

VISION 2010

Report by Table 9

Ideal Partners: The Community and Alumni and Alumnae

Committee members

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Focus group

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Square one: Vision 2010

- Purpose of the exercise: to define where the University wants to be in the year 2010.
- Specific objectives: to assess all aspects of the University's present reality; to identify its strengths and weaknesses; to define the evolving environment in which the University is called to develop; to identify avenues and possibilities for renewal and adaptation; to pinpoint shortcomings, risks and dangers on the horizon; and, lastly, to set out clearly the University's priorities for the future.

Mandate of Table 9

The mandate of Table 9 was generally to define the relationship between the University and the community—in the broadest sense of that word—and specifically to identify the contribution by, and the relationship the University should establish with, its alumni and alumnae. Of course there is some overlap of mandates, particularly between those of Table 9 and Table 10 (a university that is open to the world: the international dimension) since openness to the world can benefit greatly from greater synergy with the community. Indeed, the activities of a significant proportion of members of the Ottawa community are international in scope, and these persons could act as contacts, intermediaries or even promoters in opening the University to the world.

One general point made concerning the University's relationship with the outside world is the importance of its independence, in that any connectedness or synergy with other institutions in the community can lead to some loss of the University's autonomy in certain areas, for example in the context of contracts for research or co-operation with the government. Table 9 concluded that it was appropriate to raise this point, while not making it into a major issue, firstly because the contracts between the University and the government are routine and include protective mechanisms to ensure the University's independence, and secondly because we need to accept a slight, occasional loss of autonomy in exchange for the value-added that better integration into the community offers. We drew a parallel between this loss and the deliberate, constructive renunciation of sovereignty to which a country agrees each time it signs an international treaty. Usually, the advantages of the treaty outweigh the disadvantages and the curtailment of room to manoeuvre. That said, it is clear that the University must not become (or be seen to become) a government department.

A second general point made concerning the University's relationship with the community has to do with approaches to the work. Governments are entities that focus on constituencies, while universities, and particularly the University of Ottawa, highlight individuals (in terms of effort, research, and conceptualization). While the University long ago discovered the value of teamwork, many research projects are still the result of individual effort. There is a sort of research tradition that is reinforced by the emphasis placed in a professor's *cursus honorum* on individual contributions, research projects and publications and how they distinguish a person from his or her peers. If integration into the community is to be productive, it will require that the University and academics be much more receptive to the group work and collective effort that characterize the workings of governments, for example. Table 9 acknowledged that it would be in the University's interest to be open to the possibility of connections with a number of outside sectors of activity as part of a multi-disciplinary approach. An approach aimed at connectedness in greater depth would call for a different form of interaction, subject-specific study groups, and openness to the government and the way it operates.

A number of other general points emerged from the lively discussions around Table 9. One such point is the complexity of the community in the broadest sense, because of bilingualism at the University. While it appeared important to promote and to validate bilingualism, a number of questions were asked. Is the University of Ottawa's bilingual reputation real to the community? Is

it a genuine advantage? Are we a “farm team” for the federal government in its search for bilingual new employees? Or does the effort we spend on bilingualism prevent us from doing better in other areas? Does the fact that we are bilingual actually make a difference to the local community?

Some participants highlighted a need to encourage co-operation between researchers and the community through involvement in community groups, claiming that this form of participatory research should be given the same value as other forms of research. This point will need to be examined in greater depth.

The University should cultivate more sustained relationships with secondary schools that go well beyond simply attracting new students. For better or worse, we have a relationship with these schools, and the best university will win. The same is true for alumni and alumnae and for retired members of the University community.

More broadly, participants wondered whether the approach underlying Vision 2010—a modern exercise—is not in sharp contrast with the consistently and highly traditional university model, thus raising the possibility of a credibility gap.

Findings

Table 9 was asked to respond to 11 questions. On April 20, 2004, Table 9 participants discussed these questions during a working day at Éconiche; on April 28, a focus group considered the responses. Table 9's findings follow.

Question 1: How can we become more deeply imbedded in our community? Do we have a visible enough profile? How can we make the results of our research reverberate more widely and thus better show how they benefit society? Provide specific recommendations to enhance our relations with (a) the local community and (b) the federal government.

Responses: One basic observation was that the University does not do a good job of publicizing what it does. Even students are unaware of the services the University offers. As well, our connectedness to the community varies from one sector of activity to another and from one institution to another. Except in certain research circles, in public service conversations the University is referred to only rarely.

