

FORWARD WITH INTEGRITY: THE NEXT PHASE

Looking to the Past: Changes Made, Initiatives Underway

Since its release in September 2011, *Forward with Integrity* (FWI) has become established as the guiding strategy for the University, the overarching framework within which we think about our plans and priorities and the principles that underpin them. The key priorities of FWI are now reflected in McMaster's Strategic Mandate Agreement with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, signed in 2014, and stated in that document as follows:

1. Strengthening the excellence of our research and our graduate education and training, while seeking opportunities to integrate research more purposefully into our academic mission;
2. Developing a distinctive, personalized, engaging and sustainable student experience; and
3. Enhancing the connections between McMaster and the communities we serve, locally, provincially, nationally and around the globe.

Within that overarching framework, Faculties, Departments, academic, administrative and ancillary units across the University have taken up the challenge to reimagine programs and processes, to reconsider pedagogical techniques, develop interdisciplinary partnerships and collaborations, and further extend McMaster's connections with the local and global communities that we serve. It is gratifying to see how much progress has been made, ranging from the introduction and widespread adoption of the Learning Portfolio, the establishment of the McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the reconfiguration of high-enrolment courses into blended formats that incorporate technology-enabled learning, to the establishment of the Network for Community-Campus Partnerships to oversee and establish mutually beneficial partnerships with the local community, the implementation of the International Strategy Advisory Group to develop and lead a coordinated strategy for our International activities, and the development of initiatives such as MyGradSkills.ca to deliver professional development training to McMaster's graduate students.

A much more detailed account of McMaster's FWI priorities since 2011, as well as the key initiatives and outcomes associated with them, is contained in *McMaster Goals and Priorities 2014-15*, which is published alongside this document and also forms part of the 2014-15 McMaster Fact Book. Detailed information is also available at the FWI website:

<http://fwi.mcmaster.ca>.

Looking to the Future: Areas of Focus, Institutional Priorities

All the remarkable and impressive innovations mentioned above will, I hope, maintain their momentum into the coming years as we continue to make enhancements to the learning experience for our students, embed research even more deeply into the academic mission of the institution and develop thoughtful, cohesive strategies for our external engagement activities. Absolutely central to our mission, though, must be our commitment to and support of high-quality research, ranging from the creation of knowledge through to its application in practice, and spanning all disciplines. Indeed, McMaster's reputation as a highly-respected, research-intensive institution and a pillar of research excellence, depends upon us being able to provide effective support to our researchers, increase our research intensity, and promote the importance and relevance of the excellent research being undertaken on our campus.

In what follows, therefore, I outline what I believe must be McMaster's areas of focus and our priorities in the next phase of FWI, beginning with the research mandate.

RESEARCH: Improve Support, Enhance Quality and Productivity, Promote Excellence

An FWI Update issued almost exactly a year ago declared that research—"the quality, volume and impact of the work we do at McMaster"—would be "a priority for this and succeeding years." Today, with the search for a new Vice-President (Research) nearing completion, research not only remains our highest priority, but the funding, infrastructure and organization which supports it is under review in order to maximize our research success and impact. The challenges we face in this critical aspect of our mission are considerable, beginning with internal impediments to interdisciplinary collaboration, a *de facto* decline in funding opportunities at the granting councils, increased targeting by government of a fairly narrow range of research areas and methodologies, specific obstacles faced by established researchers as well as those newly appointed, and difficulties recruiting sufficient high-calibre graduate students.

I look forward to working closely with the new Vice-President (Research) to address these issues and to develop a very focused strategic plan for research at McMaster. We need to decide what an ambitious but not impossible target might be for our sponsored research funding and research intensity, and to lay out a plan for increases in both measures over multiple years. It is obvious, however, that in order to advance significantly the scale and success of research at McMaster we will have to look for support beyond conventional sources, to which end I will pursue a dedicated fundraising initiative in support of research, the precise format of which will be determined in consultation with the incoming Vice-President (Research), the Vice-President (University Advancement), and the Deans. The research enterprise at McMaster is multifaceted, and significantly enhanced material support will be required whether we seek to foster excellence through better mentoring of early-career researchers, through leveraging the Ontario Research Fund (ORF), or the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), or through building research teams of the sort that could find success in the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) competition.

