EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The First and Second Junctures
In our storied 171-year past, we have seen two prior major inflection points, or ‘junctures’, that have fundamentally altered the shape and direction of University. At both points, a combination of internal factors and external circumstances triggered dramatic change where the University had to depart from its past to secure its future.

The first juncture occurred in the 1880s and ‘90s. Principal George Monro Grant and Chancellor Sir Sandford Fleming, in the midst of a brutal worldwide recession, were convinced that a national educational institution could play a role in building a young country. They turned from a small liberal arts and divinity college into a comprehensive undergraduate university with a Canada-wide reach.

The second juncture occurred in the 1950s and ‘60s, during the tenures of Principals Mackintosh, Corry and Deutsch, when tripled in size, added strong graduate programs, expanded faculties and professional schools, and became a research institution as well as an educator of undergraduates.

The Third Juncture
I believe that a third juncture is upon us. This juncture is just as momentous as those faced in the last two centuries, and it will determine our destiny and likelihood of success in the 21st century. What has brought us to this point? Rapid shifts in economic conditions, ever-advancing technological changes and the globalization of education and knowledge all contribute to this new reality. States across the world are facing massive fiscal challenges and, in countries such as Canada, the social safety net created two generations ago is under considerable strain. Immigration has increased in Canada, partly in response to a need to resupply the workforce as the tail-end of the Baby Boom generation prepares to leave the workforce over the next decade and a half, which will place enormous additional pressure on social and health services.

These are some of the external realities we face. Standing still or preserving every vestige of our past ways of doing things will not suffice. But we also need to hang on to our core values – preserve the ‘soul’, if you like, of the institution. The challenge in the coming years will be to strengthen those aspects essential to the of the past and present – our reputation for quality, our history of producing outstanding graduates at all levels, our enduring student and alumni spirit of initiative – while seizing the opportunity to reinvent ourselves yet again for a 21st century world. Now is our opportunity to continue the trajectory of the past 171 years by positioning ourselves as an institution that is mature, established and reliable, but also fresh, nimble, adaptable and of value on a global, as well as a provincial or a national stage.

The Senate academic plan has articulated a set of priorities and values that we should pursue and nurture. We are a ‘balanced academy’, and the faculty we attract in coming years should be as committed to providing an outstanding learning experience for students at all levels, from first year to senior PhD students and postdoctoral fellows, as they are to pursuing excellence in their chosen field of research.
The student experience lies at the heart of Queen's identity; along with research, it is the major driver of our reputation. It is that reputation that continues to attract extraordinary young people to our campuses. The ‘Spirit of Initiative’, a phrase that ably captures the distinguishing feature of students and its graduates, as well as our faculty and staff, captures the three central traits we want to develop among all members of our community: an unwavering pursuit of excellence in all things; the ability to think and act independently, analytically, and imaginatively; and a determination to improve the world around us.

Let us gaze outward ten years to 2022. What will Queen's look like then? I have no crystal ball, but I see the following as highly likely. Government funding per student will continue to fall, at least in relative terms. It is essential that we continue to develop alternative streams of revenue. Global competition among universities will continue to increase. In the next decade, it will not be sufficient to be ‘known’ only in one’s own country. Our reputation globally – which lags our national profile – will depend at least as much on excellence in research and innovation as it will on the student experience. We need, now, to raise our game significantly in bringing international students to campus, because positioning us as attractive to a global, expanding, university-age population will be better for the institution’s upkeep of quality admissions and diversity. As the academic plan suggests, we also need to internationalize at home and to continue to provide international experiences for our students: their success and that of our country in the future will depend on being able to work and thrive in a global setting.

The quality of our research and graduate training will be a key differentiator of Queen's from other universities of our size – a place of learning which has matched its commitment to undergraduate teaching with a commitment to graduate and professional training, advanced research and innovation.

Now is also the time to make some serious effort to increase the participation in university of our indigenous peoples – the one population group in the country that is predicted to increase and which has not been well-served by existing postsecondary structures.

Within our financial constraints, and recognizing that we are an institution of learning, we must put into place the systems needed to support students individual and specialized needs. I believe that Queen's can take a leadership role among Canadian universities in providing the academic and non-academic supports to ensure that all successful applicants reach their potential.

A new campus master plan currently under development will take account of our future enrolment levels, funding for specific projects, and in particular, the way teaching, learning and research will be conducted. We need to think about our campus itself as a teaching tool and ask how it can best be configured – or reconfigured – to meet the needs of tomorrow's students.

Academically, by 2022, we will need to have moved the University decisively away from the current three hours of lecture per week per course, which is neither sustainable nor necessary, and in fact has the potential to become an impediment to active learning. The experiments of several departments have shown that much can be achieved through a blended model of learning.

In the longer run, technological changes will necessitate our adaptation in ways even more compelling than fiscal changes, and they will do this whether we wish them to or not. Budget difficulties can be overcome, governments rise and fall, generations of faculty members arrive, mature, and retire. But social media are here to stay, just like the laptop and the internet and more recently the iPad and its rivals – just like the airplane, the locomotive, the television and the telephone in earlier generations.

As scholars and academics, why should we care about any of this? The reason is simple. It is about developing the University in such a way that we continue to draw the best and brightest from across Canada and increase our intake of excellent students from around the world. Failing to do so will have real long-term academic as well as financial consequences.

The challenges before our community are immense and may seem to drive out all other concerns – may incline us to turn inward, hunker down, and think only of protecting what we have. This is not what our predecessors did, nor would they have done so in our circumstances.

When the fourth juncture in Queen's history comes, as it surely will when we are long gone, I hope that generation will look back in gratitude, for the steps we took to renew Queen's.