Recommendations

- Reach an agreement with the Ottawa newspapers (*The Citizen, Le Droit*) to organize regular publication of what the University is doing, for example in a column entitled “Your University This Month/Nouvelles mensuelles de l’Université d’Ottawa” that will put research at the University in the news. As well, publicize the content of agreements, for example with the National Research Council.
- Expand the mandate of the University’s Marketing and Communications Services to allow them

- to do more than corporate communications; provide the necessary computer and other support.
- Also achieve connectedness through better use of professional development (including the issuance of professional certificates) and part-time programs (particularly for public servants). Start with a survey to identify potential demand for professional development. Contact other organizations providing professional development, for example departmental training services such as the Canadian Foreign Service Institute, to see what gaps could be filled.
- Make more focussed offers of the University's consulting services, as a service to the community and particularly to the federal government, for example the Policy Research Initiative (<http://policyresearch.gc.ca>). Without abandoning their primary areas of interest, researchers need to be in touch with government research priorities, particularly "Population Aging and Life-Course Flexibility", "New Approaches for Addressing Poverty and Exclusion", "Social Capital as a Public Policy Tool", "North American Linkages" and "Sustainable Development". These themes could mobilize all of the University's Faculties; and there are others, such as the entire issue of the municipal or third level of government in contemporary society.
- Essentially, come to a strategic agreement with the federal government. In turn, in determining whether synergy can be achieved without jeopardizing University researchers' independence, ensure that the government is better informed about these researchers' priorities.
- Considerably expand the University's co-op program, as have other universities where co-op programs have become a standby. Given the University's strategic position, focus on developing an international co-op program.
- Consider a more co-operative research model highlighting co-operation with the community.
- Possibly design programs for seniors returning to university.
- Within the University itself, promote services offered of which students are unaware.
- Do a better job of publicizing the University's sports scores.

Question 2: Does the local community have effective input into the issues and challenges facing the University? How is the University taking community concerns into account? What do members of the community expect from the University of Ottawa? Which of these expectations should we strive to meet and how should we do so? What actual efforts are being made to meet the needs and concerns of the community? How can we shift from the theoretical to the practical when we interact with the broader community?

Responses: One basic observation was that, in this context, there is difficulty defining community. Various levels of community need to be considered and, at the same time, distinguished from each other. There are the government, the surrounding neighbourhood, the region, and the international community. There are also various minorities attending the University who form part of the community and whose particular needs must be identified.

Recommendations

- Consider the University's corporate culture and undertake an in-depth review of its objectives, in order to identify exactly where there are discrepancies between these objectives and actual

reality. Careful study of the findings by the 12 Tables should make it possible to draw up an inventory of these discrepancies.

- Offer more concrete services to the community, particularly in terms of technical and computer support; most importantly, make a difference that students and the immediate community will remember.
- Set up various committees to consult persons in the community directly and identify their needs.
- Consider service to the virtual community, which, although more recent, is growing and goes beyond the traditional definition of community.
- Possibly popularize the University's Internet site.
- Conduct a survey to determine whether Canadians who contribute to the University feel that they get their money's worth. At the moment the University's image does not have the compelling attraction that McGill enjoys even though it is an English-language university in Montréal.
- Verify whether the University's new trademark image as Canada's University is having the desired effect in the community. Now that this trademark image has been launched, we must not lose momentum.
- Become involved in community activities: there is no University presence at the Tulip Festival. Become involved, not just with signboards and advertising, but with a genuine presence.

Question 3: Are we one of the region's economic driving forces? Do we do enough to make this known?

Responses: The University is a significant employer, generating direct and indirect employment not only for professors and support staff members, but also for construction workers and service sector workers in fields such as insurance, utilities and restaurants. Clearly, however, the University does little to highlight this important dimension of its presence. This fact is part of a larger visibility problem that has to do with the University's almost too-modest corporate culture. The University has not advertised itself or encouraged its professors to get into the habit of relating their individual achievements to the University where they work. The upshot is a vicious cycle in which feelings of pride and belonging have not been marked and the institution has remained anonymous. Senior University management itself should organize a series of open discussions among various groups of professors and support staff members (not Faculty by Faculty). Marketing is nonexistent, as is shown by the absence of an official opening or of publicizing of events that are nonetheless important, such as the inauguration of the new premises of the Department of Biology. There is talk but no action. There is, however, a need to experience, and to allow others to experience, the present moment.

Recommendations

- Create a real publicity program for the selection of professor of the year; draw up an organized publicity plan, particularly to highlight employee achievements.
- In promoting research and teaching at the University, learn to go beyond abstract ideas. Present research and teaching as a mission that calls for the right people if it is to succeed.

