it could help tremendously in improving the services we provide. Although it’s not always viewed this way, students are ‘customers’ of the university. Our students were giving us feedback that 11 faculties had 11 different ways of doing things and service levels weren’t always meeting their expectations. We needed to raise awareness throughout the university community that each and every one of us needed to do our part to simplify and streamline our processes and make them more student-centric.”

There was also a lot of pressure to move forward and get things done despite a lack of dedicated resources. It was clear that Service Excellence was the objective, but what did the operational architecture look like? What specific steps would be required to effectively mobilize leadership, build engagement, raise awareness, and inspire a university-wide culture of change?



## CASE STUDY:

**University of Ottawa** cont'd



## SOLUTION

A Network of Service Excellence Champions, serving as role models and change agents from various departments across the university, was assembled to drive and sustain the vitality of the Service Excellence program. The university also brought in Janet LeBlanc + Associates, an award-winning customer value and experience management consulting firm, to provide expertise and advice.

Janet LeBlanc conducted a comprehensive gap analysis relative to best practices in Service Excellence. She facilitated a working group to develop a Service Excellence vision and build a three-year roadmap. Janet also provided guidance to the university in developing a Service Excellence measurement framework to evaluate the end-to-end student experience across campus.

Lucie says, *“There were many of us who related to the models Janet proposed. She clearly understands that models resonate with the university culture. All the pieces were included in the framework—themes that allowed us to identify short, medium and long-term priorities and develop action plans for them. When we presented the final dashboard to the faculties and services, it made sense to them. We felt Janet’s overall approach was inclusive, clear and achievable.”*

## RESULTS

Lucie says, “The Network of Service Excellence Champions has made tremendous progress opening dialogues with faculties, services and the student population. People are understanding they need to ask themselves what they can do to enrich the student experience.”

“The more staff members at every level communicate, collaborate and commit to the Service Excellence vision, the more we are witnessing student-focused qualities and values work their way into the language and culture of the university community. There is a noticeable difference including at the senior management level. It’s very encouraging,” she says.

Between 2010 and 2014, the level of student engagement climbed from 59% to 75%—and the goal is to keep improving these scores. In October 2014, campus-wide awareness was raised to new heights with the launch of a Service Excellence Week. In addition, uOttawa’s commitment to Service Excellence has been integrated into all new employee and supervisor training, with discussions to retrain thousands of existing employees to the new standard.

Lucie adds, “Recent survey results reveal that staff are viewed as more helpful, line-ups and wait times are not as long, and the quality of service is improving. We are also getting feedback through various communications channels that the changes we are making are positive. There’s no question we have more to work on, but we’re certainly headed in the right direction.”