



**Building a More Engaged University:**  
**Strategic Directions for York University 2010-2020**

**White Paper Companion**  
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# **Building a More Engaged University: Strategic Directions for York University 2010-2020**

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**BUILDING A MORE ENGAGED UNIVERSITY**  
**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR YORK UNIVERSITY 2010-2020**

**President's Introduction: York as an Engaged University**

**Academic Planning at York University**

Over the past 20 years, York University's strategic planning has been largely guided by two documents. One is *Vision 2020*, developed over the period 1988 – 1991 and endorsed by Senate and the Board of Governors in 1992. The second is former Vice-President Academic and Provost Michael Stevenson's *White Paper* of 1999. Given that 10 years had passed since the last such exercise, I asked the Vice-President Academic & Provost, in partnership with Senate, to lead the development of a Provostial *White Paper* — similar in scope and ambition to the 1999 *White Paper*.

While I would hope that this new *White Paper* will help raise York University to new heights, it will not take us in a dramatic new direction; it represents nothing so much as the evolution that began when York did more than 50 years ago. From its inception, York has aspired to be a large and comprehensive university with a strong commitment to accessibility and social responsibility. We have made considerable progress with our strong presence in the humanities, social sciences and basic sciences although less so in other areas of applied sciences. For example, York is still without engineering, medical and architecture Faculties; and undergraduates still comprise 91 per cent of our total student population against a provincial average of 87 per cent. In some ways, our distinctiveness has served us well: York is a leader in fine arts, environmental studies, bilingual education, law, health, business and many areas of humanities, social sciences and basic sciences. We have a strong focus on outreach to the communities we serve; we are leaders in making postsecondary education accessible to all, including non-traditional students. Indeed, York's commitment to its core values — diversity, social justice, accessibility and fairness — were an important factor in attracting me, and undoubtedly many of our faculty, staff and students.

We want to preserve the distinguishing features of York upon which the institution's reputation has been built and also continue to change, not in order to align ourselves with other leading Canadian universities, but because we want to encompass as much of the breadth of human knowledge as possible and offer the best opportunities to our students. We have a clear vision of the direction in which we want to move. Change will not come at the expense of the humanities and social sciences. To the contrary, the university will be looking to the disciplines where we currently have strength to take leadership on many of the recommendations that are outlined in the *White Paper* including potentially the development of new programs in areas that align with emerging societal needs.

We want however to build a more balanced university — one as strong in sciences as in fine arts; one known equally for educating leaders in health and medicine as in business.

We need to grow in areas where we have been strong but small relative to our size. Our engineering program, though excellent, is small both in relative and absolute terms. We have an opportunity to expand in areas that align with societal needs such as educating family doctors. We need to grow in keeping with the overarching principles articulated in *Moving Forward with the University Academic Plan*, which I presented to Senate and to the Board of Governors in December of 2007:

- *Quality*: York must continue to strive for excellence in all of our activities. This means competing for the best researchers, best students and best staff. It also means providing the necessary supports to ensure York can achieve its full potential.
- *Full Funding*: Full funding of all activities is a fundamental requirement to the successful long-term implementation of any plan. This means York will continue to demand that government recognize the full cost of teaching and research activity through increased operating, capital and start-up funding and indirect costs of research.
- *Build on York's Heritage as a socially responsible, international and interdisciplinary university*. York must continue to balance new and innovative directions with traditional areas of strength.
- *Strategic Alignment*: Major initiatives must be clearly linked to strategic goals, with administrative processes and resource allocations that reinforce these links.
- *Flexibility, Agility and Responsiveness*: Strategic initiatives must respond to the needs of our internal and external constituencies and be flexible enough to respond to specific opportunities and threats in the competitive landscape.

### **The Engaged University**

The deliberations of the President's Task Force on Community Engagement and collegial discussions about this *White Paper* have given rise to the idea of 'university engagement' as a unifying theme that is consistent with these overarching principles, our core values, and aspirations for the future. At its highest level, 'engagement' refers to the process of bringing our knowledge to bear on social and economic problems, and offering leadership in society that is consistent with academic freedom, openness, integrity and inclusion.

The engaged university looks outward, seeking to develop partnerships with community groups, the private and not-for-profit sector, other post-secondary institutions, governments, and others with the aim of enriching scholarship, research and creative activity. It also understands however that in order to engage the outside, the York community must be fully engaged.

The concept of engagement at York is not new. Our mission identifies York as a dynamic, metropolitan and multicultural institution that is open to the world and explores global concerns. The University Academic Plan speaks to the importance of fostering cooperative research in the University and building cooperative partnerships outside York. The UAP assigns high priority to understanding student expectations and

experiences and to taking steps to enhancing the student experience. The UAP also speaks of the importance of promoting and expanding community education initiatives and promoting internationalization at the faculty and university levels.

These statements of principle are reflected in many programs, activities and initiatives. York has taken the lead in community-based education, recognizing the world outside the academy as a source of education and research partnership rather than merely an object of study. Our Faculty of Education leads in developing ways to incorporate community-based activities and requirements into its undergraduate teacher education program. The faculties of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies (and its predecessor faculties), Health, Environmental Studies, Schulich and Osgoode are building on long-standing traditions in 'experiential education.' Through cross-sector partnerships, students are given hands-on learning opportunities that build community capacity and a sense of civic responsibility. Knowledge mobilization and exchange are priorities for York, the public and private sectors, and government.

The Report of the Task Force on Community Engagement, released in January 2010, explores how York's leadership in this area can be deepened. The Task Force consulted broadly with the community for 18 months, and identified the wide array of activities underway and suggested how to build on this area of emerging strength. Most of all, the report suggests that York is uniquely positioned to be a provincial, national and international leader in the development of engagement as a core value of the university experience.

By engaging in community outreach across the entire range of activities at the university we can enhance curriculum, teaching and learning, prepare educated, engaged citizens and strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility. Engagement also contributes to the social good through the sharing, dissemination and enrichment of the scholarship that the University has to offer.

Commitment to engagement could provide a catalyst for the creation of truly sustainable campuses – ones that harness their expertise to advance their local and global responsibilities to protect and enhance the health and well-being of humans and ecosystems by focusing on climate change, sustainable development, and sustainable communities.

Many colleagues have suggested that engagement is a core value of the university, representing a legacy of which we can be proud and a base on which we can construct the future. Hence the title of this White Paper, *Building a More Engaged University*. This document attempts to articulate a longer-term vision of the kind of institution we aspire to be over the next decade; it articulates a number of longer-term strategic priorities, identifies how York can differentiate itself, and provides a context for existing academic and administrative planning processes, including the development of the next University Academic Plan.

I believe that embracing the principle of university engagement would introduce a new chapter in the story of York's ongoing commitment to social justice. It would reflect the view that integrating teaching and research with the world outside the university would enhance the quality of the student experience, help students become more responsible and engaged citizens, and maximize the benefits of scholarship and discovery for the region, the province, Canada and the international community.

*Mamdouh Shoukri, President and Vice-Chancellor*

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Building a More Engaged University: Strategic Directions for York University 2010-2020**

In July 2009 President Shoukri announced a planning initiative that would lead to the development of a Provostial White Paper on the future of the University. While York has well established planning processes on both the academic and administrative side, it has been a decade since the University engaged in a long-range strategic exercise. Former Vice-President Academic and Provost Michael Stevenson released a White Paper in 1999 called *Strategic Planning for the New Millennium 1999 – 2010* that was to a significant extent an extension of the University's previous strategic plan *Vision 2020*, a document developed over the period 1988 – 1991 and endorsed by Senate and the Board of Governors in 1992 which set a direction for the University's next 30 years. More than ten years after Stevenson's update, it seems appropriate to reflect on all that York has accomplished thus far and to renew our strategic vision for where we want our institution to be ten to fifteen years from now.

A central requirement of the current planning process has been to ensure the broadest possible level of meaningful consultation and participation from all sectors of the community, consistent with York's tradition of collegial governance. Working in concert with the Senate Academic Policy, Planning and Research Committee (APPRC), the White Paper is the product of perhaps the most comprehensive consultation and planning exercise in the University's 50 year history. As Chapter 2 of this White Paper Companion outlines in more detail, it reflects the collective work and contributions of over one hundred authors, collaborators or active participants and takes into account input from many hundreds more across the University community. The Senate APPRC has been an invaluable partner in this process, ensuring that the consultations involved a wide range of perspectives and views, and helping to shape a common understanding of the discussions.

Given York's reputation for critical debate, a skeptic might have assumed that such a broad-based consultation process would have inevitably failed to achieve a consensus. In fact, precisely the opposite occurred. Members of the community approached the exercise with a remarkable generosity of spirit and desire to find areas of common ground. As the discussions progressed, a genuine consensus began to emerge. This initial chapter provides an overview of the resulting strategic framework and an outline of the substantive chapters that follow.

Before turning to that discussion, however, it is important to clarify the purpose of this document and its relationship to other planning processes at the University. The White Paper asks and seeks to answer the most basic of questions: what do we hope York University will be, what are our aspirations and hopes for this great institution, in the year 2020? Its purpose is to provide a careful, evidence-based and realistic assessment of our future prospects and challenges with the aim of defining how we can substantively

differentiate ourselves from other post-secondary institutions. It is not intended to replace the University Academic Plan which will continue to be the operational document defining York's immediate academic priorities. Developed through close collaboration with APPRC, the White Paper provides a frame of reference – a set of working assumptions – for the articulation in each successive UAP in the next 10-15 years of the shorter term planning goals. As a document with a longer lens than the UAP, the White Paper is able to build on past planning documents and take up issues that may not yet have been considered by units at York but that appear to represent promising opportunities. It is our hope that the White Paper will create a sense of energy, dynamism and optimism throughout the community that will inform the various plans developed during this period.

### **The Strategic Framework: What? How? How Do We Know? Academic Quality, Engagement and Reputation**

The White Paper addresses three fundamental questions: “what?” “how?” and “how do we know?” The “what?” question refers to the academic goals and objectives we wish to pursue; the “how” question refers to the initiatives that should or could be undertaken in pursuit of those goals; and the “how do we know?” question refers to the means by which we can measure progress towards the pursuit of our goals including the articulation of the outcomes that we would expect to see so that we will know that we are indeed moving in the desired direction. In brief, we can summarize the overarching goal or “what we hope to achieve” over the next 10 to 15 years as enhancing academic quality. Engagement emerged as a unifying theme for “how to get there” and among the many benchmarks that might be relevant for different units, we highlight two broad measures of success: improving York's reputation and enhancing student success.

#### **What? Enhancing Quality Through Building on Strength**

York's major planning documents throughout its history reflect a commitment to quality. We have much of which to be proud. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that renewing our focus on the enhancement of academic quality is imperative. The lengthy strike in 2008 has had a significant impact on how students, and the community more generally, view our institution. Although as Chapter 2 suggests, we have already begun to recover from the negative effects of the strike, there are other internal and external incentives for York to strive to be better including global competition and the changing political landscape. Results from a student survey commissioned for the purposes of the White Paper show that there is room for significant improvement in the student learning experience and Chapter 3 makes a similar argument in the case of the research intensity of the University. Each of the substantive chapters takes up the task of clarifying what *enhancing quality* might look like but some of the contributing strengths upon which to build are highlighted here:

- The commitment to social justice in York's mission statement is reflected in a wide array of academic programs and continues to contribute to the innovation of our curriculum including, for example, the population and community health



approach adopted in York's new Faculty of Health. Our commitment reflects an understanding of the role of the university in promoting civic engagement, supporting research and knowledge transfer, and contributing to the public good – features that are highlighted in subsequent chapters as pathways to enhancing quality.