- Learn to validate the University's human resources and achievements systematically. Support efforts by the Faculties to promote the University's trademark image and incorporate these efforts into a comprehensive vision: each Faculty is a facet of Canada's University.
- Mobilize the energy and resources of the University's employees in order to foster widespread feelings of pride and belonging. Provide the necessary resources to reach this goal.
- Foster a collective, co-operative, pooled approach that will eliminate the "me-them" dichotomy.
- Resolve the issue, or dissipate the impression, of the University's support staff payroll failing to evolve with the times.
- Combat self-denigration and resistance to change at the University.
- Celebrate the University's successes.

Question 4: Are there opportunities we can tap into to increase our revenue? Are there strategic partnerships we can explore? If so, with whom? What are the issues (threats and opportunities) in corporate partnerships?

Responses: This question elicited the most discussion about the University's independence. This point was considered so important that it may be necessary to review the principles underlying the University's activities in its community setting. These days, a university cannot afford to ignore potential income, particularly in the setting of a national capital. We can have business partners and still maintain our autonomy and independence, but strategic partnerships should be set up only if they lead community stakeholders to think automatically of the University of Ottawa as soon as research is called for. Here again, marketing is of the essence.

Recommendations

- Intensify marketing about partnerships and validating and developing them.
- Attach appropriate importance to training; strengthen the connections between education and employment. From the perspective of lifelong learning, the University is not a break in continuity but an ideal bridge between individual values and knowledge and the world of work.
- Recognize that selling is not sinning: seek out as many contracts as possible, both individual and group (team, Faculty, School, multidisciplinary).
- In the field of culture and languages, establish a special relationship with the Department of Canadian Heritage.
- Create business partnerships involving the University's specialized services such as construction, architecture and design, using the University's economic clout as leverage.
- Given the University's capacity to help create businesses, promote research supporting business startup.
- Given the University's capacity to help create small and medium-sized businesses (through its expertise, student skills, and practicum programs) and given the existence of people in the community with certain resources, without necessarily incurring investment costs or mobilizing all the resources required, possibly help attenuate business startup difficulties for people in the community, and possibly become a partner in small and medium-sized businesses in the eastern Ontario region.

- Naturally, seek out major donors, but also give donors reasons to contribute. Choose a few significant, unifying themes.

Question 5: Do individual faculties and departments take full advantage of the national capital's special resources and contacts: federal government, embassies, high-tech sector, other postsecondary institutions, surrounding community, national and international organizations? Do we use these to enrich and diversify the teaching and learning experience? Do we also use these to develop partnership opportunities?

Responses: Responses to this question were unqualified. Participants wondered whether the University of Ottawa is aware of the science and technology agreements between Canada and many other countries and whether the University is in touch with the international organizations concerned.

Recommendations

- Continually update an inventory of prominent persons and resource persons who can be mobilized as contacts and guests. Build up a network of contacts with all institutions concerned, including government departments, embassies in Ottawa, Canadian embassies, and cultural services.
- Identify government relations champions, for example, a Minister who is a former student at the University. Take greater advantage of the fact that prominent persons regularly visit Ottawa, not only by conferring an honorary doctorate on Kofi Annan, but also by leaping the language barrier: the fact that a speaker visiting Canada is English-speaking is not a bar to inviting that person to address a French-speaking class.
- Decentralize areas of specialization—an absolute necessity—and learn to publicize news events. How is it possible that no international relations professors or even students attended a lecture on Middle East policy given by the French Ambassador and organized by the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures?
- Rectify the lack of an international culture at the University, particularly given the increasing number of students from visible ethnic minorities attending it.
- To this end, mobilize the University's International Office and update its mandate.
- Develop a full program of international promotion of studies at the University, with the help of Canadian embassies and the Canadian Education Centre Network, www.cecnetwork.ca.
- Review the impact of decentralization on the delivery of services in this area.
- Take advantage of the fact that the University has a multicultural community, and draw up a genuine integration policy. To spark synergy in this regard, contact the federal government, for example, the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade; in future the members of the University's international community will be our best ambassadors in their countries.
- Transcend rivalry with Carleton University and establish vital co-operation in the area of exchanges with the outside world, for example by means of joint speaker sessions and symposiums. Along the same lines, co-operate with Algonquin College, Cité collégiale and similar institutions.

- Finally, establish ongoing co-operation with Canadian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working internationally and with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Question 6: University / private-sector partnerships are important both for fundraising and for teaching and research support. What new mutually beneficial partnerships could we establish?

Responses: There are various types of partnerships, including ones that offer merchandise discounts, special privilege cards, and rebates donated to the University on credit card purchases. Whatever the case, it is always advisable to seek to create new partnerships. The University needs to learn to think in terms of win-win exchanges and mutual benefits.

