

TABLE 1

Shaping our future: the mission statement

WHITE PAPER

Committee members

- Joseph De Koninck, Dean, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (co-chair)
- David Mitchell, Vice-Rector, University Relations (co-chair)
- Ousmane Amadou Alkaly, Student, doctorate in Economics
- David J. Currie, Chair, Department of Biology
- Sylvie Lauzon, Director and Associate Dean, School of Nursing
- Margaret Moriarty, Secretary General, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
- Geneviève Picard, Communication Officer, Marketing and Communications Service
- Rachel Thibeault, Professor, School of Rehabilitation
- Eli Turk, B.Adm, 1995, B.Com 1987, Vice-President Canadian Electricity Association
- Lise Villeneuve, Protocol Officer and Assistant to the Rector, Office of the Rector

Key Questions

Based on the Steering Committee's suggestions and on their own reflections, the members of Table 1 first defined four questions to be examined:

Objectives

-How is the University positioned with relation to the parameters considered essential for large universities, and how should this position be incorporated into its mission statement?

-How does the mission statement express the fact that the University of Ottawa reflects not only the internal Canadian situation, but also Canada's international profile and commitments?

-How does the University's mission statement reflect the balance we need to strike between our commitment to society (at the economic level, for instance) and our need to see beyond the needs of society so we can help it evolve and excel?

Promotion of Franco-Ontarian Affairs

-How can we best define our commitment toward the Franco-Ontarian community while also embracing Francophone populations both across Canada and throughout the world?

Bilingualism

-What does the term mean for the University of Ottawa? With our bilingual status, how exactly should we operate? By requiring a bilingual student body? By requiring that all professors be functionally bilingual in the classroom and elsewhere? By extending the concept of academic freedom to bilingualism and to University services —for instance “English or French, the choice is yours”? Other options?

-How do we package bilingualism so that prospective students, faculty and the community at large see it as an opportunity rather than a barrier?

Multiculturalism

-Given its historically heavier focus on biculturalism, how does the University now define itself in the light of multiculturalism, both across Canada and around the world? How will we define multiculturalism? In terms of language? of services? of programs? of the student body?

Having discussed the above questions, which are specific to the University of Ottawa, the members explored four others, which, in the opinion of a noted expert, should be answered by all mission statements:

1. How are we different?

Among the features identified were: close ties with federal departments and agencies, and with national and private-sector research enterprises; walking distance from so many key Canadian institutions and agencies, and from embassies and the Canadian offices of a number of world organizations; one of the most diverse student populations in Canada, with students from over 150 countries; our commitment, embedded in the Act that founded the University, to a specific community, the French-speaking minority of Ontario; our federated relationship with Saint Paul University, which requires constructive coexistence between our secular character and an explicitly spiritual vocation; our ability to transcend institutional boundaries through dynamic joint programs with Carleton University in selected disciplines; our wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as postdoctoral training, in both English and French.

2. How are we relevant?

We are relevant because we offer a very wide range of programs; offer a significant number of those programs in both English and French; offer a general education as well as top-class professional training in selected fields; provide an ideal place to prepare for many careers, especially in the public service; stand out as dynamic and indispensable partners in numerous research endeavors involving outside agencies and enterprises; play a leading role in the artistic and cultural life of the Outaouais region and of Canada as a whole; show how to incorporate athletic excellence with academic achievement.

3. What do we deliver?

Versatile graduates with a broad education who become excellent employees and citizens, combining knowledge of their discipline with lively intellectual curiosity, a strong ethical sense, a desire to excel, and an openness to the world; quality education in a bilingual environment; active teaching, learning and research partnerships; a vibrant presence in the community through our graduates, our interactions with local and federal politicians, our exchanges with the media; first-class training in, and opportunities to master and use, a second (or third) language.

4. What do we promise?

To deliver a first-class education that reflects Canada's values and virtues; access to numerous national and international institutions and agencies; direct contact with a multicultural intellectual community; stellar service to the Franco-Ontarian community, to the international francophone community and to students from all cultural groups choosing to be educated here;

avenues to outstanding achievement, publicly celebrated through prizes and a variety of other means; opportunities for personal development, for direct involvement in the local, national and international communities.

Towards a revised mission statement

Having explored all the above questions, the group reviewed our current mission statement and the documents defining the University's scope and values. It was agreed that the five parameters defined in 1998, **a comprehensive university, a research-intensive university, a university in the national capital, a bilingual university, a cosmopolitan university** are still appropriate. It was concluded, however, that the mission statement of the University should be revised to incorporate three elements that would more accurately reflect the current and future reality of the University:

1. As Canada's University, we reflect Canada's character and values, not only within its borders but also as a significant player on the world stage. This means that in teaching, research and outreach, we strive to develop a community that is responsive and engaged locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
2. While our emphasis on bilingualism continues to be central, our focus must be expanded to reflect the multicultural make-up of the University and of Canada as a whole; therefore, the term "biculturalism" should be replaced by that of "multiculturalism."
3. Our commitment to the Franco-Ontarian community—a part of our mission statement from the outset—must now be described in a much broader context, one that includes our commitment to Francophone communities in general throughout Canada and elsewhere in the world. This is the best way to heighten our support for Franco-Ontarians and to maintain a critical mass that can enhance both our bilingual status and our international mission.

Mission statement

The revised mission statement must make clear how the University is unique and must contain ideas that can be translated into action.

To incorporate points 1, 2 and 3, the first paragraph of the current mission statement needs to be recast.

- It focuses rather too much on bilingualism and seems to suggest that the University's particular relationship with Canada's two linguistic groups is the primary reason for its having become a great university.
- It fails to convey the fact that the scholarship and research now being conducted here are world class. The University of Ottawa is not merely linking Canadian scholarship with the external world, as stated in that paragraph. People from the "external world" come here because we are recognized as significant and formidable players on the world intellectual scene.
- Our sphere of influence now extends far beyond "Ontario and the whole of Canada" (line 6 of the paragraph).

- Being labeled Canada's "premier bilingual university" (last line of the paragraph) fails to transmit the great aspirations of the current university community, its research strengths, its discoveries, its innovative programs and teaching strategies, its global reach, its ethical questionings, its very diverse body of students, professors and administrators.

The challenge in revising the mission statement is to convey the above features in a shorter and simpler text. The group completed its work by writing down a brief piece that, hopefully, will be useful in drafting a final statement:

The University of Ottawa is Canada's university. It is a reflection, an observatory and a catalyst of the Canadian experience in all its diversity and complexity. With our privileged history and location in the heart of Canada's capital city, we offer a unique opportunity for our students to benefit from proximity and links to national and international institutions. We believe that innovative teaching, leading-edge research and service to the community are closely linked, and should therefore be integrated. We offer a broad range of high-quality undergraduate, graduate and professional programs in both of Canada's official languages. We support the Franco-Ontarian community's aspirations and contribute to its growth through our strong commitment to Francophone populations across Canada and around the world. We value and encourage the highest ethical standards and promote a strong sense of citizenship among all members of our University community. These characteristics ensure that the University of Ottawa is uniquely prepared to contribute to Canada and its place in the world.