- A related strength for York is that it is and is seen to be an accessible university (discussed more extensively in Chapter 6). York is known for the innovation and quality of its programs in areas such as business, law, fine arts, humanities and social sciences including strong interdisciplinary programs. We can build on these strengths in our efforts to expand health, engineering, professionally-relevant programs and applied sciences.
- The diversity of our student population, as well as of the faculty and staff, is a strength in terms of the range of perspectives that can be brought to bear on learning and research. Grappling with complex issues can also be challenging so care needs to be taken to ensure that we create an environment that allows us to take full advantage of that diversity through the respectful exchange of ideas.
- In terms of community outreach, York has well-established local, regional and international partnerships upon which to establish reciprocal and mutually beneficial practices that will build capacity in those communities while enhancing student learning, knowledge transfer and the potential for socially responsible citizenship.
- York is a recognized leader in knowledge mobilization and knowledge exchange and can build on that success in its research intensification efforts.
- York has a recognized internationalization strategy that provides a basis upon which to expand research partnerships as well as opportunities for students and faculty members to mutually enhance educational and research offerings. This involves both bringing international students and faculty to our campus and providing our students and faculty with international opportunities.
- Finally, the design and location of York University provides opportunities to enhance quality. The Keele campus is located in the fastest growing region in Canada with enormous potential for new partnerships and students whose interests may align with our own priorities. While not separate from residential and business areas, it is sufficiently self-contained so as to create a geographic community upon which to more fully engage our members. A similar case can be made for the Glendon campus that also provides a unique alternative for GTA students who want to study in French and/or prefer a smaller campus experience.

These features provide a strong foundation upon which to enhance academic quality. Engagement emerged during the consultation as the vehicle by which to build on these strengths and advance academic quality.

### **How? York as an Engaged University**

As President Shoukri has explained in his Introduction, through collegial discussions over the past number of months in relation to the White Paper, the idea of university engagement has emerged as a unifying theme that spans and brings together priorities

across a wide variety of areas. The President has highlighted many of the existing programs, activities and initiatives that reflect a commitment to the value of engagement and we will not repeat that discussion here. What should be emphasized is that York is uniquely positioned to distinguish itself as a leader in the development of engagement as a core value of the university experience, and that doing so will allow us to build on existing strengths to enhance academic quality over the next period of the University's development.

The concept of engagement is not new to York. The President established a Task Force on Community Engagement almost two years ago to see how we might highlight and improve our community engagement activities. The Committee quickly came to appreciate that engagement involved more than community outreach and it offered the following definition of engagement in its Report, *Toward an Engaged University*, submitted January 2010:

*York University strives to be a recognized and leading community engaged university. York University values the diversity of knowledge and expertise within communities and among its many cross-sectoral partners. As an engaged university, York is committed to fostering and sustaining community-university collaborations for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources that address pertinent societal issues, enhance learning and discovery, strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility, and prepare educated, engaged citizens.*

The evolution of the meaning of *engagement* is well documented in the literature and it has raised concern among some who suggest that the breadth of the definition makes the term less useful. The advantage of a broad conceptualization of engagement is that it affords units the opportunity to operationalize the term in ways that best align with their own priorities. We identify three central tenets where York already has strength and that provide further opportunities to enhance quality.

- 1) Engagement involves outreach that is premised on a model of reciprocal partnerships with the public and private sectors for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources that address pertinent societal issues.
- 2) Engagement is a scholarly process that integrates teaching, research and service through application. Providing students with experiential opportunities such as service learning allows them to reflect on the limitations of knowledge and opens up new insights while building community capacity. Research partnerships and knowledge exchange contribute to the public good through the sharing, dissemination and enrichment of scholarship.
- 3) An engaged university strengthens democratic values and civic responsibility. This latter principle is as significant to York's internal community as it is to the external communities with whom we partner as it speaks to the responsibility that

we have for each other and suggests a connection to something larger, to the York community and beyond into the national and international arenas.

Explicitly embracing ethical and civic engagement as a core value is a means of bringing greater definition and distinctiveness to York's role and mission. In making such a commitment, we will be joining the ranks of a growing number of universities worldwide. Universities are increasingly recognizing that the academic and theoretical elements of university education must embrace collaboration and partnership within the community, with a view to increasing access to university programs, resources and physical facilities. The ethical, social rationale for this development is that universities have a responsibility to be 'sites of citizenship', using their substantial resources to participate in reciprocal relationships that contribute to the well-being of people who live, work and study in and around the university, and to serve as a catalyst for greater well-being and civic engagement regionally and internationally.

The President has identified the fact that a commitment to engagement advances York's heritage and commitment to social justice. This commitment will also address a key concern that underlies much of the discussion in this White Paper – the need to enhance academic quality at York.

There is a clear and well-established link between engagement and student learning; indeed, the widely-used National Survey of Student Engagement and the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey are organized around the theme of engagement, recognizing that students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process. What is also becoming more widely understood is that engaged students are better able to acquire the knowledge and skills they must have in order to thrive, both as productive workers and as responsible and engaged citizens, in a 21<sup>st</sup> century democratic society. This focus on outcomes – on producing graduates who have acquired the knowledge they need, and the skills they must possess, to succeed in life, both in their chosen fields and as citizens -- is increasingly being seen as the hallmark of a quality university experience. Faculty and librarian engagement with students further enhances student satisfaction and the student learning experience. A commitment to engagement in the teaching and learning process has the potential to enhance the quality of the education provided at this university. As a public institution which derives the vast majority of its funding from the education of undergraduate and graduate students, this is a fundamental and core concern that must remain central to our plans.

A commitment to engagement will also enhance the quality of the research, and the contribution to knowledge, that is an essential part of the mission of a modern research intensive university such as York. Universities are increasingly being seen as key drivers of economic and social innovation. Governments, business and the public are looking to universities to provide the critical thinkers and the cutting-edge research that is essential to a knowledge-based society. Modern universities are now understood as having an obligation to contribute to the search for solutions to pressing social issues. For York, such a commitment comes naturally, since it has been part of our mission and heritage from the creation of the University.

Significantly, a commitment to engagement aligns with York's sustainability mandate and commitments. Individual York researchers, particular Faculties as well as the University as a whole have been recognized for our leadership in sustainability. A commitment to engagement can prove a catalyst for the creation of a truly sustainable campus – one that acts upon its local and global responsibilities to protect and enhance the health and well-being of humans and ecosystems, and actively engaging the expertise of the University community to address issues relating to climate change and sustainable development.

Chapters 3 through 7 of the White Paper Companion set out a variety of objectives dealing with subjects such as research, teaching and learning, enrolment and program planning, and internationalization, and identify specific initiatives or activities which could be undertaken in pursuit of those goals. These chapters reflect the contributions, perspectives and deliberations of the green paper working groups that were established as part of the White Paper process to offer guidance to the Provost in the development of institutional directions and objectives for the next ten to fifteen years, in the various topic areas. The reports from the “leads” of the working groups served as an important foundation on which the directions and objectives proposed in this White Paper have been built. It should be emphasized, however, that the specific initiatives in these chapters are offered for illustrative purposes only, in the sense that their inclusion provides greater definition, clarity and elaboration of the goals themselves. Endorsement of the White Paper directions does not mean that there is approval for any or all of the specific initiatives discussed; these initiatives could only be undertaken (if at all) after all appropriate processes have been completed and necessary approvals obtained, in accordance with established governance policies and procedures.

### **How Will We Know? Benchmarking Our Success**

Papers of this kind are of no real value if they are not accompanied by consistent efforts to measure progress towards the goals identified. Thus it is essential that we develop clear strategies and benchmarks or measures that will enable us to track our progress over the next decade towards the achievement of our objective of enhancing academic quality through engagement. As is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8, the development of such benchmarks is not a simple or straightforward matter and will require further and ongoing collegial discussion, analysis and refinement. The Senate APPR Committee should take the lead in ensuring that such collegial discussion does in fact occur, and the Provost should assume responsibility for providing regular reports to Senate on the progress made towards the achievement of the goals identified in this document. In broad strokes, however, we would expect that our benchmarks will demonstrate that York's reputation as a leading post-secondary institution will have significantly improved in key priority areas.

While there will need to be further discussion on appropriate benchmarks, we believe it important to articulate at the outset a number of key outcomes that have emerged from the discussions of the past number of months. We do so because colleagues have argued

that such express commitments to particular outcomes will be critical if this White Paper is to serve as a genuine guiding document for the next decade. We therefore offer below eleven benchmarks that we believe flow directly from the analysis in the White Paper, give clarity and meaning to its goals, and enhance accountability.

We reiterate the fact that an overriding concern that has emerged through the collegial discussions of the past months has been the need to pay particular attention to issues of academic quality. Thus all of these outcomes speak in one way or another to the issue of academic quality.

1. *The paramount goal for York over the next decade is an increase in the full-time faculty complement.*

Rationale: There is a near-universal consensus within the York community that the essential precondition for achieving the goals of the White Paper is an increase in the full-time faculty complement. This is not to diminish in any way recognition of the continuing important contributions made by the full range of our teaching complement, including in particular contract faculty members. Nevertheless, increasing engagement in our classrooms, on our campuses, and with the broader community, and strengthening the research profile and reputation of the University as well as our ability to provide supervision and instruction to support high quality graduate education, presupposes that we are able to replenish the losses in the full-time complement that have been experienced in recent years. This must be our paramount academic objective in the years ahead.

2. *Over the next decade, there will be an annual systematic increase in our international peer reviewed performance in research and creative work, including efforts to secure externally funded research.*

Rationale: Institutions across the globe continue to make significant advancements in their research performance and, in spite of our progress, the gap between us and many of our competitors continues to widen. If York is to compete as a serious research institution it is crucial that we increase our participation and performance in all forms of externally-sponsored research and disseminate our work through peer reviewed venues. Many of these measures have a direct bearing on key government funding allocations (CRCs, Indirect Cost Program). This commitment to increasing our research performance is not only key to realizing our research goals but is critical to enhancing our reputation, a consequence of considerable benefit to the university community as a whole. In order to build on the research excellence that exists in many academic units and organized research units, unit level research planning must be combined with a pan-university research strategy that fosters strong collaboration across disciplines.

3. *Over the next decade there will be a deepening and broadening of our institutional engagement with research partners locally and globally and leading innovative networks and clusters.*

Rationale: Universities are expected to engage with our communities for scientific, social, cultural and economic impacts. York scholars have developed a long tradition of engaging networks and partners in their research programs which have created areas of traditional research strength and emerging areas of research excellence. With the overarching goal of capturing larger research opportunities and increasing our research capacity, we will seek to leverage more extensive pan-university research collaborations and further develop mutually beneficial innovation networks and clusters – furthering the momentum of promising initiatives, leading to further sustainable institutional programs, and enhancing York’s reputation.

4. *Over the next decade, York will continue our efforts to become a more comprehensive University, by continuing to expand the scope of the University’s teaching and research activities in the areas of health and medicine, engineering, applied science, business-related and professional programs.*

Rationale: As is discussed above, York has made considerable strides in its ambition to become a more comprehensive university, with a view to achieving greater prominence and strength in the sciences, applied science, engineering, health and medicine, business-related studies and professional programs. We believe that further growth in these areas is warranted as there is both need for such programs in Ontario and demand especially on the part of students in nearby communities from which York draws a significant portion of its students. Greater comprehensiveness will also extend our outreach to community partners, attract top quality students in additional areas to those we now offer, and allow us to compete for research dollars to the benefit of the entire institution, as well as providing opportunities to advance York’s distinctiveness. The York Health System, a regional network involving the university, hospitals, primary care, community health care, public health, and health promoting organizations, will provide a foundation for development in the health field. Two key benchmarks will be the establishment of a Medical School and an increase in applied science enrolment such that it would support the creation of a separate Faculty of Engineering.