Recommendations

- Do more to promote existing partnerships; create partnerships with the French-language Ontario educational television network TFO and community television stations such as the one at Carleton University.
- Make contact with voice communication media and Internet servers and service providers.
- Create partnerships with large corporations, while ensuring that what the University can supply in terms of knowledge, research, teaching and image meets actual demand. Define demand; take advantage of the contacts and networks of foundations, corporations, and alumni and alumnae.
- Create long-term feelings of commitment and loyalty, not only among alumni and alumnae but also and most importantly among businesses. Encourage “good conscience donations” by local businesses through simple incentives such as the publication of lists of donors.
- Cultivate potential donors; start thinking about future partnerships now, to ensure that students can become future donors or facilitators of partnerships.
- Possibly offer local businesses a “business tune-up” service in exchange for donations.
- Ensure that members of the University’s own community forge links with local businesses, and encourage them to participate in groups of business persons.
- In seeking out persons at the University and encouraging their support for a comprehensive strategy, ensure that publicity about what is being done corresponds to reality.

Question 7: Should we take on a political role when it comes to federal and municipal bilingualism, given our status as the largest university that promotes, encourages and recognizes bilingualism?

Responses: It must first be understood that, although much criticism has been levelled at the unevenness of bilingualism at the University of Ottawa, the practice of bilingualism where it is well entrenched is often superior to that in the federal public service. Table 9 agreed that a political role is inappropriate and could even have negative repercussions. That said, given the small number of bilingual universities in Canada, the University plays an important societal role.

Recommendations

- Possibly take part in research in fields related to bilingualism at the provincial, municipal and federal levels.
- Ensure access to grants to develop projects that correspond to the interests of the various levels of government.
- Cultivate the international aspect of bilingualism; seek partnerships with other universities in the Commonwealth and in the international French-speaking community.
- Here again, review and update the mandate of the University's International Office.
- Acknowledge discrepancies between the theory and practice of bilingualism at the University, but emphasize the long-term objectives, particularly in light of declining registration by French-speaking students and the chronic lack of French-language teaching materials.
- Counter a condescending attitude among unilingual English-speaking students toward bilingual services; most importantly, parry or at least try to respond to the ever-more frequent question in the community: "Today, is bilingualism at the University an asset or a liability?" There is a perception that, in order to enhance bilingualism, the University is less demanding in terms of admission requirements and course curricula; this perception negatively affects the University's reputation. There is also tension over resources: in achieving the more local objective of bilingualism, are we spending less effort and money on making the University a major international institution?
- Promote bilingualism, particularly by becoming more involved in the community.
- Resolve the issue of the quality of the University and of bilingualism, something that can be accomplished only by means of a profound commitment by the University to defending the quality of the French language and through partnership with the secondary schools to this end.
- Build on the University's remarkable atmosphere of tolerance concerning bilingualism. There is more pride in bilingualism at the University than in the public service.
- Remedy the serious problem of the apparent lack of a role for the University of Ottawa Press.
- Begin to address the problem of bilingualism among holders of chairs.
- Bear in mind that the University's political role can no be more than demonstrative, for example by holding activities, offering courses, showcasing bilingualism, and exercising influence.
- Identify champions; encourage people in the community to become proud readers of articles about the University; highlight the University's values.
- Consider in greater depth the impact of the federal government's image on the University, as well as the University's relationship with the municipality.

Question 8: Should we regularly host the media, MPs, MPPs, city council members on campus (two to six times a year)?

Responses: Table 9 noted that, aside from the remarkable Distinguished Canadian Leadership Awards, in comparison with many other universities the University of Ottawa seems to have difficulty organizing media events. This difficulty is more apparent with medium-sized events, usually because it is hard to mobilize an organizing committee. Table 9 wondered why there are only between two and six media events per year, when they are simply a matter of organization and

attracting media coverage.

Recommendations

- Design a real media events program; co-ordinate activities among the Faculties in order to avoid bottlenecks. As well, design a multidisciplinary program.
- Choose themes in accordance with specific criteria, for research scientists, political scientists, national and international researchers, for example.
- Ensure that media events are university events.
- Choose a date, the aspect that calls for the most co-ordination. An interesting planning model is used by the Head of Protocol at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade to arrange visits by dignitaries to Canada and other countries. Set engagement priorities using very strict criteria including impact, prior engagements and availability.
- Set up a workable organizational structure; appoint a person at a fairly senior level as head of protocol.
- Do not decentralize matters that need to be co-ordinated. Have the courage to question decentralization if it hinders synergy or activities that need to be co-ordinated.
- Know how much money the University can count on; co-ordinate resources.

