Imagining the Future:
Towards an Academic Plan for Queen's University

Submitted to Principal Daniel Woolf

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INTRODUCTION: IMAGINING QUEEN'S[*]

In the winter term 2010, the Principal, Daniel Woolf, asked us to provide input to assist him in the formulation of an academic plan for Queen's. We were tasked, inter alia, with reviewing the responses the Principal had received to the document he wrote to initiate the planning process, *Where Next?*. The Principal asked that we report to him before the senior administrative retreat scheduled for 1 September.

At our first meeting in April, we identified as our primary task *listening for resonances* – shared ideas about the challenges facing Queen's and the future of our university. To do this, we attempted to synthesize and digest the varied responses to *Where Next?* and to put them in broader context through meetings with individuals and groups from different parts of the Queen's community. We also invited all members of that community—faculty, staff, and students—to communicate directly with us. We asked people to identify the core values of Queen's as it is now, and we asked people to share their vision for the kind of university they would like to see in the next five to ten years.

What follows are the results of our search for resonances within the Queen's community. In keeping with our advisory status, we have framed this report as our recommendations to Principal Woolf. Our recommendations are framed as *goals* that Queen's as a university might set itself for the future, recognizing that the establishment of clear goals is an important first step in the planning process.

We also recognize that the establishment of metrics—or empirical and analytical measures that allow us to know how well we are doing in achieving goals—is a crucial part of the planning

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[*] We would like to thank Katarina Keenan-Pelletier and Eric Leclerc for their excellent support of our team's work.

process. For that reason, we have recommended, where we felt it appropriate, *metrics and analytics* for the identified goals.

We have several caveats. First, we recognize that our report does not seek to provide a comprehensive review of every aspect of our university. We did not purposely neglect specific areas, such as the finances of the university; rather we recognized our limitations and felt it best not to comment where we had insufficient knowledge or information.

Second, coming from different academic cultures with distinctive identities we recognized early in the process that the six of us held opinions that were quite diverse. Therefore, we have consciously sought to provide recommendations that go beyond our individual disciplines.

Third, we all became acutely aware of the enormity of the task of planning at the post-secondary level. Indeed, academic planning for universities has become increasingly professionalized, with peak organizations like the [Society for College and University Planning](#), and scholarly journals like *[Planning for Higher Education](#)*, and well-developed sets of "best practices." Needless to say, given the existence of a highly professionalized academic planning industry, our group emerged from this process convinced that what is needed is an on-going *culture of planning* at Queen's.

We thus constructed our role in a more limited way, seeing this report as but one in a series of introductory steps to the process of creating an academic plan, hoping that our perspectives will be useful for the next stages of its development. To this end, we sought to synthesize the considerable amount of information generated in response to *Where Next?*, but also to listen to the range and diversity of voices and perspectives, often contradictory. In this report, we also seek to expose the contradictions that we believe are important for making planning decisions in the hope that an open and transparent process of dialogue will lead to an effective plan for Queen's that will enjoy broad and sustained support.

Our optimism about the planning process has been fuelled by our brief discussions with members of the Queen's community over the course of the summer. We were very much impressed with the thoughtful inputs received, and want to thank all those who participated, in small and large ways, in this process. It became clear to us that Queen's continues to have a solid sense of community; its members are proud of our university and its traditions, and are deeply dedicated to our core missions. These discussions with the community convinced us of the importance of *process* in the academic planning endeavour. Whatever the end *product*, the engaged dialogue among individuals and groups has been positive. The more people who think and talk about what makes Queen's the university that it is, and how we can build on our strengths for the future, the better.

1. PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Any plan for the future will succeed only to the extent that we are clear about what we value, about our past and for the future. These values should act as a filter for decisions and new directions.

> *Goal 1.1:* **To identify and agree on the values we share at Queen's that will serve as a guide to academic planning.**

The Queen's community values academic excellence, a sense of community, a broader learning experience, engaged students, loyalty, and school spirit. We need to build on these values and to integrate them tangibly into the vision for our future: e.g., enhancing international engagement, becoming more inclusive, more innovative in teaching and in research, and more interdisciplinary.

We believe that the academic plan should be founded on principles of highest quality in undergraduate teaching, graduate and post-doctoral education and supervision, and research. Despite financial difficulties, we cannot undermine our core missions.

At Queen's, we value academic quality. We set high standards for scholarship, have high admission standards and are known for the quality of our faculty, students and staff. Queen's should emphasize inquiry and discovery-based learning.

We also value balance. The university offers an outstanding undergraduate experience and graduate and professional programs within a research-intensive environment. Teaching and research are interconnected elements of a strong academy.

We value leadership. A Queen's education should be designed so that students and alumni can participate in complex problem solving in organizations, communities, and societies. Increasing

our focus on interdisciplinary teaching and research will provide additional opportunities for students to address multi-faceted, complex issues in the classroom and in the field.

We value inclusivity through internationalization and diversity. As internationalization expands at Queen's, and increased opportunities are provided for interaction with citizens of other nations, the cultural sensitivity of the university community is deepened. The university commits to educating its community to respectfully embrace different ways of seeing and valuing the world. Students learn to be global citizens. Queen's faculty, students and staff value "social purpose" and public service, and through our teaching, research and service are net contributors to the Canadian society and global community. Other principles that guide us are imagination, innovation and integration. These are expanded on in *4.7 Integration and Inclusivity.*

However, we also need to make decisions about some, potentially conflicting, values that could take us in very different directions. Two values in particular that we discussed can be best posed as questions: (i) how decentralized or centralized should Queen's be? and (ii) how transparent should Queen's be?

The first we raise as a question without offering a recommended answer. We note that traditionally Queen's has been a highly decentralized institution, where academic units have a high degree of autonomy. We observe that while this has had a number of positive effects— such as the encouragement of initiative and the flourishing of a culture that permits the adaptation of practices to "local" conditions—it has also had a number of negative impacts. For example, the Vice Principal (Research) has noted in his submission to *Where Next?* that decentralization in hiring makes it harder to develop strategic areas of research through hiring. Likewise, the decentralization in curriculum matters makes it harder to achieve interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinarity. While we do not offer a view on whether in the future Queen's should choose the path of greater centralization or remain largely decentralized, we argue that culture, structure and control issues must be explicitly addressed.

On the second question, by contrast, we do offer a view, which we articulate at greater length below: Queen's, as it embraces its future, needs to more transparent and open (see *5.2 The Importance of Transparency*). Furthermore, we believe that this step will help frame approaches to the issue of centralization.

> *Goal 1.2:* **To capture the essence of what studying at Queen's involves, and ensure that this unique experience is preserved and enhanced. Students cherish the "Queen's experience" and we need to preserve its distinctiveness.**

Queen's University students tend to be curious, inquisitive and on a life-long journey of knowledge discovery. They have "spirit" – keen enthusiasm, passion and loyalty regarding

Queen's, and a deep sense of accomplishment and satisfaction while at Queen's, as the responses to the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) suggest.

The residential nature of Queen's provides the opportunity to foster a close-knit community among its students, post-doctoral fellows, staff and faculty. The typical Queen's student has the potential to be highly engaged. Students invest themselves on campus (in clubs, departmental activities, residence activities, social gatherings, etc.) and beyond the campus (in service learning projects, volunteer activities, work, etc.). Even when students graduate, they stay engaged. Alumni value their association with the university long after they leave and are part of Queen's extended virtual community. Thus, we should plan to more formally engage our alumni, asking them to become an even more valuable resource for feedback, innovation, quality assurance and strategic planning processes at the unit, program, faculty and university level.

Metrics/analytics: At present, the NSSE scores and other measures, such as the *Maclean's rankings*, are the main metrics used to track student engagement at Queen's. However, as we note above, further metrics are needed. We also do not sufficiently monitor the many student projects on campus and in the community. We do not know enough about what students value about these projects and how they rate their experiences. In addition, we do not track closely alumni contributions of a non-financial nature across the campus. Given the high engagement, the potential for students and alumni to contribute further to Queen's is significant. Spirited, non-financial contributions (e.g., volunteer service at Queen's, and classroom and research contributions) may have as great an impact as gifts and alumni donations. We need to know how much students value the contribution of alumni to their experience.

We recommend that the planning process ensure the preservation of a well-described, measurable "Queen's experience" as well as student and alumni loyalty. Furthermore, we must be careful to build the Queen's community even as we engage new educational strategies.

Planning exercises need to have a timely outcome, but the process is important in itself — bringing together people from disparate elements of the community to imagine our future. However, in order for a strategic or institutional plan to be successful, it needs to be implemented using targets, milestones, and regular checkups (i.e., metrics) to chart, monitor, and celebrate the achievements. Our team recommends that Queen's institute a permanent mechanism for driving change facilitated by a rigorous, but comprehensible, system of metrics to assess our achievements.