5. *By September 2010, the academic standards for admission to all York undergraduate programs will have increased. A minimum GPA admission requirement for applicants from secondary school of 74% will be set as the initial benchmark for September 2010; this minimum will rise to 75% by September 2011, to 76% by September 2014 and to 77% by 2017.*

Rationale: York has traditionally targeted a minimum GPA in the range of 74%, although some Faculties/programs significantly exceed this cut-off. However the strike of 2008-09 had a significant negative impact on our secondary school applications, and put at risk our ability to maintain this standard. Although there has been a modest recovery in applications for the September 2010 admission cycle, the overall number of applications, as well as first choice applications, remains significantly below the 2008 level. We believe, therefore, that it is essential that we commit to maintaining the established minimum GPA cutoff for applicants from high school for the current academic year, and to raising the minimum cutoff gradually over the remainder of the decade. Student ability is a key driver of the quality of the learning experience and it is therefore imperative that we admit students who have

the necessary qualifications to succeed with the supports that they have available to them. An important – though not the only – predictor of success at university is entry grades. Projections of increased demand for university spaces provide an opportunity to achieve enhancements in this area and to improve retention and student performance. It will also send an important signal to prospective students and their families regarding the commitment of the University to maintaining and enhancing the quality of the student body. York will nevertheless remain committed to the wide range of access initiatives and supports for qualified students, and to the recruitment and success of students not coming directly from high school.

6. *By September 2012, the University will have developed and implemented an enhanced first year program for undergraduate students.*

Rationale: Numerous studies show that students are more likely to continue in higher education if they receive concrete support in negotiating the transition to University from high school, college, or, in the case of mature students, a return to academic studies. An enhanced first year program for undergraduates should help students understand university culture, promote connections between students and between students and faculty, and encourage a student's active engagement in their own learning. The particular strategies that the University will employ must accommodate different Faculty environments and recognize and respond to the specific needs of both full-time and part-time students, domestic and international, as well as other particular communities such as our commuter students, First Generation and Aboriginal. Based on the input from the White Paper consultations as well as student surveys, we know that class size, student advising and contact time with full-time faculty are important. The creation of *student learning communities* offers a way to address these concerns and bring together many of the ideas discussed in detail in the White Paper Companion. The learning community model can be used in a variety of contexts including both living-learning communities rooted in on-campus residences and on-line, virtual communities either of which might involve block scheduling in first year and/or increasing the number of our colleagues who teach first year students as just two examples. In creating an enhanced experience for first year students, York has the opportunity to bridge to its existing college system and to build on the work that is already being done in individual faculties.

7. *Over the next decade, there will be a significant increase in opportunities for students to participate in an experiential education activity, both domestically and internationally, as a component of their degree program.*

Rationale: Instructional research shows that learning activities that integrate theory and practice by providing students with opportunities to apply what they are learning tend to support the development of higher cognitive abilities than do more traditional classroom methods. They also enhance the critical elements of a liberal education through promoting a deeper understanding of the subject matter and the relevance of that knowledge, and strengthening self-directed learning and the capacity for critical thinking and analysis. In the survey undertaken by Strategic Counsel, current students, as well as students who had declined an offer of admission or who had not applied to York, were asked what changes would have the greatest positive impact on

the student experience. Of the factors identified, one of the most significant was an expansion of experiential education opportunities. Experiential education includes a wide variety of opportunities for students to apply their learning through co-op and internship programs, community service or community based learning, simulations, laboratory work, and capstone courses involving application of learning. It has sometimes been suggested that such programs lack the academic rigour or quality of traditional lecture style courses or seminars. In fact, as is detailed in Chapter 4 of this White Paper Companion, research has demonstrated that when properly planned and delivered, experiential education enhances student learning and better prepares graduates for success post-graduation. While most graduate programs involve elements of experiential education, there remain untapped opportunities to expand opportunities for internships.

8. *We commit to identifying benchmarks and developing policies and mechanisms to increase the number of students who successfully complete their PhDs by the end of Year VI.*

Rationale: Much of the attrition in doctoral programs at York, as in many other universities, comes during the later years of a student's program of study, typically from the fifth year onwards. This represents a considerable loss to the student as well as to the institution, and moreover, attrition rates are increasingly used as a measure of successful graduate programming. York's doctoral students are provided with funding for six years, a commitment which is unique in Canada and only found within 3% of graduate programs in the US. An analysis of doctoral programs across North America indicates that six years is an appropriate median time to completion. By identifying benchmarks, establishing milestones and sharing best practices, our intention is to foster student success, so as to increase the numbers of students who complete or who are very close to completion by the end of Year VI.

9. *We will improve the overall research profile as well as the quality of graduate and postdoctoral programs by increasing both the number of successful applications from York students and postdoctoral fellows for externally-funded domestic and international scholarships and fellowships, as well as increasing the numbers of students and postdoctoral fellows coming to York with external awards to 25% by 2015.*

Rationale: Graduate students not only comprise the largest community of researchers at York, but within many disciplines they, together with postdoctoral fellows, are critical to the research of our faculty members. Increasing the number of applications as well as raising our success rates will help strengthen the research culture at York, assist us in becoming a more comprehensive institution, while also assisting our students in building strong foundations for their subsequent careers. A more aggressive pursuit of scholarship and fellowship opportunities will also help us to increase in a sustainable manner the number of international graduate students at York.

10. *York University will improve accessibility for students by significantly expanding online delivery of courses and programs as part of its efforts to enhance learning through the use of technology.*



Rationale: The 1999 *White Paper* noted the importance of technology-enhanced learning to improve accessibility (particularly to commuter and part-time students), contribute to life-long learning, and lead to innovation in pedagogy. Chapter 2 of this White Paper Companion identifies the emergence of new technologies as one of the key drivers of change and opportunity for universities. As a large commuter university where most of our students spend relatively little time on campus outside of class time, there is a need and demand for the use of new technology, particularly for part-time students. Moreover, the use of new technology and the digital library can enhance student learning and satisfaction. Yet we have made relatively modest progress towards systematically incorporating new technologies in the learning process, particularly as compared to our competitors. We therefore propose a significant broadening of the use of web-based teaching and learning components over the next decade in addition to the other technologies that are discussed in Chapter 4 to enhance learning.

11. *York will continue its efforts to enhance internationalization, including the recruitment of international students. By 2013, at least 7.5% of York students will be international students; by 2017, at least 10% of all York students will be international students.*

Rationale: York has long had a commitment to internationalization. International students add diversity to our student body and enrich the university experience for all. However the proportion of international students at the University is surprisingly low, particularly when compared to our leading competitors in the GTA and in our major Canadian urban centres. In fact, in recent years, the number of international students at York has fallen, both in relative as well as absolute terms. We believe it important to set a goal that will allow York to retain its leadership in this area, not only because of the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives but also in terms of maintaining York's reputation and distinctiveness regarding its internationalization strategy.

12. *The Vice-President Academic & Provost will lead and coordinate the development of a pan-university strategy for community engagement.*

Rationale: In the U.S. the Carnegie Foundation has been a leader in promoting community engagement in post-secondary education. Engagement is defined as the collaboration “between higher education institutions and their larger communities (local, regional/state, national, global) for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity.” The Carnegie framework highlights the importance of the incorporation of community engagement in academic plans and of institutional leadership in advancing the engagement agenda. At York, the President's Task Force on Community Engagement catalogued initiatives already under way across the university and highlighted opportunities going forward, building on those initiatives, in relation to learning and the student experience, partnership and community collaboration, campus culture, and knowledge exchange. The Vice-President Academic & Provost will work with

colleagues across the university to develop strategic plans to enhance capacity in this area.

It is common in documents of this kind to describe the institution as standing at a cross-roads. Yet this would appear to capture precisely our own challenge and dilemma at the dawn of a new decade. Having just completed the first 50 years of our existence -- a cause for rightful celebration of our considerable accomplishments and success -- we have also recently come through an extremely challenging year. This has produced a palpable sense amongst many in the community that we can and must do better in the years ahead if we are to truly realize the aspirations and the vision of those whose efforts led to the creation of this great University in 1959. It has also produced a remarkable willingness to contribute constructively towards the achievement of that goal.

We expect the next decade to be one in which the pace of change, the competition between universities, and the demands for public accountability will all continue to increase. Yet we believe that York University is remarkably well positioned to advance and even flourish as the decade unfolds. We are situated in the heart of the largest and most dynamic metropolitan centre in Canada and one of the world's leading global centres for innovation and knowledge mobilization. We believe, therefore, that our destiny is within our own hands, and that what is required most of all is an appreciation of the opportunities that are available to us, along with the development of a sense of resolve and common purpose to pursue them.

The overall conclusion that emerges from this discussion is what we have termed the quality imperative for York University. By focusing on academic quality, we can enhance our reputation for academic excellence with a wide variety of constituencies, including faculty, students, staff, prospective students, government policymakers, and so on. We also propose that engagement – whether it occurs in research activity or through the student experience – is the principal means to respond to the quality imperative. The substantive chapters of this White Paper Companion explore the ways in which a commitment to engagement can support the overall objective of increasing academic quality.

### ***Remaining Chapters of the White Paper Companion in Brief***

Chapter 2 provides the context for academic planning at York in 2010. It outlines the history and evolution of planning at York and describes the internal and external environment which makes turning our attention to the enhancement of academic quality an imperative. The past decade has been a period of tremendous growth at York, in both the undergraduate and graduate programs. Demographic projections for the next decade suggest a continuing increase in demand for additional university spaces, particularly in the GTA. On the one hand, this suggests that we may have an opportunity to grow in areas of strategic priority, to increase student quality, or both. Yet we cannot simply take it for granted that this overall increase in system demand will necessarily result in increased demand for York University programs. In fact, York's share of first choice applicants from secondary school has declined over the past five years, with the greatest drop attributable to the labour disruption of 2008-09. Secondary school applications for

September 2010 are up only modestly from a year ago, which indicates that much work remains to be done to rebuild the University's reputation in the years ahead.

The chapter on **research quality and reputation** examines our progress towards the objective of becoming one of Canada's leading research-intensive universities, which was a central goal of the last UAP. While we have made significant progress towards this goal over the past five years, institutions around the globe have also been investing heavily in research performance. The result is that, despite our notable successes, the gap between York and many of our competitors has not narrowed and in some cases has even widened. This chapter therefore argues for the need to develop a broad-based approach, encompassing scholarship and creative activity across all Faculties and disciplines and all levels (unit, Faculty, institutional), building on existing strengths and networks, and working towards the development of mechanisms to increase research support and research capacity, thereby enhancing York's research reputation and profile. The commitment to research excellence should be reflected in planning in relation to a range of areas, including complement, the libraries and graduate studies.

This section also emphasizes the key role that can be played by a strategy built around the theme of engagement. In particular, research partnerships and collaborations both within the university and with external partners such as business, the healthcare sector, and municipalities, can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and the contribution of York's research to significant socioeconomic, environmental, cultural and policy issues. Thus engagement through research can assist in building quality and research reputation.

The chapter on the **quality of student learning** explores opportunities for York to be a leader as a learning-centred institution, responsive to the needs of a knowledge-based global society, and preparing students for success in life and as civic-minded and contributing members of society. The starting point for this analysis is the observation that there is considerable room for improvement in the student experience at York. A research study commissioned by the Provost to assist in the development of the White Paper found that York students are less likely than those from comparable universities to report that their experience at York was excellent or good. This research suggests that York's academic priorities should include improving student perceptions of the quality of teaching, individual faculty reputation and the tangible benefits of a York education upon graduation. The research also found that six key steps that would improve the student experience are: expand experiential education opportunities; reduce class sizes; invest in campus safety; provide more academic advising; expand study space in the library; and, for part-time students in particular, provide more flexibility in program delivery through such initiatives as an increase in on-line courses and e-learning opportunities.

This chapter returns to the theme of engagement by proposing a learning-centred approach encompassing all aspects of the student experience, including the classroom, libraries, social and intellectual interactions, advising, and student supports. This section considers how engagement advances the learning-centred focus through enhanced integration of theory and practice (e.g., through experiential learning initiatives including those embedded in the community), development of learning communities and student

supports, enhanced flexibility recognizing student learning styles and needs (including online opportunities to learn), and greater attention to teaching development and celebration.