Last year's FWI Update [*Focus on Research Excellence*](#) outlined some of the problems facing researchers, but it also highlighted a concern in the McMaster community that excellent work

done on our campus is sometimes not widely enough known. The “*Big Ideas, Better Cities*” Research Showcase, launched last month after extensive planning, is intended to showcase the University’s cutting-edge research and explore the ways in which McMaster research can help urban communities respond to some of the challenges they face, and support the creation of healthy, smart, creative cities. Involving more than sixty researchers from all Faculties, the four clusters of high-profile public events will draw attention to the excellence and relevance of the research being conducted on our campus, promote our researchers to a broad audience, and provide an opportunity to celebrate the quality and variety of the work that is undertaken in our institution on a daily basis.

Training the next generation of researchers is critical to sustaining our research excellence and intensity, with our graduate students being at the heart of the research enterprise. In addition to increasing both our Masters and Doctoral Student enrolments over the next several years—a serious challenge because of broader funding questions—we are also committed to ensuring that our graduate students receive high-quality training and the practical research and professional skills that they need to succeed after graduation. A number of new graduate programs, such as the Masters in Public Health, the Masters of Biomedical Discovery and Commercialization, and new PhD programs in Health Studies and Gerontology, have recently been developed and I expect to see the introduction of additional new programs over the coming years.

Competitions such as the CFREF highlight the need for an integrated interdisciplinary approach to considering and solving pressing global challenges. Multiple inter-Faculty collaborations are already underway, and it is vital that collaborative programming as well as collaborative research continues and develops over the coming years. The silos that have traditionally impeded cooperation between Faculties, and even between disciplines within the same Faculty, can no longer be the norm and it is incumbent on the central University administration to find ways to facilitate and support such vital and ongoing collaboration.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & INTERNATIONALIZATION: Enhance Connections for Mutual Benefit

The overall goal of the University’s community engagement and internationalization portfolios is to enhance the connections between McMaster and the communities we serve, whether such communities are situated locally or on the other side of the world. In this sense, the two portfolios are closely linked and it is fitting that in both cases work is underway to develop longer-term strategic plans to lay out our priorities and guide our endeavours in a more focused way over the coming years.

Our Community Engagement activities have two distinct but related and equally important aspects: 1) promoting and extending relations between the University as an entity and the people and civic institutions of our communities; and 2) encouraging the growth and vitality of mutually beneficial community-based research and education. Our commitment to and ongoing partnership with the City of Hamilton and our local region can be seen in the gradual expansion of our footprint in downtown Hamilton. The opening of the David Braley Health Sciences Centre, the move of a number of administrative units to the University’s new location at One James North, and the launch of the Action Research Commons Hamilton (ARCH) are all

excellent examples of this, as is our engagement in the consortium led by the Royal Botanical Gardens to preserve the natural lands that surround the Westdale campus and make them available for research as well as recreation.

The Network for Community-Campus Partnerships, created as an FWI initiative, but now embedded formally in the infrastructure of the academy, provides a framework to support McMaster's goals related to community engagement. The Network has taken up the challenge of fostering ongoing collaboration with community partners, understanding the issues identified as priorities by local and global communities, and coordinating research, teaching and service with community members and partners for the public good. In June 2015 the Network launched a strategic planning process intended to inform the development of a 2016-2020 strategic plan for community engagement, and ensure that we are working towards a common vision that supports a long-term approach to mutually-beneficial community-campus partnerships.

The Internationalization portfolio similarly has two distinct, related and equally important aspects: 1) the need to establish, expand and maintain an appropriate number of international institutional partnerships pursued as part of a coherent strategy to locate McMaster in a meaningful and advantageous network of institutions; and 2) the need to develop and implement with the University's academic leaders a process to internationalize the curriculum, the aim being to ensure that we are educating our students in a way that equips them to be successful in an increasingly globalized context. This second aspect will be critically important so long as the actual number of domestic students able to afford an international experience during the course of their degree studies remains low.