> *Goal 1.3:* **To improve on the collection, analysis and interpretation of performance indicators in order to provide timely feedback on our successes and failures.**

Queen's takes great pride in maintaining very high admissions standards and in the high academic quality of our student body. Thus, it is a given that we should constantly strive to

provide a distinctive and high quality educational environment, characterized by effective faculty-student interactions, state-of-the art facilities, and appropriate academic and career progression for students during their tenure here. To continue to attract the best students we will need to be vigilant with respect to our programs, experiences, culture and environment so that they rival comparable institutions worldwide.

Impediments to Queen's being recognized as achieving these objectives include the lack of system-wide and well-resourced monitoring programs assessing all aspects of the educational experience. In fact, the current provincially-mandated institutional performance indicators that are published by colleges and universities do not provide a coherent vision of post-secondary institutions with respect to their role in society or even regarding how well they fulfill the province's requirements (e.g., with regard to accessibility, equity and diversity).

We question whether we want to be constantly chasing external metrics such as the [Maclean's university rankings](#), the [Academic Ranking of World Universities](#) (the so-called Shanghai Jiao Tong rankings), the [Times Higher Education World University Rankings](#) or the [Fuzzy Cluster Analysis of University Rankings](#). In short, we very much need more appropriate Queen's-shaped tools that we will actually use, across the campus and over time, to "*measure our success.*"

To date, despite the availability of a host of data sources at Queen's, there has been a noticeable lack of integration of the findings among units, programs, faculty and the university, in general. Strategic grouping issues such as student and faculty composition, as well as those related to programs, research, services and campus environment are all highly relevant and yet most of us are not aware of the associated metrics. Appropriate knowledge translation and transfer of these results needs to become a routine component of how we operate.

Although there are a host of performance indicators available, one recent example is the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE). This instrument, first administered in 2000, measures students' levels of engagement with their institution on an annual basis by involving randomly selected first-year and senior-year students at hundreds of four-year colleges and universities in Canada and the United States. It contains items that reflect confirmed "best practices" in undergraduate education (i.e., that reflect student and institutional behaviours associated with desired outcomes). The five benchmark scores—Active and Collaborative Learning, Level of Academic Challenge, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment—are generated from 5-7 questions per benchmark. Given the widespread use and apparent acceptability of this kind of assessment, it would seem prudent to take the results seriously. It is noteworthy, that at present we do not have formal, system-wide processes at the department, program, or faculty level to "deal" with results such as those from the NSSE.

Nor are our current metrics sufficiently sophisticated or program-specific to measure other important aspects of student engagement: what students value when they choose Queen's; what keeps them engaged; and what they value after they graduate.

It is clear that the availability of appropriate, ongoing analysis and interpretation of outcomes data would provide us with the evidence that change is or is not required. The continuous availability of "current" data would very likely lead to more dynamic improvements in teaching and learning, as well as in career progression of the students. Simply stated, more consistent, regular and appropriate quality assurance of all of the components of the educational programs would benefit all of our students.

The anxiety surrounding metrics comes, in part, from the concept that academic freedom and autonomy for individuals, units, programs and institutions is of fundamental importance. However, Queen's is a primarily publicly funded, post-secondary institution and should always strive to find an appropriate balance with respect to the needs of students, faculty, staff on the one hand and the interests of society on the other.

We have much to lose if we do not embrace processes that *measure our success*. Appropriate, comprehensive, system-wide as well as program-specific performance measures would allow us to (i) perform rational academic planning on a more regular basis; (ii) plan to differentiate ourselves from other institutions; (iii) improve the educational outcomes valued by students, alumni and society in general; (iv) foster transparency between and within groupings at the university; and (v) continue to attract the best and brightest minds based on a fundamental understanding of what Queen's offers.

2. DIFFERENTIATING QUEEN'S

In this section we seek to articulate what we believe is distinctive about Queen's among the approximately 90 universities in Canada. While we have a good sense of what Queen's has traditionally been best known for, and while we believe that there are some elements, such as the "Queen's experience", that ought to be preserved, the planning process needs to begin with a vision of what Queen's seeks to be in the medium term.

> *Goal 2.1:* **To develop a niche position as Canada's only research-intensive university that offers both high-quality graduate degrees in selected fields and a rich undergraduate educational experience.**

Historically, Queen's has been known as one of Canada's premier undergraduate institutions, known for the high quality of its academic programs, its residential experience, and its "spirit." The durability of the Queen's "brand" has not only been reflected in its constant ability to attract the very best students from across Canada and elsewhere, but also the deep and abiding loyalty of its widening alumni base.

In the last twenty years, Queen's has become more research intensive and has also dramatically increased the size of its graduate programs. Today, as a result, Queen's is a member of the Group of Thirteen (G13) Canadian research-intensive universities (by 2008, Queen's was sixth in research funding per full-time faculty in Canada). This research intensity was accompanied by a sizeable expansion of the number of graduate students: between 1998 and 2008, there was a 47.5 per cent increase in doctoral students and a 41.1 per cent increase in master's students.

As a result of these changes, Queen's is now in a distinctive position in the Canadian university system: it is a research-intensive university with sizable graduate and professional programs that is nonetheless known for the quality of the undergraduate educational experience in a relatively small residential-based campus.

However, the rapid increases in both research intensity and graduate student enrolments have implications for undergraduate programs, which experienced modest growth in the same period. Undergraduate enrolments in the Faculty of Arts and Science rose 10 per cent between 1998 and 2008; enrolments in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science rose 27.3 per cent.

While graduate enrolments in particular rose dramatically—by nearly 48 per cent in the case of doctoral students—the size of the faculty complement did not keep pace: the number of Queen's faculty rose from 708.4 equivalent full-time staff (EFTS) in 1998 to 877 EFTS in 2008, a 23.8 per cent increase. This has put increasing pressure on undergraduate programs, as the submission from the Faculty of Arts and Science makes clear.

How to preserve and strengthen Queen's research intensity, while arresting and reversing the trends that threaten the quality of the undergraduate experience, is the challenge that faces Queen's today as it embarks on a planning exercise.

In this report, we recommend a number of measures designed to enhance the undergraduate experience, and in particular integrate more fully the research intensity with the undergraduate learning experience (see below, *3.3 The Undergraduate Experience*).

In this way, we believe that Queen's can "square the circle"—in other words, it can be research intensive and a centre for high-quality graduate education, while at the same time maintaining our historical reputation for high-quality undergraduate education.

Embracing this overarching goal could have exciting implications for Queen's. With relatively few resources, the culture of research intensiveness, successfully fostered over the last decade, would be maintained. Graduate programs, particularly at the doctoral level, would need to be monitored carefully for quality, and enhanced (see *3.2 The Graduate, Professional and Post-Doctoral Experience*). The primary implications would be at the undergraduate level. Embracing this distinctive niche for Queen's would mean taking concrete steps to reinvigorate the undergraduate mission, seeking to integrate it more closely with the research-intensive mission, and seeking to broaden and deepen the engagement of the full-time faculty in undergraduate learning. This is discussed further below (see *3.3 The Undergraduate Experience*).

Metrics/analytics: We recommend that the metrics for assessing the achievement of this broad goal should consist of as many standard measures as possible, including but not limited to the following, recognizing always that every individual measure of university performance has particular strengths and weaknesses:

- [Common University Data Ontario (CUDO)](#) data, including the percentage of incoming students with first-class entering averages from secondary school, and the number of Ontario scholars as a percentage of OAC registrants

- Responses to the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (particularly measures of student-faculty interaction; level of academic challenge; active and collaborative learning; enriching educational experience; and "overall" questions, benchmarked with Ontario universities, focussed peers and broader peers)

- Indicators of teaching performance, such as internal and external teaching awards, and a variety of university teaching evaluations

- Graduate student data, including retention rates, graduation rates, post-graduation employment, benchmarked with Ontario and G-10 universities, including responses from the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student survey

- Standing in rankings of universities, both globally (Times Higher Education Supplement, Shanghai Jiao Tong) and within Canada (*Maclean's*, *Globe and Mail*)

- Standings in rankings of Canada's research universities ([RE$EARCH Infosource](#), G13 benchmarks), measurements to include total sponsored research income, faculty research intensity, research output indicators and research impact

- Other indicators of research intensity, such as number of external awards or honours (e.g., the Killam, Steacie, and Trudeau awards, and fellowships in such academic societies as the Royal Society of Canada).

3. THE CORE MISSIONS

We recommend that Queen's seek to consolidate its niche as a research-intensive university that offers both high-quality graduate programs and a rich undergraduate experience. We recommend goals for each of these missions.