The next two chapters build on the notion of community engagement to consider explicitly how York can become more fully engaged with, and better serve, its local and global/international communities. The chapter on **internationalization** explores opportunities for York to further its leadership and reputation in the international realm through the strategic expansion of partnerships for teaching and research and taking steps to attract more outstanding international students to our undergraduate and graduate programs. It also highlights the importance, in the context of their development as citizens of a global society, of providing opportunities, through curricular and research initiatives and cultural interchange activities, for all students to gain international perspectives and experience. The chapter on **community engagement** considers how York can build bridges to and expand its involvement with the local community (particularly the area surrounding the campus and extending to York Region and other areas to the north and west, which include a diversity of cultural communities) in ways which are of mutual benefit, promote understanding, social justice and the sharing of knowledge, and are consistent with university standards. This includes strategies to provide access to educational opportunities, co-op arrangements, community services, research initiatives, and shared events, in partnership with community organizations, businesses and agencies.

The chapter on **enrolment and program development** takes as its starting point the opportunities set out in the environmental scan for York to grow overall and/or in particular programs or constituencies, and considers how York might utilize these opportunities to advance its academic priorities, in particular its commitment to quality and its aim to become a more “comprehensive” institution, at the same time responding to student and societal interests. A particular focus is on the expansion of programming and enrolments in areas relating to health and medicine, engineering, applied sciences, business-related studies and professional programs. It also contemplates opportunities to enhance program quality by raising admission requirements, while maintaining the commitment to accessibility, introducing programming options that incorporate career-relevant elements and web-based learning, and developing programming for new constituencies of students such as internationally-educated professionals. Finally, it canvases opportunities and directions in relation to enhancement of graduate education.

## Chapter 2:

### The Current Context for Academic Planning

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes and analyzes the context within which academic planning and direction-setting will take place at York over the next decade including salient issues in the internal and external environments that are expected to shape or at least influence planning directions. It also clarifies the overall planning context at the University and how the White Paper fits into that context.

#### **The White Paper in the Context of Academic Planning at York**

York has a history of forward planning as long as the history of York itself. The importance of academic planning within the institution's processes and structures and its relationship to budget planning was formally enshrined in our planning framework in 1985. Throughout our history, major institutional planning documents have reflected and been framed by our culture based on enduring commitments to a number of fundamental values and principles including:

- Quality
- Innovation
- Accessibility
- Diversity
- Social justice/social responsibility
- Interdisciplinarity
- Internationalization

Since 1985, the *University Academic Plan* (UAP) has been the university's major academic planning document. The UAP is a cyclical document that sets out the guiding principles, academic priorities and objectives over the next five years. Grounded in a commitment to the highest quality, it is intended to be a dynamic and iterative document, reflecting and anticipating the evolution of York, and taking account of its environment including government directions, societal needs, and the post-secondary education system. It serves to frame and guide academic planning across the University, including planning for complement, enrolments, and infrastructure. The 2005-2010 UAP highlights the importance of research intensification, graduate education, the student experience, community engagement, and York's profile as planning priorities. An institutional *Planning, Budget and Accountability* report, published annually since 1999, provides updates on progress towards both academic plans and other strategic plans. Recent efforts have been directed towards the closer integration of academic planning and resource allocation, together with accountability, with the implementation of the Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) framework at the university.

A number of other significant planning documents have, from time to time, given direction to York's development and priority-setting over the years, and this White Paper is both shaped by and builds on those documents. These include:

*2020 Vision: The Future of York University* (1992): Observing that York differed from other large Canadian universities in that it did not offer programming in medicine, architecture and (at that time) engineering, and that its enrolments in science programming were relatively small, an Enrolment Working Group prepared a Green Paper whose main focus was to recommend strategies of growth and diversification, including opportunities for new faculties or academic units and suggestions for implementation of the strategies. Several working assumptions were proposed including that York become a more "comprehensive" university by building on strengths, recombining programs in new ways, and introducing new programs in areas such as communications/design, health, and information science.

*Strategic Planning for the New Millennium* (1999): Building on *2020 Vision*, this White Paper was authored by then Vice President Academic Michael Stevenson and it set as overarching objectives increasing the excellence of teaching and research, improved balance and diversity of programs and enrolment, and sensitivity to student demand and accessibility; and proposed objectives to enhance York's profile in liberal arts, applied science, professional programs, international programs, technology-enhanced learning, collaborative programs, and research. It argued for redistribution of enrolments to expand the sciences, fine arts, environmental studies, and professional programs in support of diversification.

*Moving Forward with the University Academic Plan* (2007): The President's report to the Board of Governors identified key strategic initiatives building on the theme of making York a more comprehensive and research-intensive university, including enhancement of the research culture across the university by diversifying the research base and research partnerships, expansion in the life sciences and applied sciences, and initiatives to enhance the student experience and to expand community connections and visibility. It also noted the need for flexibility, agility and responsiveness in academic planning and for the alignment of initiatives with goals, reinforced by resources and structures.

These papers, and now this White Paper, share a number of common features:

- an enduring and unwavering commitment to the highest academic quality;
- a commitment to academic planning and to setting academic priorities to guide the allocation of resources; and
- an overarching goal of York's evolution as a more "comprehensive" university, taken to mean the offering of a broader range of programming more representative of the pure and applied sciences (including engineering) and health/medicine, to be accomplished by building on strengths and innovation.

These principles continue to shape planning for York's future directions as we enter the next phase of institutional planning and direction-setting. Within this planning context, the Provostial White Paper – like the three longer-term documents described above that

preceded it – is intended to provide a guiding vision for York for the next ten to fifteen years, building on the fundamental goals and values that characterize this institution, articulating collegially shared aspirations for strategic directions and priorities and indicating how York can differentiate itself within the post-secondary education system. It provides a framework to guide and foster the alignment of planning processes across the university – that is, planning at all levels in both academic and administrative spheres – in the shorter term. The objectives proposed in the White Paper are intended as a set of working assumptions for the articulation in the next iteration of the UAP of the specific goals and objectives that will be pursued over the next five year period to advance the institution in the directions articulated.

The White Paper’s articulation of the University’s longer term direction serves as an essential basis for fully implementing the Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) framework. First initiated by Vice President Finance and Administration, Gary Brewer, in 2007, the purpose of IRP is to produce a demonstrable alignment of University resources with strategic and academic priorities, and to put in place the administrative structures, processes, tools, operational plans and accountability measures necessary to accomplish this. One component of the IRP framework, the Integrated Resource Plans, specify the strategies/actions that every Division, Faculty and major administrative unit intends to pursue to advance academic priorities and objectives, as well as the benchmarks that will be used to monitor progress. The effectiveness of these plans and of all planning and resource decision-making within the IRP framework is dependent upon planners having a clear and common understanding of where the University intends to be 10-15 years from now. The White Paper will provide this.

Recognizing that current budget constraints are likely to be a continuing reality in York’s planning, the White Paper will provide a framework for approaching the difficult choices that inevitably will have to be made among worthy options, both current and new. In order to ensure that institutional resources (new and existing financial, human and infrastructural resources) are allocated to support our priorities, it may be the case that we will not be able to continue to do everything we currently do in the same ways we now do them. The White Paper provides a “measuring stick” against which both potential new initiatives and the continuation of current activities can be assessed.

Because of the potential for fundamental impact of the strategic direction and priorities articulated in the White Paper on York’s future, collegial agreement around the directions and priorities is crucial. For this reason, the process for the development of the White Paper was designed to invite and encourage the engagement of all members of the York community. Thus a “green paper” consultation phase involving hundreds of people through working groups, open forums, and meetings with Faculty Councils and other constituencies, led to the release in February 2010 of a draft White Paper entitled, *Canada’s Engaged University: Strategic Directions for York University 2010-2010*, followed by another round of extensive consultations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The many helpful and constructive comments, some of which were too specific for incorporation in this White Paper, have been compiled and will be referred to the drafters of the new UAP and others across the university who will be responsible for carrying forward the directions articulated.

Several themes emerged in the consultations around the draft White Paper:

- a widely shared dedication to York's mission and values, including quality, diversity, and equity/social justice;
- the desire to see clearly articulated in the document a vision for York for the next ten to fifteen years;
- agreement with the overarching objective of enhancing academic quality in relation to research, teaching, learning and the student experience, programming, and personnel (faculty, librarians and staff);
- general support for the concept of engagement as a unifying theme to advance academic quality, provided that it is clearly, meaningfully and broadly defined;
- a deep and strongly held pride in, and commitment to, York's strengths and a determination to celebrate and build on those strengths as we move forward in new directions - some of those strengths as cited in the consultations include:
  - world-renowned professional programs
  - innovative pedagogies
  - leadership in internationalization
  - distinctive interdisciplinary approaches to undergraduate and graduate teaching and research
  - an array of fine arts programs that contribute to education and cultural policy in Canada
  - leadership in bilingual education at Glendon
  - outstanding cutting edge programming and research in health and the sciences
  - renowned research centres
  - leadership in sustainability
  - reputation for community outreach and collaboration;
- the importance of incorporating into the set of values commonly understood to frame York's development a commitment to sustainability and engagement with our environment, and of taking meaningful steps to make that commitment a reality;
- the need to be open and realistic about the challenges before us, in particular around the costs (i.e., financial, human, and infrastructural resources) involved in developing new initiatives, including those associated with our evolution as a more comprehensive university, in the context of current financial constraints; and the need for guidance about how the balance among priorities is to be determined;
- support for a number of the strategic foci suggested in the draft, particularly those around the student experience, including the opportunity for students to develop skills and capacities to prepare them for active and engaged citizenship as part of their education and the importance of the first year experience; and
- the need to put in place plans, priorities and strategies, through the UAP and planning across the university, to ensure progress towards the goals articulated in the White Paper, as well as appropriate means to measure that progress.

Some argued that there was a need to make bold changes in order to achieve the quality enhancement and differentiation York seeks, while others concluded a more incremental approach represented the more realistic and ultimately achievable approach. We were urged to set out a process for making the difficult choices and priority-setting that will be



required; and we would point out in response that the White Paper is intended to provide the framework for decision-making through the planning processes that will follow.

### **The Internal Environment**

While this White Paper is, as it should be, focused on future directions, it must also reflect an awareness of how our history and the environment in which we operate (both internal and external) serve to shape those directions. Planning cannot be stifled or dictated by that environment, but it must surely take account of environmental factors and both the challenges and the opportunities they present.

#### *Enrolment Planning:*

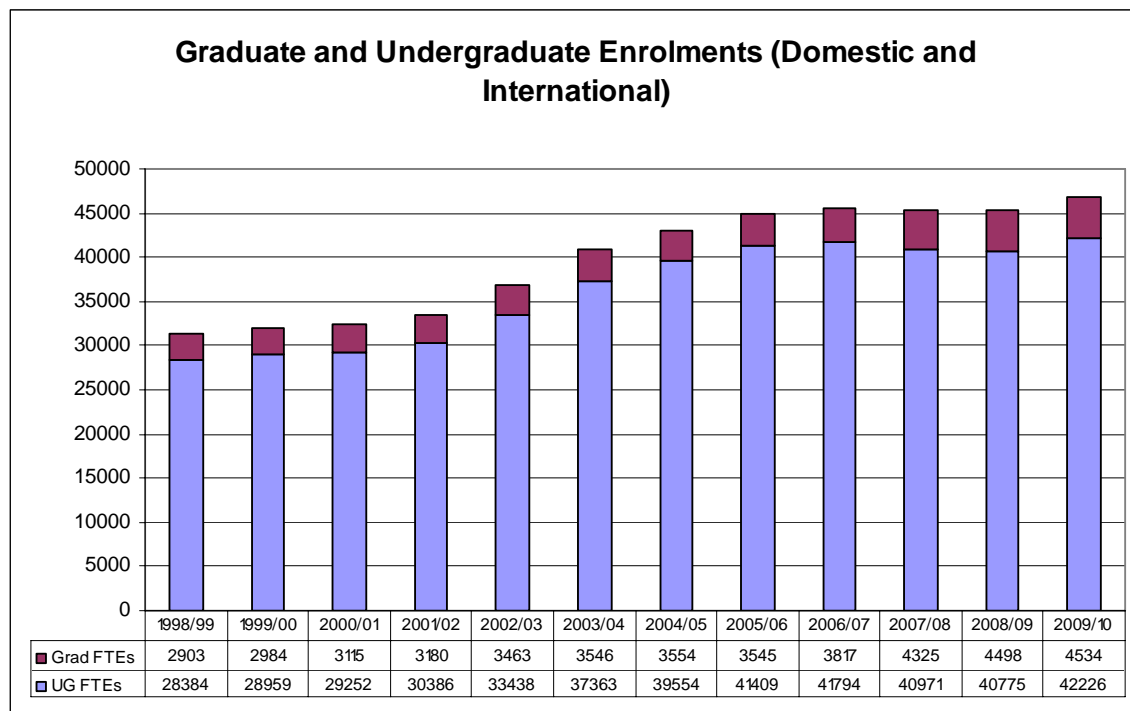
York is a very large university – the third largest in Canada – and important questions going forward focus on whether we should continue to grow, and if so, how much and where. The draft White Paper issued in February reviewed in detail developments around enrolments over the past decade, noting the significant enrolment growth over this period in both undergraduate and graduate enrolments. Of particular significance is that the University is significantly larger today than it was in 1999, with approximately 43% more undergraduate and 47% more graduate students today than a decade earlier. Growth and the ways in which we grew reflected several factors, including demographics – increases in the university-aged population and in participation rates – and response to the “double cohort” resulting from the elimination of Grade 13 from Ontario high schools, as well as government policies and associated funding envelopes intended to encourage universities to increase enrolments in total and/or in particular areas (e.g., computer science, Nursing, education, and bilingual programs). The total growth in graduate and undergraduate student numbers (FTEs) is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

During this period significant restructuring occurred to better align and consolidate our academic programs and research activities, highlighted by the creation of the Faculty of Health in 2006 and the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies in 2009.