The recent transfer of the Office of International Affairs to the Provost's portfolio is intended to ensure that a close connection is maintained with the academic leadership of the institution, and to support enhanced collaboration with International Student Services and the recruitment and support of International Students. The pan-University International Strategy Advisory Group, led by the Associate Vice-President (International Affairs), is developing a comprehensive strategy for the University's international engagements, ranging from institutional partnerships to faculty collaborations to student exchanges and opportunities, and including international recruitment of faculty, graduate and undergraduate students. This strategy is expected to be released early next year and will, I hope, enable us to focus and align our efforts in a way that supports McMaster's goal of being an institution that is global in impact, that addresses through its research the great challenges of humanity, and that educates its students through an internationalized curriculum that incorporates content of global resonance.

To encourage and facilitate this broader internationalized perspective, two specific initiatives underway this year will offer an opportunity for members of the McMaster community to consider the role of the academy in issues of global significance and engage with the challenges facing humankind: *Perspectives on Peace* is intended to establish an ongoing discussion about the complexities of peace-building and conflict-resolution from a variety of perspectives and to build understanding and respect for the views and experiences of people from different cultures, backgrounds and faiths, while the McMaster Seminar on Higher Education will this year focus on the theme of *The Engaged University* and will consider the role and responsibility

of the academy and its members in a variety of crucial global issues ranging from climate change to the protection of free speech, city-building and the role of the United Nations.

FOCUS ON THE McMASTER COMMUNITY: Building an Inclusive Community, Promoting Equity and Fairness, Celebrating our Rich Diversity

One of the outcomes of *Perspectives on Peace* will, I hope, be an increased awareness and respect for the perspectives and experiences of others and an enhanced understanding of the challenges facing other Nations, groups and individuals. The diversity of McMaster's student population is high: a very wide range of ethnic and national backgrounds is represented, notwithstanding our relatively modest enrolment of international students. However, there is still work to do; improving university access, retention and success for underrepresented groups, particularly Indigenous students, continues to be an important objective for the coming years. We enjoy a strong partnership with Six Nations Polytechnic, and intend to build on that for the enrichment of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners at our two institutions.

The work of the Yates Committee on Gender Equity, which focused on the position of female faculty, and the pay equity study undertaken by the Provost's Office earlier in the year, highlighted the need for a sustained focus on equity and diversity on our campus if we are to address the systemic inequalities that exist. A committee led by the Associate Vice-President (Faculty) is currently working on the implementation of matters arising from the Yates report, and the administration and MUFA are also working together to consider and seek to address gender differences in hiring and career development for faculty. In response to a recommendation from the President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC), Human Resources Services has recently hired an Employment Equity Specialist to focus on the development and implementation of an employment equity survey to capture diversity information about our workforce, and to promote and support equitable hiring and recruitment processes that reflect the diversity of our broader community.

This is only the beginning, however. It is imperative that the University review current hiring practices for both faculty and staff, collect and make available diversity-related data, review policies and processes (including Tenure and Promotion and CP/M assessments), and work to promote an increased awareness of the importance of diversity on our campus and the inherent barriers that impede certain groups. The importance of promoting and supporting diversity within our student body is also crucial; our campus must be a welcoming and supportive environment for all our students, whether they come from overseas or more locally, and regardless of their ethnic origin, background, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or political alliances.

The work of both PACBIC and MSU Diversity Services has been invaluable in this area and as an institution we need to build on their work and recommendations and model the inclusive community that we aspire to be.

INTEGRITY AS A PRECONDITION FOR SUCCESS: Structures and Processes in Support of the Vision

Although it appears nowhere explicitly in McMaster's Strategic Mandate Agreement with Government, there is one theme from FWI which cannot be dropped if we are to see success in addressing our declared priorities.

Integrity is, of course, always vitally important in the realm of human conduct. FWI acknowledged the need for our institutional success to have its roots firmly in the ground of personal integrity, and much of what I have identified here as a priority for the next phase extends the theme: enhancing equity and diversity, for example, or fostering a climate of mutual respect in which religious or political difference can be constructively explored. But integrity of a different kind will be just as crucial to our success, and that is *integrity of structure and process*.