3.1 Research Intensity

> *Goal 3.1:* **To foster and sustain a rich, innovative and dynamic research environment that attracts the best researchers and provides a rich learning environment for our students.**

As a member of the Group of 13 (G13) research-intensive universities, Queen's has a strong and well-reasoned interest in building on the efforts made over the last two decades to create a culture of research intensity at the highest level. As noted above (see *2. Differentiating Queen's*), we see the research mission as a crucial co-equal element for defining the university's distinctiveness in the future, and we recommend that the university continue to place an emphasis on research intensity in all of its operations, including recruitment.

However, we recommend that the process of planning take considerable care with any attempt to identify areas of research excellence. First, the *[Strategic Research Plan](...)*, approved by Senate in 2003 and amended in 2006, remains the formal statement of Queen's University's strategic plan for the Canada Research Chairs and Canada Foundation for Innovation Programs, and altering that strategic plan—which identified eight multidisciplinary research clusters, together with sub-clusters and themes—could have a negative effect on Queen's eligibility to participate in the CRC and CFI programs.

Second, we believe that the identification of core research competencies at Queen's is an on-going process that should be driven by the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research). We believe that this process should be transparent and must fully engage the Queen's community,

including alumni and graduate students. It should make evident the criteria used to determine core competencies. The decision-making process and criteria may be as important as the actual decisions made.

The university planning exercise should focus on ways that the university can provide core support to all faculty members in their research, regardless of the fit (or lack thereof) with identified university strengths and opportunities. That is, an important role remains for investigator-driven research programs outside of the stipulated areas of research excellence.

Metrics/analytics: Metrics for the research intensity of the institution as a whole will differ from metrics for individual researchers. We noted above (*2. Differentiating Queen's*) the standard metrics for measuring the university's standing as a research-intensive institution, though we again caution that some of the measures employed in "league table" or rankings approaches must be used with considerable care.

For individual faculty members, we recommend that multiple measures of research intensity be used. Instead of focusing only on the measures that are used to determine institutional research standing—notably publications in high-impact journals—we recommend that wider criteria be used to assess the contributions that an individual faculty member makes to discovery, including but not limited to:

- "Output" measures: peer-assessed scholarly journals; scholarly books, book chapters or creative work; organization of conferences and publication in conference proceedings; successful supervision of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows; achievements of our graduates; patents awarded

- "Input" measures, such as external grants

- "Recognition" measures, such as citation/impact factors; research awards and fellowships; journal editorships; distinguished lecture and visiting scholar invitations

- "Innovative" measures, such as: submissions to government/professional bodies; expert opinions; establishment of industrial partnerships; establishment of spin-off companies; demand for graduates and graduate student placement; student involvement in research; equipment; knowledge mobilization (e.g., impact through media); and impact on the field, the broader scientific community, students and postdoctoral fellows, and the public.

3.2 The Graduate, Professional and Post-Doctoral Experience

> *Goal 3.2:* **To ensure that graduate, professional and post-doctoral education and research opportunities are advanced as a critical enterprise within the Queen's community.**

Queen's University has superior graduate students who make up close to twenty percent of the total student body. Derived from a highly competitive applicant pool, Queen's attracts students who achieve high levels of external scholarship funding (45 per cent of funding-eligible graduate students have external funding), complete their degrees at a rate consistent with national standards in all discipline clusters, and, according to Ontario Council on Graduate Studies (OCGS) consultants, are very productive in terms of publications and presentations resulting from their graduate work.

The evidence is clear that the contribution of these talented graduate students to the success of our research enterprise and resultant high standing among the G13 research intensive universities is critical. Graduate students also enrich the overall educational community acting as tutors, mentors and leaders, in addition to their well-recognized role as Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Teaching Fellows (TFs).

Based on the importance of these contributions to our overall mission, Queen's needs to continue to be aggressive in attracting the best students (e.g., providing guaranteed, centrally facilitated, competitive funding packages) and a rich, educational experience that is both student- and career-progression centred.

It should be stressed that the supervision and mentoring of graduate students is "core" to our mission. Graduate students contribute substantially to the university's revenue; they generate a significant net financial gain from a complex of tuition, scholarship and BIU (Basic Income Unit[*]) funding. Furthermore, a breakdown of the main sources of support using data from the 2008-2009 academic year reveals a rank order of funding components: external scholarships

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[*] Basic Income Units (BIUs) are the funding units used by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) to calculate the provincial grants to Ontario universities. Each student reported to the government for funding purposes generates a specified number of BIUs depending on the program of registration and the level of study. BIUs are derived from full-time equivalent student numbers (FTEs): the total number of FTEs in each program category is assigned a weight which seeks to reflect the relative resources or effort required to operate that program. FTEs are then multiplied by the category weight to produce the BIUs for that program. The base BIU is generated by one full-time undergraduate student enrolled for two terms of general degree work offered in a liberal arts program. The current value of a BIU is approximately $5000. Students taking honours, professional or graduate programs generate increased BIUs: for example, an upper-year arts student is worth 1.5 BIUs, an upper year science student or an engineering student 2 BIUs, a master of arts student has an annualized weight of 3 BIUs, a master of science 4 BIUs, and a doctoral student in all programs 6 BIUs.

(45.3 per cent) > grant supported research assistantships (20.5 per cent) > teaching assistantships (20.1 per cent) > and endowed awards (7.1 per cent). That is, we take in considerable government revenue to support graduate studies, and yet students are funded by non-traditional revenue streams. System-wide transparency and a revenue attribution approach might provide a clear picture of the benefits of strong and innovative graduate programs.

Teaching Assistants and Teaching Fellows are funded from faculty/department operating budgets. They play a key role in the undergraduate curriculum and thus they are a required "cost of doing business." Having graduate students as TAs and TFs provides undergraduate programs with the services of talented and qualified individuals, while providing a valuable experience in leadership, mentoring and teaching for our graduate students.

To ensure that this goal is achieved, we need to

- more clearly communicate the successes of our graduate programs, both internally and externally

- implement a transparent funding formula that is fair and equitable to both new and successful existing graduate programs

- create a comprehensive and continuing database to facilitate regular review of performance metrics (e.g., intra-program and immediate post-program outcomes, and career progression)

- inaugurate a regular and transparent academic planning process that advances new graduate programs, appropriately supports successful ones, and provides for sunset clauses for programs winding down

- develop a plan for greater national and internationalization collaboration involving sister institutions and appropriate funding bodies (e.g., MITACS), that allows our graduate students and post-doctoral fellows to engage in quality exchange and internship programs both in academia and in industry, and

- formally recognize the importance of faculty mentoring in graduate student training. Currently, there is little assessment of this activity, despite its wide acceptance as an effective teaching method. As a result, many highly effective mentors are not recognized in this instructional role and opportunities for sharing and improving mentoring practices are limited.

Post-doctoral fellows (PDFs) play an important role in advancing the core Queen's missions. As PDFs embark on their scholarly careers following the successful completion of their doctoral degrees, they are at the forefront of knowledge generation. They can also play an important

role in delivering the undergraduate program. We recommend that PDFs be given greater recognition and support as a critical part of the Queen's community.

3.3 The Undergraduate Experience

Goal 3.3: **To provide Queen's undergraduates with a rich educational experience.**

We propose that Queen's reinvigorate its commitment to the undergraduate experience while maintaining its strong commitment to research and graduate studies.

A rich educational experience at the undergraduate level should include:

- Maximal engagement between faculty and students, which enriches the undergraduate experience. Such engagement comes in a variety of ways, such as the availability of a small-group experience for senior students, student academic advising directly by faculty, or mentoring in a capstone experience. While engagement becomes more difficult in larger undergraduate courses, Queen's needs to organize itself so that these opportunities are offered at all levels of an undergraduate's program.

- A commitment to the ideal of having full-time faculty be responsible for providing the best possible learning experience to undergraduate students. There is significant benefit in learning from and being mentored by those who are widely recognized as leaders in their research field. Queen's should promote a culture of pride in undergraduate teaching. We believe that an "always learning, always teaching" approach should be adopted to achieve this goal.

- An opportunity for undergraduates to integrate the research experience during their education: there should be a natural synergy between the knowledge creation and reflection by faculty and graduate students and undergraduate programs across the university. We recommend that Queen's incorporate the culture of research intensity more systematically throughout undergraduate programs, including "capstone" experiences.

- A seamless transition between all programs at Queen's and those at international exchange institutions with which Queen's has a partnership. Students should be able to spend a term or a year abroad without being unduly restricted by program requirements (see also *4.4 Internationalization and Student Mobility*) or other impediments.

- Access to courses across a range of disciplines, except where appropriately limited by prerequisites (see also *4.3 Interdisciplinarity*).