The shape of enrolment distribution and program development has reflected modest success with regard to objectives relating to balance and diversification, intended to increase the proportion of the sciences, engineering, and professional programs as a proportion of our total enrolment. Figure 2 illustrates Faculty-by-Faculty enrolment changes (undergraduate eligible FTEs; adjusted to take account of restructuring initiatives).

At the graduate level, in part in response to government objectives as well as to address York’s relatively small proportion of graduate students, efforts have been made to increase the numbers of high quality graduate students, though those efforts have been limited by the need to provide competitive financial support as well as the need for tenure stream faculty for teaching and supervision. The growth undertaken to date has however imposed considerable strains on most of our programs. Consequently, graduate enrolments are expected to level out until such time as resources are in place to ensure their long-term sustainability and quality.

Figure 1



Source: OIRA

Figure 2

**Faculty Enrolments (Undergraduate: Eligible FTEs)**

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
LAPS	19854.2	20733.6	20358.9	19376.3	18878.5	19115.3
Education	1345.0	1356.8	1348.7	1360.7	1265.0	1307.8
FES	319.4	444.8	492.6	537.3	587.8	623.9
Fine Arts	2959.4	3118.3	3174.9	3093.0	3225.0	3165.3
Glendon	1710.8	1751.3	1819.3	1800.7	1787.9	1831.9
Health	4682.8	5012.1	5725.7	5640.0	5562.5	5675.3
Osgoode	873.6	867.1	888.8	884.2	895.4	862.9
FSE	4036.5	4117.6	4197.3	4673.2	4942.9	5194.0
Schulich	809.9	879.0	895.1	937.5	987.7	1024.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>36591.5</b>	<b>38280.6</b>	<b>38901.3</b>	<b>38303.0</b>	<b>38132.7</b>	<b>38801.2</b>

Source: OIRA

*The Student Experience:*

The 2005-2010 UAP observed that we do not know enough about our students – who they are and what they need/want from their educational experience. Therefore, as part of the research to support the development of the White Paper, we commissioned a survey of current students at York, as well as of applicants to York who declined an offer of admission, and of applicants to other GTA universities who did not apply to York. This survey found that there is significant room for improvement in the student experience at the University. It also indicated that the two factors that would lead to the greatest positive impact on the student experience and improve perceptions of the quality of the student experience at York would be an increase in experiential education opportunities and the reduction of class sizes. Also important amongst current students were issues relating to campus safety, a desire for more and better academic advising, the expansion of study space in the library and, for part-time students, increasing flexibility of course offerings and expanding online offerings. The results also showed that the lack of academic programming in specific areas has an impact on interest in York and may play a part in diminishing the University's academic reputation. Finally, quality of teaching, research reputation, and the tangible benefits of education upon graduation are important determinants of students' perceptions of university reputation. While students have always been concerned about the relationship between their education and what comes after graduation, research has shown that this is particularly evident among first generation students so this preoccupation might intensify further. It is important to be both responsive to the skills that our students need for success and clear in explaining to them how their education (not limited to substantive knowledge but including the critical thinking, communication and problem-solving skills that support life-long learning) relates to their future plans. In the long-term, we should continue our efforts to enhance the quality of teaching/learning as well as research.

*York's Culture and Organizational Structure:*

York University's current organization culture, like that of many universities, reflects in its complexity the many interests and perspectives that find a supportive home within the institution. These include:

- the interplay, sometimes tension, between deliberation and action that is one of the defining characteristics of university life and is essential to universities' role as social forces of enlightenment and transformation; the challenge for any university is to manage the tension between deliberation and action to the maximum advantage of the university itself and the society it serves;
- the tensions between central and distributed responsibility;
- academic versus non-academic administration;
- outward versus inward focus;
- the relationship of pure or discovery and applied research and scholarship;
- the relationship between research and teaching;
- labour relations and collegial governance; and
- the tension between tradition and change.

It remains important to take York's culture into consideration as a factor influencing the internal environment within which academic plans unfold although we should not assume

that culture is static. The organizational structure should be continually reviewed to ensure that it facilitates rather than hinders planning and to create opportunities for horizontal as well as vertical planning.

### **The External Environment**

The draft White Paper reviewed in some detail the external environment, identifying five factors that will be important considerations as we shape our strategic direction over the next decade.

The first factor is **globalization/internationalization**, the relentless increase in interaction amongst people, organizations, resources and governments of different nation states. This phenomenon poses pressures and challenges for the University, as it shapes government thinking and priorities and gives rise to an emerging global competition between universities worldwide for reputation and resources including faculty and students.

The second factor is the **information and communications technology (ICT) revolution**, which is related to globalization but which should be considered as an independent factor in its own right. ICT advances in the past 20 years have been remarkable, increasing and diversifying the ways in which people and organizations create information and communicate with each other, particularly through the Internet. Universities are seeing the emergence of an Internet generation, those born after 1994 who have no experience of a world without the Web or the wider ICT revolution. This cohort expects to communicate and interact in virtual as well as real time; indeed, the boundary between real and virtual environments is blurred as heavily mediated modes of communication become more prevalent and easily accessed. The pace of the ICT revolution can be expected to accelerate rather than abate over the next decade.

The third factor is **government decisions and political will**, which we expect to reflect an even more constrained fiscal environment, particularly over the next five years, and increasing efforts by governments to target funding for universities towards government objectives. These objectives will relate primarily, although not exclusively, to economic and labour market goals. In this context, it will be important for York to have articulated core values, interests and strategic goals, so that we will be well positioned to develop proposals in response to government initiatives that are in keeping with them. Whatever the proposals for funding might be, they must emphasize meaningful, direct linkages between the University and the communities and society it serves. The interests of students will also need to be taken into account in planning for the range of programs we offer.

The fourth factor is **GTA demographics**, which are expected to produce a significant increase in demand for university spaces over the next decade. Research and analysis indicates that there could be pressures for as many as 80,000 additional university spaces in the GTA by 2021, as a result of population increases particularly in York and Peel regions, increases in participation rates, and the tendency of students, many of whom

come from immigrant families, to study near home. Given that over 80% of our students come from the GTA, we expect to face significant pressure to further increase enrolment over this period. At the same time, our share of first choice applicants in the GTA has been declining in the past five years, a trend that was exacerbated by the labour disruption of 2008-09. Thus it cannot be assumed that this increased demand for university spaces will benefit York.

The fifth factor is the **actions of our competitors**. Our primary competitors remain the University of Toronto and Ryerson University. Both of these institutions have developed or are in the process of developing plans indicating how they will respond to the demands for growth over the next decade. Non-GTA universities are also putting in place plans for future enrolment growth, in part through the establishment of satellite campuses in the GTA. The Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (some of which are now offering applied degrees) are also part of the post-secondary landscape and we are feeling increased pressure from government to develop “pathways” for student mobility between the segments of the post-secondary system. York has been a leader in the development of articulation, collaboration and other such agreements.

This environment presents a series of risks, challenges and opportunities for York:

- While internationalization efforts have been a major focus of our efforts over the past decade, we must make even greater efforts in this regard in the future.
- The demands and expectations of our students for the use of web-based technology and other eLearning initiatives will grow significantly over the next decade, and we must be in a position to respond effectively to these expectations.
- While enrolment demand will be strong in the GTA over the decade, we will also face increased competition from our traditional competitors as well as from new institutional entrants into the GTA.
- York will need to develop new undergraduate programs, as well as consider changes or modifications to existing programs, that will ensure the continued relevance and attractiveness of our programs for current and prospective students. Similar pressures exist at the graduate level, but given the resource implications of graduate programming, we will have to proceed carefully.
- If we do experience increased demand for our programs, this will enable us to grow in strategically important or desired areas, as well as to ensure that any growth that we do accept is accompanied by new funding for both operating and capital costs.

## Chapter 3:

### Promoting Research Quality and Intensification

*“While York has grown into one of Canada’s largest universities, it is not yet one of Canada’s top research-intensive universities. Recognizing this dichotomy, the University Academic Plan sets the intensification and expansion of research as the paramount objective.”*

President Shoukri

*Report to the Community, 2008*

#### **Introduction**

Research is at the core of the mission of universities and York has many internationally recognized research strengths. These are confirmed through international peer reviews, research grants, publications, major awards and editorships of journals. Yet, our comparative numbers on public policy measures demonstrate that York consistently ranks far below our place as the third largest university in the country. It is incumbent on all of us to build on our recognized strengths, and to promote a more pervasive and sustainable research culture throughout the university. Our university’s reputation depends on how the academic community and external stakeholders including the government, international institutions and the population at large, perceive our research and our rankings. It is not only a matter of reputation for us. Perceptions of research performance affect university selection among undergraduate students as well as our ability to compete for graduate students, faculty, and research support. Just as important, an active research environment enhances learning and enlivens the entire intellectual community.

York must build on progress made during the last UAP and set in motion a comprehensive implementation plan in order to realize its goal of transforming itself into a top research-intensive university. We have a tremendous opportunity to mobilize the university’s energies and strengths to work towards this strategic priority. The balance of this chapter sets out four objectives and offers some commentary on the directions that the University’s implementation plans ought to be taking to guide the advancement and expansion of York’s research.

#### *Research intensification:*

Institutions across the globe continue to make significant advancements in their research performance and, in spite of our progress, the gap between York and many of our competitors persists. If York University is to compete as a serious research institution, it is crucial that we strive to attract faculty with established research excellence, junior faculty with exceptional research promise, and outstanding graduate students. If we are to attract top applicants, we must take decisive action and have a pan-university commitment to improving our research intensity, performance and reputation.

Encouraging our colleagues to understand the importance of seeking and securing external internationally peer reviewed publications and creative works, and advancing participation in all forms of externally sponsored research, are fundamental to our research reputation. In this regard, a particular challenge at York is that we fail to take full advantage of the capacity of our social sciences and humanities faculty, an obvious strength and building block. While there is certainly variation in the extent to which faculty members require grants in order to successfully conduct their research and disseminate their work, the number of requests for internal support suggests that there is substantial capacity to secure additional external funding if all colleagues who are in need of funds were to apply for external support. Another challenge is increasing our capacity to take a leadership role in the “big science” competitions.

We must make an institutional commitment for regular and systematic annual increases in our externally sponsored research participation. Success will result in significant gains in our reputation and in key funding allocations by governments (e.g. CRCs, Indirect Costs) that will provide us with the means to improve research services to all. Further, restructuring the system and creating opportunities to integrate better graduate students in research and professional opportunities will be important.