Since 2011 we have made significant changes to our organizational structures better to support the goals of the academic mission. The decision to move the Office of International Affairs under the Provost is a notable example, as is the creation of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, or the School of Interdisciplinary Science. Some pan-university initiatives are still in progress and their articulation with the strategic goals and priorities of the University is as yet incomplete. In addition to ensuring that the general practice of integrating our structures and processes with our institutional goals continues unabated, a key priority in the coming years—parallel to those laid out in the preceding pages and yet also a precondition for their success—will be to ensure that two of these, in particular, unequivocally support the academic mission as it has been described in these pages. These are the new ERP, *Mosaic*, and the budget model—now sufficiently mature that its effects, positive as well as negative, intended as well as unintended, are beginning to be understood. Both represent a significant step forward for our institution and open a way to greater success in the future, but like all structures and processes in the University they exist to support our goals and priorities, and so continued scrutiny of their efficacy in this regard is vitally important. While the operation and effects of the budget model are being assessed, a general review of Information Technology at McMaster is being planned in order to ensure that service across units is coordinated and that the needs of the university community are being met.

REPUTATION AND BRANDING: Ensure we Situate Ourselves most Effectively in the Postsecondary Landscape

McMaster's reputation is built on its tremendous success as a research-intensive institution. Our traditional approach has been to rely on earned publicity to build this reputation in the academic and broader public regard and the Office of Public Relations has done an outstanding job of showcasing achievements in the University, and maximizing pickup in the national and international media. However, given the increasing competitiveness of the postsecondary scene, the looming end of Ontario's decade-and-a-half long enrolment boom, the importance of rankings and reputational surveys of one kind or another, the challenges of recruiting the best faculty and students, and the importance of universities establishing a clear and prominent place for themselves in the public view, it is clear that McMaster needs to review and where necessary refresh its approach to publicity and branding.

Earlier in the year, I struck an Advisory Group to review McMaster's current standing in a range of rankings (Research Infosome, Maclean's, QS Higher Education, Times Higher Education, Shanghai Jiao Tong) and provide advice and recommendations on strategies to assist in improving McMaster's standings in those rankings that are most important from a reputation perspective. The Advisory Group will be reporting shortly and we will then focus our efforts on implementing strategies, and possibly targets, for improvement.

Associated with that work, at the request and with the close collaboration of the Deans and other senior leaders, we have been engaged over the last few months in an exercise to review our current public presentation of ourselves and to consider whether a refreshed positioning or branding might be beneficial. Several meetings of senior leadership yielded considerable agreement that the University might coalesce around an umbrella positioning that reflects our recognized strengths and existing reputation and yet broadens the capacity of diverse disciplines to become meaningfully engaged. The proposed positioning, "advancing human and societal health and well-being" will be explored and tested broadly within the institution. I will be asking the Deans to consider with their respective Faculties the ways that each Faculty might see and promote itself within this overarching theme.

Beyond the rankings and formal branding, the standing and reputation of the University can be measured in a variety of ways, ranging from the awards won by our faculty, staff and students, to our role and influence in provincial, national and international fora or associations. We need to focus on all these areas and ensure that as an institution we are nominating and supporting the members of our campus community for awards and properly celebrating the success of our researchers, students and staff. Work in this area is already underway: the Acting Vice-President (Research) is looking at ways to formalize and support a process for awards nomination, as well as re-thinking the internal nomination process for external awards such as CFI grants, and Human Resources Services is focused on enhancing the workplace culture and appropriately recognizing the achievements of staff. In addition, McMaster has submitted an application to the Top 100 Employers competition, the regional results of which are expected later this Fall.

CONCLUSION

That the standing and reputation of the University properly reflects the outstanding work that occurs here on a daily basis is clearly vital to the success of us all. The areas of focus that I have outlined for the coming years underpin, reinforce and extend our core mission and priorities, as outlined in FWI and our Strategic Mandate Agreement, and are intended to strengthen McMaster as a research-focused student-centred university that is engaged with the issues of the world and deeply connected with our local and global communities.



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October 2015