- Ease of navigation through program and degree options. Undergraduates should experience transparency from the first contact with Queen's recruiters through to the completion of their degree. High school recruitment needs to be open and honest in indicating to would-be students (and their parents) what Queen's can—and cannot— offer them. And once at Queen's, students should be able to navigate their way through program and degree options as easily as possible, with departments, faculty offices and student services making sure that information, particularly regarding prerequisites, is available to students in a clear, timely and accessible manner.

Reinvigorating a commitment to the undergraduate experience will require action in a number of different areas:

- We recommend that the senior administration reaffirm the importance of undergraduate learning in Queen's threefold mission—research, graduate and professional student mentorship, and undergraduate learning.

- Given the impact of course buyouts and teaching releases on the undergraduate program, we recommend that the university and the Queen's University Faculty Association review the use and impacts of course buyouts and teaching releases, and share this information in a transparent manner with students and faculty.

- In order to lower the barriers to international exchanges—both Queen's students going overseas and foreign exchange students coming to Queen's—all departments and programs should explore and/or implement policies that enable students to take a term or a year at another institution as seamlessly as possible. The university itself should consider implementing some of the best practices of the Bologna Process for the transfer of marks of students on exchange.

- In order to encourage interdisciplinary studies at the undergraduate level, we recommend that, given current resource constraints, Senate initiate a university-wide review of programs with the aim of simplifying program requirements and identifying degree combinations that are no longer feasible, particularly in the Faculty of Arts and Science. Timetabling issues also need to be addressed in order to facilitate interdisciplinary studies.

- In order to assess the undergraduate experience more accurately, we recommend that Queen's consider multiple measures for course evaluation. Since a course evaluation that is administered during class time in the last two weeks of a course can only provide a partial evaluative measure of that course, we recommend that Queen's study the possibility of on-line evaluations (such as the Mercury system currently used by McGill University), or a "deferred judgement" model, in which students are asked to evaluate a course's contribution to their learning after the passage of a number of years. While this

would be a costly and lengthy process, it would be a concrete signal of Queen's commitment to measuring student *learning* – and not only "customer satisfaction."

Metrics/analytics: We recommend that the quality of the undergraduate experience be assessed by a variety of metrics, including, but not limited to, the following (recognizing, as always, that appropriate judgement needs to be applied to the selection of metrics):

- Percentages of undergraduate classes taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty, term adjuncts, continuing adjuncts, post-doctoral fellows, and doctoral students

- Number of students completing a capstone experience, and type of capstone experience appropriate to the discipline/program

- Number/percentage of students on international exchange

- Evidence of internal (program) barriers to international exchange

- Evidence of barriers to interdisciplinarity

- Responses to National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) that explore student-faculty interaction; level of academic challenge; active and collaborative learning; enriching educational experience; and "overall" questions, measured year over year, both in the aggregate and by program

- Evaluations based on [University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations](#) (UUDLEs) developed by the Ontario Council of Academic Vice-Presidents and subsequently endorsed by the Council of Ontario Universities

- Responses to a multiplicity of teaching and learning evaluations, including USAT evaluations and other measures put in place to assess learning

- Responses to exit surveys.

4. THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Among the common resonances we heard was the importance of teaching and learning as crucial to the Queen's mission. In this section, we explore different elements of teaching and learning at Queen's. We begin with a reflection on the learning experience.

4.1 The University as a Community of Learners

> *Goal 4.1:* **To provide transformative learning experiences that assist students in becoming self-directed, responsible, life-long learners.**

Queen's has some of the best and the brightest students in the country and we want to offer them the highest quality learning experience, to prepare them for lifelong learning and to facilitate the development of foundational competencies. We have high-quality faculty and staff who want to help students reach their full potential. If resources continue to decline and student-faculty ratios continue to increase, we recommend that we adapt our learning models. It is evident that efforts made by educational developers at Queen's have had a positive impact on learning at all levels. We outline several different approaches for consideration.

The University as a Learning Community: Rather than seeing teaching and research as distinct activities, we see a continuum of learning that reflects changes in the way in which knowledge is acquired and created. As students enter the university, they acquire the ability to self-learn within a pre-existing knowledge framework. Later, they acquire the ability to discover new knowledge, and are eventually able to do so independently. More advanced learners are able to make a significant contribution to knowledge within an area of study. This can further progress to learning new ways of knowledge discovery and new concepts of knowledge. Typically, more advanced learners are thought to *teach* those who are advancing, and the process of knowledge discovery is termed *research*. It can also be stated that all members of the community of a university are all active somewhere in this *continuum of learning*, including

undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, staff, junior faculty, and senior faculty.

Learners need to realize that they have responsibilities in the process of knowledge acquisition and for the use of knowledge once acquired. Within the process, learners must actively engage in opportunities afforded them and personally assess outcomes. Once acquired, the learner is responsible for sharing knowledge with others to some positive effect. These roles become more demanding as the learner becomes more advanced, and we need to ensure that we provide these more challenging opportunities.

In short, we need to see ourselves as members of a learning community, engaged in the process of knowledge discovery.

Learning to Learn: There are a number of different models that have been articulated for the process of "learning to learn."

- *Outcomes-based learning models*: The [University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations](#) (UUDLEs) guidelines emphasize an outcomes-based approach to curriculum, with emphasis on knowledge acquisition, methodologies, application, skills development, and professional preparation. Such an approach streamlines curriculum development, moving away from input or content-based models toward developing core competencies and skills through inquiry-based models. In order to adapt our curriculum, we should explore new tools, such as the ICE (Ideas, Connections, Extensions) assessment model.

- *Inquiry-based learning and research first*: Capstone experiences support independent inquiry-based learning, but we need to orient students as learner-researchers as early as possible. When students are engaged in team-, project-, or case-based learning beginning in first year, they become conscious of the steps in knowledge creation, skills they can use throughout their degree program. There is ample evidence that inquiry-based models assist students in becoming self-directed, responsible, life-long learners, outcomes we would like to see in all Queen's graduates. This approach need not be limited to small classes, but can be successfully implemented in larger classes with guidance, supervision and appropriately configured learning spaces.

- *Student-to-student mentoring*: There is already a great deal of student-to-student mentoring at Queen's on an ad hoc basis. A more formalized university-wide student mentoring program, which for example partners third-year and first-year students (thereby allowing for a two-year interaction), would help students to acquire study and time management skills, and ensure a smooth transition to a university learning environment. It would also give upper-year students an opportunity to pass on their knowledge and become engaged in community service in their learning community.

- *Enhancing learning – virtual learning*: In order to preserve small-class experiences for some students (e.g., those in their upper years), some larger classes will be needed. But large-class learning need not be limited to lectures. Technology can be an important supplement to in-class learning, accommodating different learning styles, facilitating instructor-student interfaces and enabling the delivery of materials via several platforms. Virtual learning does not replace the instructor; it can supplement the classroom experience and enhance overall learning.

- *Flexible learning spaces*: Space and infrastructure will be an on-going concern for Queen's in the coming years. Large-class spaces have already been identified as a priority, but inquiry-based learning would be facilitated by redesigning existing rooms into flexible small and medium-sized learner-centered spaces (see also *5.6 Infrastructure*).

- *Sustainable programs and program development*: In order to ensure student satisfaction, we need to be honest about which programs will be sustainable in the long run. Queen's currently offers a vast number of degree program concentrations and combinations. While student choice is important, most would argue that overall service to students is more important. If students have a wide choice of available programs but the courses they need for these programs cannot be offered in sustainable ways, then student satisfaction diminishes. A significant proportion of students is increasingly interested in flexible, interdisciplinary programs, which allow them greater freedom to be more active participants in directing their studies (see also 4.3 *Interdisciplinarity*). Such programs are less dependent on specific core courses, allowing for more flexibility in program delivery. Interdisciplinary programs and streamlining degree options are also ways to maximize resources.

Flexible Learning Systems – Transformative Learning: As we look to the future, we recognize that there are a number of different systems for "learning," particularly those systems that seek to be transformative.

- *Skills-based first-year courses*: We can assist students in becoming better learners by offering skills and competency-based first-year courses, focusing on study habits, oral and written communication, peer-to-peer interactions, critical analysis, and other learning tools.

- *Service and community-based learning*: Many Queen's students are actively engaged in service work in the greater Kingston community, including health, education, business, social needs, and the environment. Offering non-credit certificates documenting these contributions and the learning achievements of these extracurricular experiences would further integrate service into academic life, and establish the value of service.

- *Student-leadership learning*: Many student leadership roles are demanding positions with considerable responsibility. Offering non-credit certificates documenting these

contributions and the learning achievements of these leadership roles would further integrate leadership into academic life, and establish the value of leadership.