Implementation plans will benefit from strategies that appreciate the *diversity* of research activities pursued by our faculty members and that retain a broad definition of research including discovery-based research, research of economic significance, and applied research in industry, performance and creative works. It will be important to support colleagues in the pursuit of these different research activities and to assist them in applying for, and securing, relevant grant applications.

We will continue to engage governments in discussions on a broader research agenda that includes socioeconomic policy as part of the overall innovation agenda. The government continues to support basic discovery research (through the granting councils), yet the availability and distribution of research funds are increasingly tied to strategic priority areas defined by the federal and provincial governments, areas where success is deemed critical to Canada’s competitiveness, global positioning and economic return. So much of what drives social change and fuels the modern economy however also derives from, and responds to, social sciences and humanities theories, critiques and analyses. York, therefore, must advocate for a broader suite of research areas to be recognized and supported through public policy. In this regard, we have established the first institutional infrastructure for knowledge mobilization to engage external partners and to inform public policy, social programming, and cultural engagement. This is intended to provide the intellectual space for independent critical analysis and policy development. York is poised to take advantage of a broadening government agenda, not only contributing our science and technology research but also leveraging the work of our social sciences and humanities scholars.

Engaged research can have multiple, layered interpretations all of which are valid and may co-exist. A key component is enhancing the research culture among our faculty and supporting our graduate students. As the objectives below highlight we must support unit

level research planning and pan university research capacity to sustain collaboration across disciplines. Whether as independent researchers or members of multidisciplinary teams, faculty are also concerned that the knowledge generated by the university is shared with the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research and creative activity, and to address critical societal issues. Where appropriate, faculty members should engage other research networks and non-academic partners (industry, community, government) in their research programs.

**Objective 1: Enhance unit level research planning.**

Research excellence exists in many Departments, Faculties and Organized Research Units where peer reviewed areas of strength are recognized nationally and globally. In building on these strengths, units should seek to develop a coordinated research planning framework with an effort to integrate the areas of needed research intensification as a key component located at the centre of their academic planning.

Coordinated planning for research excellence is a collective responsibility that should draw on a responsive planning culture, to be shared not only locally but also centrally. Deans, department chairs, and research directors should initiate a leadership role in advancing research within their unit. Some elements of successful research planning include an articulated vision along with priorities and strategic directions, strategies for implementation, research performance measures, and meaningful comparators with leading units at other universities. In developing a more coordinated planning approach it is important that all Faculties and units not only recognize the research strengths within their own units, but also identify those priority areas worthy of support, and promote collaboration with other areas across the university, thereby leveraging broader York research opportunities (see section on Pan-University Capacity Building).

A key consideration in all research planning is faculty complement. Our culture must let go of any misunderstanding that teaching and research compete; in research intensive universities they are viewed as synergistic. We must overcome our history where Faculty hiring in many units has been based predominantly on undergraduate enrolment requirements. At the same time, keen evaluation of the research productivity of Faculty candidates during the Tenure and Promotion process must be emphasized. Research intensity should be sustained at all levels of the professoriate, and therefore greater consideration must be given to evidence of a successful research program for anyone being considered for advancement.

It is important that all units incorporate a culture of evidence-based decision making as part of their coordinated research planning. This will assist in documenting success, with comparative assessments and performance benchmarking, based on norms for their disciplines and with adherence to international peer review standards, thereby making the case for the commitment of resources to support research intensification and research excellence.



Deans, research directors and chairs are in leadership roles and therefore must provide the means to establish incentives to further drive research success within units. Each Faculty should have an Associate Dean whose principal responsibilities are research focused, and a Research Office with a robust role in working with faculty members in supporting research and in generating grant submissions and aligning their efforts with the Office of Research Services in a contemporary matrix organizational approach. Further, in achieving a comprehensive plan consideration should be paid to linking IRP/ budget allocations with success in meeting research priorities and goals.

**Objective 2: Enhance pan-university research capacity building.**

Having proposed better unit level research planning, we should then turn our focus to nurturing and increasing the institutional scope and capacity of our research. A pan-university approach would underscore research excellence and strong collaboration across disciplines.

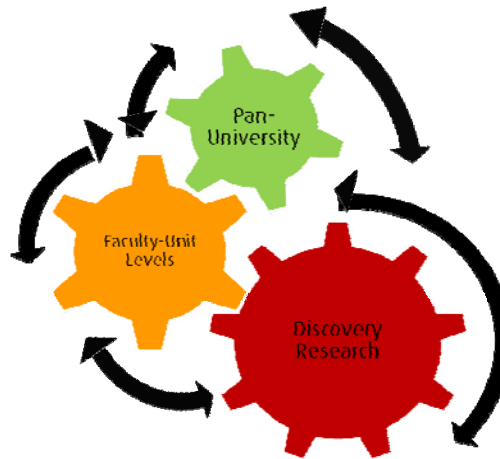
We can build on our successful history of scholarship that crosses traditional academic boundaries and lead the country in innovative research. This will allow us to compete more successfully with leading research institutions that have more critical mass than us in many disciplinary areas. It will enable us to respond to complex contemporary scientific and social research issues that require creative solutions. We need to better leverage our research strengths and open opportunities for York to lead new emerging research paradigms while differentiating us from other institutions.

In building this approach, we must draw on some of our successes, including those Research Centres and Institutes that have taken the lead in facilitating the formation of multidisciplinary teams to conduct large scale international research. We cite but two such examples: the Centre for Vision Research (CVR), a focal point for innovative collaboration among researchers with expertise in psychology, biology, computer science, engineering and kinesiology; and the Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS), where top level research requires incorporating the disciplines of law, sociology, political science, history, anthropology, education, and health studies in the study of complex human challenges of forced migration and settlement.

We have numerous other unique areas of opportunity given our strengths and recent successes across the university, including for example climate change and digital media. Climate change has become one of the most salient environmental issues of our time. Its pervasiveness and complexity requires a range of analyses and solutions drawing upon a diverse range of scholarship from the sciences, humanities and social sciences. Digital media similarly encompasses the expertise of many areas of research at York, including communications and culture, fine arts and education, computer science and engineering, law and business. We must develop and harness more intensive and innovative research with leading interdisciplinary approaches in these and other areas.

We must develop a strong horizontal system for research capacity building across the university. With the overarching goal of capturing larger research opportunities and

increasing our research capacity, we must leverage more extensive pan-university research collaborations. In advancing this objective, it will be important to carefully document barriers to cross-Faculty collaboration and develop strategies that will overcome these hurdles. We must make evidenced based evaluations and reward recognized areas of research excellence. Results of the unit-level research planning exercise will provide synergistic inputs. ORUs should play an active part in coordinating and building our pan-university research capacity.



System for research capacity-building

### **Objective 3: Engage in innovation networks and partnerships.**

York has experienced excellence in a number of large-scale interdisciplinary research initiatives, opening up opportunities to lead emerging research partnered networks. Some examples include SSHRC Community University Research Alliance (CURA), SSHRC Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI), SSHRC Knowledge Impact in Society (KIS) and Clusters, CIDA Tier I and Tier II University Partnership for Cooperation and Development (UPDC) grants, Ford Foundation funded projects, CIHR Team grants and NSERC industry partnered programs. Funded by these and other peer reviewed competitions, York scholars have developed a long tradition of engaging networks and partners in their research programs which have created areas of traditional research strength and emerging areas of research excellence.

In citing some examples, equity and vulnerable populations research is an area where York scholars are leading national networks in mental health, and homelessness, exploring youth and poverty with local community partners and forming international networks of refugee researchers and their government and NGO partners. International research on disabilities partnered with people with disabilities and their communities has led to the development of Canada's first graduate program in critical disabilities studies. Further, with traditional strengths in industry partnerships in chemistry and a long standing partnership with the Canadian Space Agency in Space Science and engineering,

York is now emerging as a leader in digital media, a fusion of fine arts and computer science collaborating with academic, creative and industrial partners.

We recognize that knowledge has greater value when it is mobilized and shared by engaging faculty and graduate students with communities and organizations that can contribute to and benefit from York's research. The key to developing robust research partnerships lies in both sustainable relationship building and carefully matching our research strengths and critical analysis with the complementary needs of innovators, entrepreneurs, policy makers and community groups. The international literature clearly shows that this new emerging paradigm is contingent on innovative partnership strategies that can be best achieved through university leadership and engaged scholarship in regional innovation networks or clusters.

In a recent report that further confirmed this approach, the Council of Canadian Academies found that more opportunities must be seized to effectively cultivate horizontal connections between scholars and the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. This approach is not the exclusive domain of an S&T agenda; external partnerships with SS&H researchers help to better inform public policy solutions to and services for complex, socioeconomic and cultural issues. Our pan-university infrastructure, the Knowledge Mobilization Unit, provides the tools to move this agenda forward and entrenches our leadership in this paradigm. Our knowledge mobilization infrastructure supports the engagement between researchers and research stakeholders, focusing on developing the connection and collaboration with our partners in government, industry and in the community. This results in advancing social innovation through engaged scholarship and assisting in economic, cultural, social and environmental development.

To date, we have experienced a strong response from faculty colleagues and seen a broad range of involvement in a pan-university research outreach strategy aimed at deepening institutional networks and partnerships. Some initiatives already feature York's collaborations across a variety of sectors including business, municipalities, hospitals, and community agencies. We have seen strong external receptors for our research, especially in York Region which is located on our doorstep – with dynamic organizations and diverse and rapidly growing population base. These linkages will enable us to better leverage our research strengths and open opportunities to lead the way in this new emerging research paradigm while differentiating us from other institutions. Fostering these partnerships will also provide our researchers with many new opportunities and benefits, while enhancing York's reputation. This provides a solid base for future development.

Many of our researchers have a strong interest to work with external partners, and through such engagements they have built a relationship of trust and respect with local collaborators. Universities are expected to engage with our communities for scientific, social, and economic impacts. York can assume a leadership role in this emerging new paradigm for research and innovation. We must further the development of mutually beneficial regional innovation networks. This will offer new opportunities for our researchers and graduate students, furthering the momentum of promising initiatives and

leading to sustainable institutional programs. The opportunities afforded by external partnerships for our researchers are limitless. Our collective goal is to harness this capacity and to implement York's leadership in regional innovation networks in order to:

- Enhance York's reputation
- Impact regional economic growth
- Impact social and cultural well-being
- Strengthen institutional opportunities
- Leverage strong regional clusters for global recognition and competitiveness.

#### **Objective 4: Build graduate capacity.**

Graduate students and postdoctoral fellows are critical to intensifying research activity at York. Our ability to advance research intensity at York is dependent on recruiting and supporting quality students at the master's and doctoral level, and the nature of scientific enquiry has put a premium on complex research teams in which postdoctoral fellows play a vital role. In many research areas, postdoctoral fellows have become an essential qualification for academic employment, particularly but not exclusively in the sciences, and they have the potential to strengthen and contribute to the reputation of programs across the university.

York University has recognized areas of strength which draw outstanding graduate students, many of whom are attracted not only to our innovative interdisciplinary programs but also the opportunities we offer to students to work with faculty from other fields as part of their program of study. The quality of our students has been confirmed with the recent increases to our quota for SSRHC and CGS graduate competitions along with improvements in our success with NSERC master's and doctoral fellowships. But we cannot be complacent – in the increasingly competitive and globalized world of graduate and postgraduate education, we face a number of challenges in recruiting and retaining the high quality faculty and students we wish to attract. Continued efforts to enhance the reputation of both our scholars and our graduate programs will, in turn, improve our ability to attract outstanding postdoctoral fellows.

A further discussion of graduate recruitment and the provision of a high quality graduate education is provided in Chapter 7. We nevertheless highlight two suggestions in the context of research quality:

- The fullness of the educational experience should include opportunities for graduate students to participate in a range of aspects of the research enterprise, including conducting and disseminating research.
- York should develop a flexible post-doctorate program that will attract quality applicants and that is capable of accommodating the different research programs of units across the University.