Question 9: How can we recognize and reward professors and staff who display strong community involvement?

Responses: Questions of this type are not controversial: yes, the University needs to encourage its members who become involved in the surrounding community, and to find a way to thank them.

Recommendations

- Ensure that validation goes beyond awards of merit.
- Include community involvement in performance evaluations.
- Express recognition of services rendered by support staff members and professors to the outside community; encourage community members to tell university management about employees' involvement so that good deeds do not go unnoticed.
- Extend some Faculties' practice of honouring employee merit; most importantly, when justified, express recognition beyond the departmental level.
- Consider the possibility of including or acknowledging these activities in allocating the workload, given that community involvement affects employees' work and recognition makes for happier employees.

Question 10: Should our teaching be rooted in community engagement? Should we do community teaching?

Responses: The University already carries out these activities at its summer camps. These efforts should be better co-ordinated.

Recommendations

- Continue to expand these activities, since professional development has become vital. Professional certification is an integral part of the concept of university education.
- Open these activities to seniors and members of marginalized groups. Investigate other possibilities arising from the University's downtown location.
- Consider a "linguistic tune-up" service that is compatible with promoting both official languages.

Question 11: How do we make alumni play a larger role at the University?

Responses: The question about alumni and alumnae gave rise to a wide range of comments. The simplest observation was that a positive experience at the University creates positive alumni and alumnae, who become positive ambassadors for the University; this progression has to do with corporate culture. And, increasingly, alumni and alumnae move in international circles and thus are all the more important if the University wishes to broaden its student base and raise its profile.

Recommendations

- Foster feelings of pride and belonging among students before they graduate; rule number one is to treat students in a way that ensures their satisfaction.
- To foster a feeling of loyalty among alumni and alumnae, contact them, ask for their help, give them responsibility, call upon their abilities, give them a mandate, and ensure that they have a role to play.
- Possibly design an international alumni and alumnae association, ensuring that its mandate is clear.
- Take advantage of the experience of alumni and alumnae by obtaining their advice on specific matters such as scholarships, orientation services, quality of teaching and services, and cultural activities.
- Do not lose sight of the importance of support staff members.
- Avoid frustration by paying attention to the balance between costs and services and maintaining a happy medium. Higher tuition fees may be offset by good courses, good events and good services, for example, and being greeted by pleasant, courteous, smiling staff members influences students' perceptions.
- Above all, if the University wants grateful alumni and alumnae, ensure that students feel at home at the University and actually are the University's top priority.
- Associate alumni and alumnae not with solicitation for donations, but with good news from the University. Organize an annual activity bringing together alumni, alumnae and the university community.
- Also consider involving retired members of the University community and asking for their co-operation; otherwise, there is a danger of even greater loss of connectedness than has already been noted among a considerable number of professors.

A few further findings, in the form of questions

- Given a changing modern society and frenetic international competition, should present-day university research and even basic research not always conclude by bringing theory and practice together in a more practicable, not to say more saleable, vision?
- Ottawa is recognized as one of Canada's leading computer science centres. Should the University of Ottawa not make the financial and other choices that would allow it to gain a reputation equivalent to that of the University of Western Ontario and, in the long term, to become the obligatory university at which to do computer science research? Similarly, since Ottawa has a powerful communications industry, can the University of Ottawa become the premier institution of higher learning for co-operative research in telecommunications?
- What needs to be done to ensure that the University of Ottawa becomes the premier university in Canada for the study of major international issues, through the creation of vital synergy with CIDA, the embassies, the Department of National Defence, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade?
- Can we become the premier university for the Department of National Defence in its relations with academe? Why have Queens University and Université Laval occupied this privileged position for the past 30 years? To this end, do we need to make the necessary approaches to the Policy Planning Branch, the Operational Research and Analysis Establishment (ORAE), and other entities at the Department of National Defence?
- Given the increasing importance of governance and pluralism, both of which are fundamental aspects of convergence with the community, should the University begin to specialize in this field and, given the increasing cultural diversity of Canada's demographics, should it extend this field to encompass the ethnic communities by combining governance, pluralism, democracy and human security, for example, and in particular by conducting research on means of intermediation?

In summary, the University needs to do the demanding work of implementing the following clear priorities:

- **fostering a feeling of belonging to the University;**
- **stressing the University's influence, excellence and quality, particularly in bilingualism;**
- **highlighting and cultivating the University's presence in the immediate community; and**
- **validating and celebrating the University's resources.**