- *Residence-based learning*: Similarly, non-credit certificate courses taught in the physical space of the residence with a focus on some area of residence life, e.g., team building, environmentally sustainable living, community service, and social responsibility, would integrate academic and residence life, and establish the value of the residence community.

- *Student-led projects*: A large number of extracurricular projects such as team design competitions and business practice competitions can develop competencies that are consistent with learning objectives in many programs. We should develop ways of formally recognizing such activities, including recognition of faculty in their mentorship roles in these enterprises.

- *Social responsibility and ethics*: We should integrate our aspirations for the ethical development of Queen's students into the competency-based curriculum (peer and faculty assessments). To integrate the concept of social responsibility into every aspect of university life will require innovation. Service learning and community learning opportunities can be part of this model.

Learning to Teach/Teaching to Learn: Part of the learning process is the transformative role played by mentoring.

- *Incentives for teaching and curriculum development*: Curriculum development and reflective teaching take time, and so we should reward outstanding teaching in tangible ways, and recognize these achievements and the value this adds to the learning environment at Queen's (see also *4.5 Innovation in Teaching and Learning*).

- *Centre for Teaching and Learning* (CTL): The CTL provides mentorship to all instructors (faculty, staff, post-doctoral fellows, graduate student TAs and TFs, and undergraduate TAs). If we are serious about staying at the forefront of teaching and learning, then we need strong centrally coordinated CTL-facilitators and a way of integrating the CTL into the everyday business of teaching across units and faculties.

- *Graduate student training, supervision and mentoring*: A broader view of professional development in graduate student training is required. We recognize that teaching fellowships help finance graduate students' studies and in some units graduate student teachers play an integral role in program delivery. However, teaching is also an important component of professional development for graduate student instructors. Training, supervision, and targeted mentoring benefit both graduate student teachers and undergraduate learners. The CTL offers excellent programs for student teachers, but such training needs to be more broadly integrated into the graduate student

experience. Students should be mentored as part of their overall professional development in making the transition from being an undergraduate student to an independent researcher.

4.2 The Curriculum

Goal 4.2: **To deliver the curriculum with maximum efficiency and simplicity in order to offer the highest-quality educational experience to students.**

Queen's should aim for maximum efficiency in the undergraduate curriculum while maintaining a high-quality undergraduate experience. Three issues stood out:

- *"Service" and cross-listed courses:* We note that a number of units that require that students taking their concentrations acquire particular knowledge (such as statistics) tend to offer their own courses that are tailored specifically to their discipline, but may differ only marginally from comparable courses being offered by other units. Likewise, we note that some units offer courses that could be regarded as fulfilling the requirements in other concentrations. We strongly recommend that units assess which courses could be co-operatively taught, or offered to provide students with "required" knowledge. In many cases, the documentation of expected learning outcomes (competencies) would greatly simplify the process while placing it within a recognized curriculum development framework.

    We also recommend that units consider accepting, where appropriate and subject to space availability, more courses offered by other units for concentration credit. Use of a flexible "modular" format would also be one way of providing a *common course component* (i.e., needed in all courses) complemented by a "break-out" format where the remainder of the course has distinctive program elements. This could have particular benefits in facilitating the availability of courses across faculties, such as between Arts and Science and Engineering and Applied Science.

- *Program complexity:* In the Faculty of Arts and Science, there are at present approximately 1600 degree combinations. This creates a burden for the Faculty, particularly when a significant number of degree concentrations have a very small number of students. We also note that many of the programs offered by the Faculty are marked by a high level of complexity. As indicated above, we recommend that Senate initiate a review of degree combinations and program requirements, particularly in the Faculty of Arts and Science, in order to identify degree combinations that are no longer feasible, and simplify program degree requirements; impacts on programs offered in other faculties need to be considered.

- *Class size:* There is a common view—reflected, for example, in the *Maclean's* rankings—that only small classes can offer a quality experience to students. We disagree with the assumption that *only* low student:faculty ratios translate to quality education. Moreover, in the current financial climate, it is not realistic to embrace the normative goal that *every* class must be small.

  This is particularly true, we believe, at the first-year level. In 2008, Queen's offered 376 first-year courses (not labs or tutorials, which are counted separately). Of these, 126 (or 34 per cent) had fewer than 30 students, 69 (18 per cent) had between 30 and 60 students, 57 (15 per cent) had between 61 and 100 students, 88 (23 per cent) had between 101 and 250 students, and 36 (10 per cent) were large classes of >250 students.[*] While clearly in some cases, such numbers are warranted, we question whether such a high concentration of low-enrolment courses in first year is the most effective way to use our finite resources.

  Rather, we suggest that a range of class sizes would be more efficient. Offering large lecture courses (>400) and medium-size classes (100+) allows us to provide small-class (≤24) experiences for students. We recognize that altering the present patterns may affect Queen's standing in the *Maclean's* rankings, but our view is that Queen's cannot afford to have its policy driven by these rankings. We recommend that Queen's focus its efforts on innovation to promote the most effective learning experience, and not dwell on class size as a specific end goal. As changes are made, student learning and satisfaction will need to be closely monitored.

4.3 Interdisciplinarity

Goal 4.3: **To increase opportunities for interdisciplinarity.**

Transdisciplinary research, teaching and learning should be encouraged because working at the edges of disciplines increases the potential for innovation. This has become an outstanding

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[*] It should be noted that these data, reported to us by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, differ markedly from the enrolment data officially reported by Queen's to Common University Data Ontario (CUDO), a data collection facility maintained by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). In its CUDO report for 2008 enrolments, the latest that is publicly available, Queen's reported that there were 492 first-year courses, fully 281 (57 per cent) of which had fewer than 30 students. The discrepancies in data arise because Queen's strictly follows COU-approved methods for reporting enrolment data that, for example, allow universities to report multiple enrolment sections of the same course as multiple "courses" with fewer than 30 students—even though all the students in these "courses" attend the same lecture in one large theatre given by a single professor. In other words, COU methods permit Ontario universities to appear to have many more small classes than they actually do, underscoring our concern for developing appropriate metrics.

feature of research activity at Queen's and we recommend that the university work to decrease barriers for students who seek interdisciplinary learning and research goals at all levels. This can be achieved, for example, by developing "streaming options" and flexible interdisciplinary programs, adding to a number of such initiatives already underway.

However, we do not believe that interdisciplinarity can only be achieved by creating an administrative structure in which to house it. Specifically the notion of interdisciplinarity as a "discipline" is much less preferable to the concept of students learning to function within a number of knowledge frameworks. Because of the impact on existing systems, we should ask, before we establish new autonomous interdisciplinary units, whether we can achieve our interdisciplinary goals with existing structures or more defined collaborative ventures (see also *5.5 The Sustainability of Academic Units*).

4.4 Internationalization and Student Mobility

> *Goal 4.4:* **To increase international engagement (student exchanges, research collaborations, and international students).**

"Internationalization" refers to both the international activities of Queen's students and faculty and the number of international students and researchers who spend time at Queen's.

Queen's already has considerable international activity. In addition to the large number of faculty members, whose research has an international component, the university also has a well-established institutional commitment to internationalization. The Bader International Studies Centre (ISC) continues to attract both first-year and third-year Queen's students. In the School of Business, over 75 per cent of commerce students participate in international exchanges. The Faculty of Law has an international program based at the Bader ISC. Both the Department of Global Development Studies and the School of Policy Studies have programs based at Fudan University in Shanghai, where Queen's maintains a successful liaison office. Many other faculties and units also have active exchange programs. Similar discipline-specific initiatives have been undertaken in several faculties.

In addition, Queen's is a founding member of a new global network of similarly sized and structured universities, the Matariki Network of Universities (MNU), which counts among its members Dartmouth College, Durham University, Queen's University, University of Otago, University of Tübingen, University of Western Australia, and Uppsala University. The intent of the MNU is to develop both research and teaching linkages. We believe that developing a framework for more focused international collaboration with these universities will help advance the goal of internationalization. We encourage both the administration and academic units to work to develop concrete collaboration with these new partners.

There are a number of units at Queen's dedicated to expanding and furthering internationalization, including the Vice-Provost (International) and international offices in other faculties. At Queen's itself, the Queen's University International Centre provides support for those "incoming" staff and students from abroad, and "outgoing" Queen's students and staff. Coordination of international activities is conducted through a central coordinating committee, Queen's University International Programs Committee (QUIPC).

While internationalization has clearly increased over the last decade, the number of international undergraduate students at Queen's is relatively low. According to the 2008 counts, the latest figures publicly available, there were just 451 students on student visas out of 13,458 bachelor's/1st professional degree students – merely 3.4 per cent. By contrast, of 1823 master's students, 292 (16 per cent) were visa students. Of 895 doctoral students, 213 (23.8 per cent) were on student visas.