#### **Measuring Progress Towards Objectives**

There are a variety of valid, internationally benchmarked measures used to evaluate and quantify the complexities of research performance; e.g., publications and citations. We

need to continue to benchmark our performance on these measures but we also need to focus on how much external research funding York receives. This is a key measure driving public policy and external rankings. Increasingly, we also want to track the impact of our research through monitoring and assessing knowledge mobilization and technology transfer.

It is also essential however that we develop other valid indicators that reflect the specific research concentrations and strengths that we have. Work has already begun with several departments and the libraries to develop bibliometric measures and benchmarking research performance against international best practices, appropriate comparison groups and disciplinary norms. We are working to assess the impact of some of our institutional partnership infrastructure in advancing the application of scholarship outside the university, while continuing to work with the Faculties to measure our commitment towards annual systematic increases in our externally sponsored research participation. We will also focus on benchmarking research performance against a range of competitors through the local research planning exercise.

Efforts to enhance quality and reputation also need an effective communications strategy to promote a broader understanding of the diverse ways in which our research and other professional contributions impact the cultural, political, educational, economic and technological sectors of our society, and improve the quality of life. An implementation plan should include an aggressive and innovative research communications strategy that builds on the work of the KM unit and potentially includes an open access policy.

We must continue to evolve our research measurements and to benchmark against international best practice. We must move towards developing a comprehensive performance model of evaluating and comparing York's research successes. We need to consolidate a strong and vibrant research culture to ensure York's evolution as a leading research intensive university.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Promoting Quality in Student Learning**

#### **Introduction**

Over the last two decades a paradigm shift has occurred in Higher Education from an emphasis on teaching to a recognition that the ultimate focus of attention must be on student learning and success. While every institution will define what it hopes to achieve in its own context, a broad consensus has emerged around the qualities, skills, and abilities university graduates should possess if they are to flourish, both in their careers and in life. In the context of the rapidly changing globalized information age, the emphasis is less upon what a student knows than upon his or her capacity to learn and to mobilize that knowledge over a lifetime. Student success depends on a solid interdisciplinary foundation of knowledge; information and technological literacy; the ability to think critically, generalize, problem solve, communicate effectively, work in teams, and apply knowledge; and the capacity to think and act autonomously.

Over the next 10-15 years, York has the opportunity to distinguish itself as a pre-eminent, learning-centred institution that is responsive to the changing needs of the knowledge-based global society and committed to supporting its students becoming reflective, socially responsible citizens who are able to succeed anywhere in the world. Beyond the general qualities all universities hope to foster in their students and building on the University's traditional commitment to social justice, York's particular objective is to prepare its graduates for active democratic citizenship through introducing them to new ideas and approaches, promoting respectful dialogue, and encouraging engagement in public debate. At the same time, through actively embracing our diversity and that around us and by engaging with our local, national, and global communities we will ensure that a multiplicity of perspectives, experiences, and contributions imbue our teaching and learning, encouraging our students to engage in the diverse global environment.

The literature suggests that one of the best ways to support student academic and personal success and quality in learning is through engagement: through the engagement of students with their learning; the engagement of faculty with students; the engagement of students with one another; the creation of a supportive, engaged campus environment; and the engagement of students with their local, national, and global community<sup>2</sup>. Students are more likely to continue in university if they are engaged with their studies and have developed networks and relationships with fellow students. At the same time, the greater a student's involvement or engagement in their academic work, the greater his or her level of knowledge acquisition and general cognitive development. Further, students who are engaged in their own learning are more inclined than others to actively participate in lifelong learning opportunities after graduation.

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<sup>2</sup> See New Directions for Higher Education, no. 147, Fall, 2009, Wiley Periodicals, Inc. [www.interscience.wiley.com](http://www.interscience.wiley.com).

The literature and our own experience tell us that engaged faculty are key to fostering student engagement and success. By “faculty,” we intend to encompass all of those members of our community who contribute in significant ways to the education of our students – that is, not just the full-time faculty but also the many dedicated contract faculty members who, over the years, have made outstanding contributions to pedagogical development and to teaching and learning at York. Indeed, many of our contract faculty members have been recognized with both internal and external awards for educational leadership and teaching. Enhancing the student experience will rely upon the efforts of all of these colleagues.

Studies have emphasized the importance of understanding that all facets of a student’s experience contribute to his/her success<sup>3</sup>. Engagement thus needs to start locally within the university and include specific opportunities for students to make meaningful connections with faculty, staff and other students. As a consequence, our scope should incorporate not only academic but also administrative, environmental and social aspects. The entire university community needs to be engaged in the student learning experience. Recent reports urge a move away from the traditional dichotomies of student/academic affairs, inside/outside the classroom learning, and curriculum/co-curricular activities to embrace the overall student learning experience, and encourage universities to open discussions of teaching and learning as part of the student experience. Our scope should also extend to forging connections through community contacts and creating the opportunity for international experiences. This chapter, then, proposes a learning-centred approach encompassing all aspects of the student experience, including the classroom, libraries, social and intellectual interactions, advising, and student supports. The end result of this approach will be to help York as a large post-secondary institution feel more personal, increasing the potential for students to be engaged and to experience a sense of “belonging” all of which the literature suggests will support their academic success.

Any approach to supporting and enhancing the quality of student learning must take into account and build on the distinctive characteristics of York’s student body. These include:

- 80% of our students are drawn from the Greater Toronto Area (GTA)
- 45% of our students identify as visible minority (the three largest groups within that 45% are South Asian 31%, Chinese 24% and Black 11%)
- 64% of our first-year students live at home with their parents
- almost half our students commute more than 40 minutes each way
- 60% of our first-year students work off campus an average of 16 hours per week
- many of our students work long hours because they are debt averse
- 50% of our incoming students are first generation with parents who see education as a means of enhancing economic prospects
- undergraduate times to completion are longer than the provincial average

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<sup>3</sup> See “Learning Reconsidered: A Campus Wide Focus on the Student Experience” Report by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and the American College Personnel Association, 2004 and Glenn A. Jones “The “NSSE” Experience: What Have Ontario Universities Learned?” Report on the workshop sponsored by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2007: pp 1-9.

- almost 50% of first-year students report that they spend 5 hours or less on campus each week outside scheduled class time

At the same time, we must also recognize that there is no singular York experience. Instead, we must understand that Faculties, and sometimes programs, may attract distinctive student cohorts and create unique experiences that must be taken into consideration as we work to support and enhance the quality of student learning. We must also remember that although many of our students are commuters, we also have a significant and important residential population whose needs must be met.

What follows are six objectives, identified through the consultation process leading to the White Paper and supported by research in the field, that are critical to mobilizing York's overarching commitment to improving the quality of student learning. These six objectives reflect the essential concept of engagement and build on York's existing strengths.

### **Objectives**

**Objective 1: Support deeper student learning through the integration of theory and practice within all degree programs by providing students with opportunities to apply what they are learning.**

Instructional research shows that learning activities that encourage students to apply knowledge and skills to the solution of concrete problems tend to support the development of higher cognitive skills than do more traditional classroom methods.

One of the most effective ways of actively engaging students in learning, of providing students with this opportunity for deeper learning, is through Experiential Education [EE]. EE is an approach to learning that bridges theory and practice by providing students with concrete applied practical experiences and then helping them to reflect on their experiences using the theoretical knowledge they have learned. While certain approaches to EE are well known and well established within particular disciplines including field practicum, clinical placements, internships, co-op and community service learning (CSL), Experiential Education encompasses a much more comprehensive range of learning activities including problem-based learning (PBL) which applies theory to practical issues, community based learning (CBL) which brings community-defined problems into the classroom, Honours thesis research and major research projects, simulations, laboratories, capstone courses involving the application of learning, and primary research involving archival materials.

The opportunity to apply knowledge has been shown to enhance the critical elements of a liberal education through developing a student's:

- mastery of knowledge, promoting a deeper understanding of the subject matter;
- ability to use what they know through emphasizing the relevance of that knowledge;



- capacity for critical thinking and analysis by and the application for knowledge in complex and ambiguous situations - complex situations; and
- strength as a self-directed learner prepared for life-long learning.

The key to Experiential Education is the student's active engagement in his/her own learning. As a consequence, experts distinguish between an experience and experiential educative opportunities which are characterized by intention, purpose, and direction. Properly structured, EE provides an opportunity to apply knowledge. The quality of the intellectual experience, the achievement of academic goals, requires that students reflect on the experience, examine or critically assess it, and be able to articulate what they have learned.

At the same time as enhancing learning by actively engaging students in the learning process, specific forms of Experiential Education have enormous potential to promote the active engagement of students in their local, national, and international community. Activities such as semesters abroad, work terms, CSL and CBL, which engage students in work with individuals and organizations around the world, extend community outreach regionally and internationally. As such EE can help to foster social and civic responsibility and develop the habit of active, engaged citizenship.

York already has a significant number of well established Experiential Education opportunities. Most graduate programs include a significant element of EE. At the undergraduate level, it is well entrenched in many professionally relevant programs including Nursing, Social Work, ITEC, Engineering, Law; an essential component within our Fine Arts programming; and integral to a number of courses in Biology, Geography and Environmental Studies which use the campus woodlots as a learning space. An important EE component has been introduced across many elements within our Business programming; and faculty in programs across the University have shown an interest in how in one or another form EE might enhance student engagement within their discipline and nurture the development of effective, constructive professionals and citizens. With its strong liberal arts background, York has been grappling with how best to support critical learning and ensure that its students can effectively apply their knowledge. In this context Experiential Education, both at the graduate and at the undergraduate level, is an excellent fit for the University in supporting its priority of promoting quality in student learning.

Our libraries are also at the forefront of engaged learning. At the heart of the Scott Library Learning Commons is a collaborative partnership between the libraries, the Writing Department and the Learning Skills Program of Counseling and Development Services, that will support engaged learning by providing an integrated approach to library research, writing and learning skills. Other potential contributions include curricular support for general education and capstone courses; co-curricular programming focused on academic skills; and support for learning communities and experiential education.

In order to significantly increase the opportunities for students to participate in an experiential education activity, either domestically or internationally, as a component of their degree program, will require that we reflect on how best to facilitate and provide support to faculty who want to incorporate aspects of EE in their courses or programs. In this context we need to consider what is manageable in the context of class size, facilities, training etc. EE can be resource intensive. The literature underlines how essential it is that the infrastructure requirements of EE be recognized and adequately provided for. How we can best do this will undoubtedly be the focus of on-going discussion.

**Objective 2: Enhance student engagement and learning through expanding and enriching E-learning and the use of technology.**

The Information and Communications Technology revolution has had an enormous impact on Higher Education, enabling new modes and new norms of communication and pedagogy while supporting the creation of learning communities and student community engagement across time and space. Technology can support new ways of teaching, provide students with enhanced access to learning materials, enable accessibility and flexibility through the provision of on-line or blended courses, create learning spaces within which students can explore and develop ideas, and enhance engagement through the creation of virtual learning and social communities. Today's students have an unprecedented level of comfort with evolving technologies and high expectations concerning how universities will respond to the plethora of opportunities to enhance student learning and engagement.

York has made reasonable progress in the use of technologies to enhance learning and increase accessibility through on-line courses. Individual faculty members have incorporated significant e-learning components in their teaching. The fuller, more coordinated use of ICT would have significant benefits across a number of fronts.

- For York's commuter population, the introduction of more "blended" courses that promote active participation in learning would reduce how often a student needed to come to campus. At the same time, properly conceived and structured, the use of ICT to create virtual social and learning communities has the potential to help York's commuter student population become more actively engaged in campus life and their own learning, supporting their academic success.
- E-learning technology can be used to enhance the quality of teaching and learning for both on-campus and off-campus students through the introduction of different forms of student engagement and has the capacity to supplement traditional learning modalities in a cost-effective way. While the application of technology does not automatically support improved teaching and learning, the emerging literature describes ways in which it can be employed to help students more actively engage with learning materials and construct knowledge.
- The use of E-learning tools has the potential to increase opportunities for students to engage with faculty, tutors and peer mentors thus supporting engagement.
- E-learning opportunities will significantly enhance access to university study for students with disabilities.