Expanding international engagement at Queen's will require a centrally coordinated effort involving all parts of the Queen's community, from the Principal down to individual units.

First, internationalizing initiatives by the senior administration need to be more solidly integrated with the activities of faculties and units. Greater central support, particularly financial support, should be allocated to the multiple facets of the university's internationalization plan.

The university needs to encourage departments to better accommodate undergraduate students, particularly in the Faculty of Arts and Science: incoming students need more secure access to courses, and outgoing students need to more flexibility in programs to ensure seamless exchange experiences. The courses and marks achieved on international exchanges should be clearly documented on Queen's transcripts. In addition, virtualization initiatives involving partner institutions abroad could facilitate internationalization.

The Vice-Provost (International) needs to play a key coordinating role in advancing the university's priorities related to internationalization. We also need to more fully develop the "Queen's International" brand and provide the practical support required (e.g., additional travel awards and bursaries to students to facilitate international travel and exchanges). Innovative programs, such as the "Global Citizen" certificate program being considered, should be fostered. (If approved, the Global Citizen certificate will be an academically-oriented, extra-curricular program of events, seminars and experiential activities related to international leadership, cross-cultural communication and global connectedness.)

Increasing the number of students at Queen's on international student visas will require more determined effort, in part because of structural impediments created by heavy differential fees on foreign students and barriers to permanent residency status. We need to account for Queen's location in Kingston, both difficult to travel to and lacking the urban multicultural experience sought by many international students. As international engagement increasingly

becomes a core activity of Queen's over the next decade, the creation of an expanded Office of International Student Services that facilitates efforts in faculties, departments, programs, and streams could be explored.

Queen's cannot expect dramatic increases in revenue from visa students overseas, but we recommend that consideration be given to increased recruitment from the American market, particularly in the Northeast. Queen's could reasonably be an affordable alternative to universities like Dartmouth College or Middlebury College: Middlebury's "comprehensive fee" (tuition plus room and board) is USD$52,120, while at Dartmouth tuition is USD$38,400, with total annual costs estimated at USD$49,900.

Metrics/analytics: The metrics for measuring the success of the goal internationalization include: the numbers of Queen's students going on successful exchanges; competitive students from partner universities spending a term/year at Queen's; graduate and undergraduate students on student visas; numbers of international research linkages; and the number of faculty and graduate students conducting field work overseas. Other metrics, where appropriate, should be developed, ideally in association with international partners.

4.5 Innovation in Teaching and Learning

> *Goal 4.5:* **To develop better incentives for innovation.**

In most universities, the search for innovation in teaching tends to be impeded by the day-to-day demands of established patterns and routines. Even in normal circumstances, faculty experience difficulty in finding the time, opportunity or resources to develop innovative new ways of teaching. In the last two decades, however, this condition has been aggravated at Queen's by the progressive increase of demands on faculty and staff to do more with fewer resources as expectations have increased and many tasks and functions that were previously carried out by the central administration have been downloaded to academic units. Moreover, in many units, both academic and non-academic, staff positions have been cut, leaving both staff and faculty with larger workloads. Ways need to be found to give members of the Queen's community the incentive to innovate.

The question is: How to generate innovation in educational technology, courses, or programs in a faculty that already feels burdened?

First, the university should continue to offer tangible help to project leaders to develop ideas and concepts into the best possible projects (e.g., via the [Principal's Innovation Fund](#) or the [Principal's Development Fund](#)). Units could also create transparent and separate budget planning processes designed to fund meritorious innovative projects at various times during the year.

In addition to financial resources necessary to create both time and incentive to innovate, we need to find ways of recognizing the very significant intellectual effort and time that must be invested by staff and faculty in developing an innovation. We recommend an incentives program that provides staff and faculty with regular recognition from their peers, such as Principal's Innovation Awards in research and teaching, for which faculty and staff could be nominated.

4.6 Reassessing How We Count Teaching and Learning

Goal 4.6 **To rethink how we "count" teaching and learning.**

A normal assumption is that a course taught by a single instructor over one or two terms has a fixed course credit for both student and instructor. But the workload for the instructor can vary significantly, depending on course size, course content, new preparation, and level of coordination and supervision required. We recommend that the university study a more flexible system of course-credit allocation for instructors. Likewise, student learning outcomes vary considerably in a course, depending on the level of independent learning; once again, a more flexible course-credit allocation, as described in section 4.1, may be useful.

4.7 Integration and Inclusivity

Goal 4.7: **To *integrate* the principles of inquiry, interdisciplinarity, internationalization, imagination, innovation, and inclusivity into the university's core mission.**

We have identified these as established and emerging core values at Queen's, but we believe that more broadly integrating their common themes and threads would better support the university's goals.

Diversity and equity are intimately connected to the question of inclusivity (in the largest sense of the word). Queen's needs to continue to evaluate the many aspects of belonging and community that diverse students, staff, and faculty, including equity-seeking groups and minority voices of all kinds, consider important. The university must address community challenges related but not limited to socio-economic disadvantage, disability, gender, race and religion (see *Queen's Diversity, Anti-Racism, and Equity Panel Report, 2009*).

Internationalization needs to be more integrated with concerns of diversity and inclusivity. Our diversity is partly dependent on the full range of our international endeavours: students from outside Canada; student exchanges abroad; international research collaborations; and internationalization at Queen's—in the curriculum and in the community. We need to develop

an *integrated model of inclusivity and internationalization* inside and outside of Queen's, inside and outside the classroom.

We need to shift our thinking and consider the distinctive contributions that people from underrepresented groups contribute to the university. When we consider the diverse voices on campus, whether visible or invisible minorities, we often think about services we can offer to these groups. But a range of experience and perspectives greatly enriches the learning environment for all people at Queen's (students, staff, and faculty). If creating and maintaining an inclusive environment is not supported as an institutional priority, we potentially forfeit the value and benefit that increased diversity brings to the greater community.

Interdisciplinarity involves breaking down barriers between bodies of knowledge and needs to be more broadly integrated into our policies of inclusivity and internationalization. Interdisciplinarity and inquiry are often considered aspects of research, teaching and learning. An exciting innovation would be to use these tools to help sharpen our thinking about who we are, what we do, and how we do it. With imagination, we can develop an innovative plan to integrate these principles into a larger model for the community.

5. THE QUEEN'S COMMUNITY

This section focuses on a number of additional goals that we believe could be articulated about Queen's. We begin with the idea of community, which we believe must be central in any planning process. We also focus on a number of issues that revolve around efficiency.

5.1 The Importance of Community

> *Goal 5.1:* **To preserve a sense of community, congeniality and cooperation at Queen's.**

A university is a community, and in order to thrive, we need to have a sense of common purpose, to appreciate other units and faculties, and have some knowledge of what they are doing (see also *4.7 Integration and Inclusivity*).

This requires effective communication between units, a serious challenge for Queen's given the historically decentralized nature of the institution. We recommend that the university work to preserve and enhance congeniality, communication, and cooperation across campus, for example by using university-wide publications. Transparency and frequent and clear communication of the goals and aspirations of other units or individuals builds trust and leads to more cooperation and mutual respect for our various contributions to the overall mission of this university.

Communicating the accomplishments of Queen's personnel to the general public and decision-makers is essential. In addition to fulfilling our mission of outreach and public education, effective communication of the products of our research and teaching further demonstrates the relevance of our work to decision-makers and the public at large. Among the best advertising or branding for a university such as Queen's is the demonstration of the importance of thoughtful opinions, based on sound scholarship and research, which are vital to sustaining a thriving democracy. Moreover, it demonstrates, by clear example, to students and others the

importance we attach to our responsibility to maintain a high calibre of community involvement, and to promote an educated, engaged, and active citizenry.

5.2 The Importance of Transparency

> *Goal 5.2:* **To embrace a culture of openness and transparency in allocative decision-making.**

Taking community seriously implies that the decision-making processes that shape the community be as open and transparent as possible, particularly in the area of allocations. In our deliberations over the summer we were struck by the degree of opaque decision-making that appears to mark much of university operations. However, we believe that this opaqueness is, in the longer term, detrimental.

We understand why universities are hesitant to disclose detailed financial information. Universities cannot operate properly as *universities* unless there is a considerable degree of cross-subsidization, where a "profitable" set of operations allows an "unprofitable" part of the university to continue operating. The politics of cross-subsidization—and in particular the demands of some units to be allocated more of the revenue that their operations generate—tends to foster an understandable desire on the part of the senior administrations of universities to keep the allocative process opaque, on the grounds that there will be greater harmony.

We have a different view. Over the longer term opacity can have more negative than positive effects. The Queen's community would benefit from transparent allocation processes, and from the open and frank discussions about re-allocations that would inexorably result. Let the community be aware of special arrangements that are needed in particular situations; let the community hear the public explanations. Let the community see clearly the cross-subsidies that are necessary to keep a university in balance—and hear the rationale. We believe that sharing information openly, and giving members of the community an opportunity to discuss allocations, would result in a stronger community.

We therefore recommend that the decision-making process be made more open. The allocative process should be explained to the community, even when there will be annoyance and criticism from some quarters. We trust the Queen's community to respond positively in the main, given the values that bind us together.

5.3 The Value of Time

> *Goal 5.3:* **To recognize the value of time and to strive to achieve efficient use of all of our human resources.**

Time is one of a university's most cherished commodities. However, at Queen's, faculty, staff, and students are challenged by diversions from their core activities by a fast-growing number of tasks that have little to do with our main responsibilities of teaching, research, and service. Over the summer, we returned repeatedly to the issue of time and how it appears to be increasingly devalued. We believe that this is a root cause not only for inefficiencies of different kinds, but also for considerable frustration on the part of faculty and staff.

If the Queen's community is asked to do less with less in the current financial climate, then simply rationalizing what the university expects faculty to do with their time is something that needs careful and *in-depth* scrutiny. If time is money, then we cannot afford to waste our human resources by wasting people's time. When we considered the erosion of costly faculty time by the variety of administrative tasks that have been downloaded to faculty, we often felt that we could "do more with less" or at least "do it differently with less" if more attention were paid to the issues of time and efficiency.

Services, which allow Queen's personnel to do their jobs effectively and efficiently, have been diminishing as responsibilities such as finance, purchasing, and human resource management have been downloaded to academic units without an equivalent increase in staff resources. For example, websites designed to make operations more efficient can end up costing time if IT support is insufficient. With the erosion of efficient, centrally-provided services, it becomes increasingly difficult to carry out the core missions of the university: undergraduate teaching, graduate mentorship and research.

The new financial system implemented at Queen's University is worthy of highlighting as an example of centrally-made changes that have resulted in an inefficient use of faculty time. Faculty members with large numbers of graduate students and other research-supported personnel have been disproportionately affected by this system because the administration of research budgets has been downloaded to them. This has had a negative impact on core activities such as mentoring students and undertaking research and has had considerable opportunity costs. Given the amount of time that has had to be devoted to dealing with this problematic system, it stands as a useful reminder that poorly designed or implemented procedures have many hidden costs, in addition to their advertised price tags.

We recognize that staff positions have been eroded and that personnel at Queen's feel burdened by increasing workloads. This may be in part due to increased regulation across the university and throughout the post-secondary system. Regardless of the reasons for the increased administrative workload, we see the increased demands of time on all members of the Queen's community as a major challenge for the university in the years to come.

5.4 The Value of Staff

> *Goal 5.4:* **To value non-academic staff as crucial for the central missions of the university.**

At any university, the non-academic staff performs a vital role in ensuring the smooth operations of the institution. Staff at Queen's are by and large enthusiastically engaged and dedicated to the overall mission of the university. We need to value this strength and enable staff to achieve maximum productivity.

This requires that the non-academic staff be supported as a crucial human resource for Queen's. Careful attention needs to be paid to the creation and maintenance of a healthy workplace. Career development should be fostered through advancement opportunities and training as outlined in our Educational Equity Policy. Internal mobility should be actively encouraged.

Queen's is ranked as one of Canada's Top 100 Employers, and scores very well on a number of measures employed in this benchmarking exercise. However, some of the metrics on which Queen's scores well are derived from benefits enjoyed by faculty that are not available to non-academic staff. Moreover, we note that "employee engagement" is ranked as a B. In our view, efforts should be made to improve non-academic staff satisfaction through further engagement; they have an expertise and a knowledge of the university that should be used, where appropriate, to inform policy decisions.

We therefore recommend that the university explore mechanisms for communication, both within the non-academic staff community itself, and between the non-academic staff and the university, that goes beyond the consultative mechanisms outlined by the Memorandum of Understanding between the university and the Queen's University Staff Association of 1997.

Valuing non-academic staff also requires the rational, transparent distribution of staff across units, and a careful consideration of their duties. Regular review of staff roles and responsibilities should be implemented.

We believe that a thorough re-assessment of how and why staff are assigned to different units is in order. Many of the present discrepancies in staffing levels exist for what are sometimes called historical reasons—shorthand for allocative decisions made in the past to deal with a particular short-term need that over time have become embedded because of inertia, leading to inefficiencies. Staffing allocations can also affect morale, since members of staff themselves are well aware of other staff doing essentially the same job, but at a different level that exists only because of historical reasons.

For that reason, we recommend that a transparent formula be developed to determine how university-supported staff be allocated to academic and non-academic units, and at what salary levels.

The senior administration needs to ensure that all administrative units on campus *directly* contribute to the overall core missions of the university. We therefore recommend that all units be regularly reviewed to assess how they can more effectively contribute to these core missions.

Metrics/analytics: We recommend the use of multiple measures for valuing non-academic staff. Because the annual Canada's Top 100 Employers competition is based on *all* employee groups on campus, its metrics will not always reflect the conditions faced by non-academic staff. Clearer measures would be found in the results of the periodic surveys of staff, students and faculty conducted by Human Resources, and the metrics employed in the periodic reviews of non-academic units. Expansion of the performance measures index would be very valuable.

5.5 The Sustainability of Academic Units

> *Goal 5.5:* **To ensure that academic units are sustainable.**

In addition to the more than 80 departments, schools, divisions and programs in the five faculties and three schools at Queen's, there are also 82 units of different sorts: 6 university centres and institutes; 10 faculty centres and institutes; 48 research groups, units, labs, programs; 13 resource and service centres; and 5 new centres provisionally approved.

Most academic units require Queen's resources: space, institutional support (financial accounting, IT support, administration and reception) and coordination, frequently involving teaching reductions for academics serving as dean, associate dean, director or coordinator.

In a period of fiscal restraint, it is important that resources be allocated to units that directly contribute to the university's core missions. We note that since 1998, 18 centres have been closed or have had their operations suspended. We recommend that the university develop appropriate metrics to ensure that all existing units (departments, schools, divisions, programs, centres, institutes, groups and labs) to which Queen's resources are being allocated are indeed contributing to the university's core missions. We recommend that these metrics be applied to any proposal for the creation of any new academic unit.

We suggest that this recommendation apply even to multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary teaching and research, which we have identified as an important goal for Queen's (see *4.3 Interdisciplinarity*). There is an understandable tendency to want to house a new multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary initiative in its own unit. However, without appropriate innovation and planning, this could divert resources from existing disciplinary units. A new program should be required to generate a net gain. Moreover, we must be careful not to create

inefficiencies by generating further overlap in research and course offerings by assuming that new interdisciplinary units be autonomous.

We are of course aware that disciplines in the modern university have evolved as a result of fission, as new ways of exploring broke out of the "disciplining" boundaries of existing academic structures. We are nonetheless concerned about the sustainability of existing discipline-based structures, particularly since some very successful graduate programs, in particular, continue to be discipline-based and are regulated by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies. It may be time to consider consolidating various related departments into *multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary schools*. We recommend that this process be inclusive and driven from the bottom-up, as departments are invited to identify synergies and potential amalgamations.

5.6 Infrastructure

> *Goal 5.6:* **To initiate a permanent educational infrastructure planning and implementation process involving all members of the Queen's community.**

The [Queen's Campus Plan of 2002](#) appears to be the last comprehensive report dealing with the many aspects of our infrastructure. The 2002 Plan was intended to provide guidance for creating a physical environment of buildings and outdoor spaces that promotes and supports our diverse institutional outcomes. Four goals, taken from the contemporary Queen's Strategic Plan "Queen's in the 21st Century," were deemed particularly relevant to campus planning:

- To continue to attract and retain students with outstanding potential and diverse backgrounds from across Canada and around the world;

- To strengthen an environment that stimulates exceptional research and teaching; supporting this with up-to-date facilities, information, resources, and technology;

- To provide rigorous, relevant, and challenging programs of study. Queen's undergraduate and graduate programs will encourage students to expand their personal horizons and provide a basis and framework for continued personal and intellectual growth; and

- To prepare graduates for roles as citizens and leaders of a sustainable global society; nourishing the "broader learning environment" to enhance opportunities for community service, cultural growth and personal development.

Only two strategies targeted issues related specifically to the quality of classroom instruction and innovation in teaching. One (Strategy 32) was related to education and research, and simply indicated this was the primary purpose of the university on the main campus, and new

facilities should still be distributed to encourage intra- and inter-disciplinary contacts. The second (Strategy 33) related to instructional space, and indicated only that lecture halls/classrooms should optimally use space according to changing class sizes, functions, and teaching methods, and should be located in areas that minimize walking distances. The document further indicated that "these halls should be designed to the highest possible standards, but they should offer enough flexibility to permit their adaptation to new uses. They should also be carefully planned and located—possibly underground—to ensure that the 'black box' syndrome common to large interior spaces is not permitted to degrade adjacent buildings and open spaces. Smaller lecture rooms, classrooms, and seminar rooms should be distributed throughout the campus in increased numbers. The design of these facilities should reflect emerging educational practices and requirements."

Although these goals contain somewhat general statements, they appear to be as valid today as they did almost a decade ago. However, since then, the political and economic landscape for available resources and the basis of decisions governing best educational practices have changed. Thus, questions that still arise are "How far have we come?" and "How far do we still need to go?" Of particular interest to most is the infrastructure required by each unit, school or faculty to achieve and exceed their desired goals in both research and education. In this regard, a specific and commonly reported need is for an increase in the number, size and adaptability of teaching areas with up-to-date educational technology.

If we are to have the infrastructure we both want and need, our challenge will be "To do it differently with less, but still do it extremely well." However, it does not stop with the provision of new infrastructure; we will need to engage in a continuous, iterative planning process for infrastructure renewal and renovation so that we will always be trying to create contemporary, active learning environments.

In particular, we have heard numerous suggestions for the creation of virtualization of classrooms and laboratories, videoconferencing, state-of-the-art demonstrations and interactive instructional classrooms for team-based learning and technology-enhanced learning. Others have recommended building more areas that facilitate learning communities, in places where students congregate and in surroundings that encourage their use. Still others have recommended more intensive use of existing structures (e.g., evening, weekend and year-round use of classrooms and residences). The same issues are being taken into consideration at post-secondary institutions around the world.

To stay current and relevant and to keep us at the forefront of educational technology and facilities, we need to initiate infrastructure planning and implementation processes that are university-wide and involve widespread input from the Queen's community. Carefully coordinated creation of flexible learning spaces that attract, challenge and engage students while serving their diverse learning styles can only enhance the success of our educational endeavours.

Infrastructure planning also needs to be informed by a commitment to environmental issues. Members of the Queen's community have raised "green issues," calling for efforts to reduce printing and our carbon footprint. Universities should lead by example. Plans for new or renovated buildings and other infrastructure should seek to exceed minimum environmental standards whenever possible. The recently convened university-wide Queen's Sustainability Advisory Committee (QSAC) is an important first step in fostering a more environmentally-friendly university, and we recommend that QSAC be involved or consulted in all infrastructure planning.

5.7 Information Management

> *Goal 5.7:* **To use information technology strategically to advance the university's goals in the face of resource constraints.**

Information is a resource. At Queen's, it has the potential to become a strategic resource—a powerful asset to underpin teaching, research and administration. In addition, information technology (IT) has the potential to cost-effectively support innovation in learning, e.g., via virtualization, e-learning, distance learning, and the provision of online resources. IT has the potential to cost-effectively support innovation in research, and to expand the range and reach of collaborations and communications. In addition, IT has the potential to introduce new administrative efficiencies.

Queen's has the opportunity to transform itself into an information-enabled, globally connected institution, with data flowing in a seamless way both internally and externally to students, parents, alumni, governments, industry and media. Queen's has the potential to increase the integration of teaching platforms, library systems, and computer/research labs. Increased partnerships can be fostered in the provision and maintenance of information resources and IT infrastructure. Through innovation, Queen's can be at the forefront of Canadian campuses in the design, use and management of its information architecture, IT infrastructure and information management (IM) services.

IT and IM no longer simply serve a support function at Queen's. Access to information and the deployment of IT have major implications for all members of the university community—students, staff and faculty. When information is available and both IT and IM are handled well, everyone "wins." When inadequate attention is paid to information systems, the costs are high and result in significant missed opportunities. IT needs to play an increasingly strategic role at Queen's. Although we believe the creation of new administrative roles generally should be avoided at Queen's, the centrality of IT/IM suggests that the university should consider creating an Associate Vice-Principal (IT/IM).

Metrics/analytics: Given the importance of IT and IM at Queen's, it is critical that IT be well led and have high service levels. Important metrics include reliability, customer service, security

and leadership. Additional metrics identified in discussions with members of the Queen's community include: system/service speed, low costs, system flexibility, and system implementation success (e.g., error-free roll out of systems, easy-to-use interfaces and minimal training requirements).

CONCLUSION: THE WAY AHEAD

Queen's University, like all universities in Canada, exists to serve society by positively changing the way people think and act. In this context, the three core missions of Queen's—undergraduate learning, graduate mentorship, and the generation of new knowledge—converge in the role of the university as stewards of knowledge and facilitators of change.

In *listening for resonances* among the diverse opinions received in response to *Where Next?*, we were greatly encouraged by the breadth and depth of passion, energy, engagement, as well as the outstanding qualities of the undergraduate, graduate and professional students, and post-doctoral fellows, staff, faculty and alumni that make up the Queen's community. However, even with the many submissions, we were unable to comprehensively assess all facets of Queen's mission, operations, and finances as we lacked sufficient information and usable metrics.

The challenge to our synthesis was to recognize these differences and yet find common ground for core values, vision and strategies to carry us forward in a distinctive, rewarding, and sustainable way. This was not a trivial task, as the evidence was clear that there is insufficient understanding throughout our community—and likely all university communities—regarding the multiplicity of academic identities and cultures. Furthermore, we felt it was important that the process of innovative thinking and subsequent implementation be fuelled by widespread enthusiasm from the Queen's community.

At the heart of our discussions was the understanding that all members of the Queen's community clearly wanted to achieve recognizable excellence in *all* facets of our mission – as a result there emerged certain core values and principles that are distinct from those espoused in previous academic plans. These include: (i) transparency of operations in order to facilitate greater accountability and trust; (ii) the ability to objectively evaluate our successes and failures through the use of metrics; (iii) recognizing that time is a highly valued commodity, and should neither be underestimated nor wasted; (iv) fostering high levels of engagement and interaction between undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty, with alumni as a fundamental

and distinguishing attribute of our success in education and research; and (v) enhanced communications and information management platforms to enable better coordination by the university's leadership, to facilitate teaching, learning and research, and to encourage an environment of diversity, tolerance, transparency and understanding.

There is much that Queen's can be justifiably proud of. We share this pride and enthusiasm. However, nothing remains static, and our document is meant to challenge complacency. We hope that the principles and values we highlight—and the goals we recommend—will help guide the Queen's community as it takes the next important steps in planning for the future.

LIST OF GOALS

Goal 1.1: **To identify and agree on the values we share at Queen's that will serve as a guide to academic planning.**

Goal 1.2: **To capture the essence of what studying at Queen's involves, and ensure that this unique experience is preserved and enhanced. Students cherish the "Queen's experience" and we need to preserve its distinctiveness.**

Goal 1.3: **To improve on the collection, analysis and interpretation of performance indicators in order to provide timely feedback on our successes and failures.**

Goal 2.1: **To develop a niche position as Canada's only research-intensive university that offers both high-quality graduate degrees in selected fields and a rich undergraduate educational experience.**

Goal 3.1: **To foster and sustain a rich, innovative and dynamic research environment that attracts the best researchers and provides a rich learning environment for our students.**

Goal 3.2: **To ensure that graduate, professional and post-doctoral education and research opportunities are advanced as a critical enterprise within the Queen's community.**

Goal 3.3: **To provide Queen's undergraduates with a rich educational experience.**

Goal 4.1: **To provide transformative learning experiences that assist students in becoming self-directed, responsible, life-long learners.**

Goal 4.2: **To deliver the curriculum with maximum efficiency and simplicity in order to offer the highest-quality educational experience to students.**

Goal 4.3: **To increase opportunities for interdisciplinarity.**

Goal 4.4: **To increase international engagement (student exchanges, research collaborations, and international students).**

Goal 4.5: **To develop better incentives for innovation.**

Goal 4.6 **To rethink how we "count" teaching and learning.**

Goal 4.7: **To *integrate* the principles of inquiry, interdisciplinarity, internationalization, imagination, innovation and inclusivity into the university's core mission.**

Goal 5.1: **To preserve a sense of community, congeniality and cooperation at Queen's.**

Goal 5.2: **To embrace a culture of openness and transparency in allocative decision-making.**

Goal 5.3: **To recognize the value of time and to strive to achieve efficient use of all of our human resources.**

Goal 5.4: **To value non-academic staff as crucial for the central missions of the university.**

Goal 5.5: **To ensure that academic units are sustainable.**

Goal 5.6: **To initiate a permanent educational infrastructure planning and implementation process involving all members of the Queen's community.**

Goal 5.7: **To use information technology strategically to advance the university's goals in the face of resource constraints.**