- Offering more courses and programs on-line would significantly widen access to university education, especially for non-traditional or external students by facilitating virtual-mobility of students and would allow York to accommodate enrolment pressure without requiring additional investment in the construction of physical classroom space. Ultimately, offering more courses and programs online would enable learners to study any program offered by York from anywhere in the world through virtualization and remote e-learning technologies.

Becoming a leader in networking through e-learning and online technologies is an important component of the opportunity that exists for York to create an unparalleled learning environment for commuter students and to turn what might be seen as a liability into a strength. We should also take steps to explore other elements of the student experience in order to develop strategies and best practices to support our large commuter base. The expanded use of ICT should be implemented in a planned, deliberate, coordinated institutional manner. For example, rather than simply offering individual courses online across a variety of programs reflecting the interests of isolated faculty, an attempt should be made to identify strategic programs for which the University can anticipate significant demand via distance. To the extent that web sites act as a window into how well a university is responding to changes in technology and new media, we must ensure that they capture our innovation in technology including having course outlines readily available online.

As in the case of Experiential Education, the introduction of an E-learning delivery model will need to be sensitive to variations in disciplinary pedagogy. Whatever the model or models adopted, experience both at York and in other institutions has underlined that effective application of ICT technology requires training, support, and appropriate resourcing. Before moving forward, these issues will need to be addressed.

### **Objective 3: Develop and implement an enhanced first year program for undergraduate students**

The transition to University can often be very challenging for new students, particularly when they are coming to an institution as large as York. Students' expectations prior to arrival often do not match well with the reality they experience. At the same time, however, a student's first year experience has been identified as a key factor in retention and academic success. Numerous studies show that students are more likely to continue in higher education if they receive concrete support in negotiating the transition to University and understanding University culture and expectations; are engaged in their studies; are aware of and know how and when to access available services; and have developed networks and relationships with other students. As a consequence, an engaged learning environment needs to start from the moment a student decides to come to York.

An enhanced first year program for undergraduate students should help students to navigate first year and understand university culture, promote connections between students and between students and faculty, and encourage a student's active engagement

in their own learning. It will provide a firm foundation for their learning throughout their university studies and well beyond, promoting lifelong learning and engagement.

The particular strategies the University will employ should be based on best practice and well supported by the substantial literature in this area. At the same time, strategies should recognize and respond to the varied experience and needs of our commuter, mature, part-time, and special needs students. They should also accommodate the very different environments of our various Faculties: what might benefit students in LA&PS is not necessarily the same as what might benefit students in the Faculty of Environmental Studies, the Faculty of Fine Arts, or the Schulich School of Business.

Across the campus, we are aware that a variety of individual programs and initiatives are underway. For example, we have well developed peer mentoring programs in LA&PS and the Faculty of Fine Arts and the Faculty of Health is in the process of developing one. There are other peer initiatives within the Colleges and elsewhere on campus. The objective here is to ensure a comprehensive and coherent approach that will encompass all first year students in an appropriate fashion that makes the best possible use of available resources. In creating an enhanced experience for first year students, York has the opportunity to bridge to its existing college system and to build upon what has already been done there. It also can build on the work being done by individual faculty and programs.

Options to be considered include:

- summer pre-university transition programs;
- individual or self assessment of entering students including EQI to identify potential at-risk students;
- mandatory advising for all first year students;
- “Introduction to University” or “University 101” courses;
- block scheduling to help create communities of students;
- peer mentoring;
- encourage early feedback to students in first year classes;
- guidance mentoring involving early identification of and support for students at risk;
- supplemental instruction;
- enhancement of student social and learning space to create clean, comfortable, quiet spaces for students to eat and study including expanded library study space; and
- mechanisms to create more sustained opportunities to connect with faculty inside and outside the classroom.

One option that might be given particular consideration and which could bring together many of the discrete elements identified above is the creation of first year student learning communities. Such communities take a variety of forms. They can be associated with a single course or can be structured to bring together students registered in a common set of courses. The latter can be done by linking students after the fact or by intentionally pairing or clustering courses to create a more coherent teaching and

learning experience through block scheduling. Learning communities may provide students with access to a number of resources including advising, early intervention, peer mentoring, moderated discussion groups and seminars, supplemental instruction, and a variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. In some instances they are structured to provide enhanced contact with faculty. The key characteristic is that they help to build a sense of community amongst learners and provide opportunities for mutual support, social and intellectual engagement, and the construction of knowledge. The learning community model can be used in a variety of contexts including the establishment of living-learning communities that are rooted in on-campus residences. In addition, the learning community model holds a great deal of potential for supporting the engagement of commuter students both with fellow students and with their learning through the establishment of on-line, virtual communities which can offer many of the same features as face-to-face communities and could be supplemented by face-to-face components.

In the survey conducted by the *Strategic Counsel* as part of the White Paper process, students identified class size as an important concern. Research shows that, properly structured, large classes can provide very positive learning experiences, but it is important that they be supplemented by access to advising and other supports for learning and the student experience. The creation of learning communities and other strategies to enhance student-faculty contact may help to address the issues that lie behind student concern with class size, particularly for lower years. It is important to recognize, however, that class size remains a critical issue for students in upper years.

Finally, while this section is focusing on the enhancement of the first year experience, we should be aware that the benefits of many of the approaches identified are not confined to first year students. Experience has shown that upper level students and graduate students can benefit substantially from the opportunity to work as peer mentors, moderators, and tutors.

#### **Objective 4: Establish a holistic approach to student advising and support.**

One of the features of engagement stressed at the outset of this chapter was the importance of creating an engaged campus: a campus in which students feel themselves to be part of an extended community committed to their personal and academic success. Most Universities provide a wide range of advising and student support services designed to support student success and retention, but one of the most frequent observations in the literature is that students are not always aware of them, do not necessarily know how to access them, and complain that they sometimes receive conflicting advice. An important approach to addressing this issue that has been used successfully at other institutions is to adopt a more holistic approach to student advising and support: to break down the often fragmentary, siloed delivery structure of services and support to students. To be effective, this structural response must then be combined with more specific initiatives to address the particular needs of students.

At York, we offer a dizzying array of advising and student support programs. A student's advising contacts can include staff contacts in Faculty advising centres; faculty and staff contacts within departments/units; librarians; advice and support from peer mentors; and interactions with College advisors, Fellows, Masters. Advising sessions are also offered through the Libraries, the Counselling and Development Centre, Student Financial Services, Residence Life and the Career Centre. Further, advising can occur in informal settings with faculty members and peers, where the experience can shift from advising to mentoring. The Atkinson Centre for Mature and Part-time Students is seen as a leader for its support for mature students and the University offers a wide range of supports for students with physical, emotional and psychological disabilities.

The key for York is in ensuring that students are aware of and can easily access the services that we offer and that these are well coordinated to support consistency, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Strong consensus emerged from the consultation phase that we need to define "advising" broadly and extend it beyond "form signing" and the communication of degree requirements to include all aspects of the student experience that can influence academic performance and future aspirations. Academic advising provides a structured opportunity for one-to-one interaction between the student and a member of the institution. Advisers help students make a connection to campus services (e.g. financial, learning skills, writing, career and personal counselling services) and provide the opportunity to discuss goals, challenges and personal issues that may affect their success. The advising process encompasses more than just academic issues but also personal concerns and the integration into campus life. Adequate access to advisers ensures that students are supported in setting and achieving their goals by working together on exploring where they are in the process, what they want, and what options are available to them.

One of the key ideas that was supported by the consultation around the Green Paper was the establishment of a Coordinated Advising Program (CAP) that would include all those who engage in meaningful and purposeful relationships with students at any stage in the student life-cycle including staff, faculty, college academic, and peer advisors. The purpose of CAP would be to create a single, integrated advising service model out of the current disparate components of student advising at York. The existing Retention Council and its Advising Subcommittee could be tasked with taking the lead on advising and student support initiatives including ensuring shared knowledge of related policies or procedures, coordinating advising efforts, and fostering communication across all advising roles. CAP would be grounded in a "service" philosophy that includes maximum points of access for students, timely response, frequent opportunities for follow-up, and a consistent message to "come back if you need to, any time." The end goal would be the establishment of a continuous process aimed at supporting student development (personal, interpersonal, social) and academic success.

In addition to this overarching framework for student advising and support, specific initiatives that should be considered include:

- mandatory advising for first year course registration (which could be incorporated as part of an enhanced approach to first year experience);
- single record of student advising history so that advisors across various roles and locations can access the information previously provided to the student to ensure consistent and informed advice;
- early identification of at risk students and patterns of attrition by course and program;
- survey tools to triage attrition risks for incoming students (which again could be incorporated as part of an enhanced approach to first year experience);
- on-line self service advisory portals to encourage self-directed student advising and consolidate links to the full range of advising services;
- accelerated implementation of automated web degree audit to all first degree programs with full access to students, staff and faculty;
- renewal of policies and procedures governing processes for academic decisions, e.g. petitions, with the goal of streamlining the process and reducing the timelines; and
- provision of training and professional development opportunities to all advisors to support continuous improvement.

#### **Objective 5: Enhance the quality of graduate learning.**

Some of the commentary in the former objectives is most relevant for undergraduate students, but much of it applies equally well to graduate learning as indicated in the text. It is important to consider some additional issues specific to their experience. The relationship between a graduate supervisor and his/her student is an extension of the learning experience offered in the course curriculum. Complement issues are particularly relevant here and are discussed separately in Chapter 7 because it is important to ensure that graduate students have access to appropriate supervisors. It is also important to recognize and address that the advising (academic, career, financial, etc.) needs of graduate students are different from those of undergraduates.

There is also a learning component when a graduate student works for a faculty member as a teaching assistant, research assistant and/or graduate assistant. Graduate students are therefore interested in having enhanced access to research assistantships. This goal is intricately linked to the research priority, and in particular, encouraging a culture where faculty members apply for external funds that include support for graduate assistants. Pairing faculty members and students so that the research interests align is more likely to provide for a mutually beneficial experience.

#### **Objective 6: Promote engaged teaching and curricular design.**

Through the Green Paper process, consensus emerged on seven overarching principles that align well with York's historic emphases and that are critical to quality in teaching and learning. A number of these are incorporated directly or indirectly in earlier objectives. Collectively, they suggest the importance of engaging in a sustained and

critical reflection about teaching and curricular design to ensure that they imbue all that we do as we move forward. The seven essential values are:

1. An institutional culture that values teaching and learning and that is also perceived as valuing and supporting teaching and learning;
2. An emphasis on reflective and evolving approaches to teaching and learning including student-centred teaching practices that focus attention on how students learn;
3. The promotion and facilitation of universal design as an approach to teaching and learning that accommodates the diverse, individualized ways in which students learn and succeed including the use of technology to support learning and engagement with and amongst students;
4. Attention to the development of fundamental and transferable skills including effective communication, critical thinking, research and information literacy, and collaboration;
5. The integration of theory and practice. While university study has its foundation in curiosity-driven or enquiry-based research, education should also offer opportunities for the application of theoretical or research-based concepts learned in class to “real world” situations;
6. The inculcation in our students of a sense of democratic citizenship and social justice based on a global perspective of the social and ethical issues around what they are learning;
7. The encouragement of an open, accessible and inclusive teaching and learning environment that reflects and embraces the diversity of our community.

Many individual faculty members already incorporate approaches and methodologies that draw from these principles in their teaching. In order to promote the more universal integration of these principles into teaching and learning at York it is important to encourage faculty to think about their programs holistically. We will need to provide academic colleagues with opportunities to reflect critically on what they want their students to learn and how the structure of their programs, design of their curriculum, and approach to teaching support the realization of the core values and overarching principles of quality teaching and learning.

The Undergraduate Program Review process including the implementation of University Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations and the newly emerging Quality Council framework for undergraduate and graduate reviews will help to support this process. Beyond this, however, we will need to give careful consideration to how faculty, including both full-time and contract faculty course directors, can be supported. A number of initiatives have been identified to create an environment for teachers and teaching that inspire and support creativity, scholarship, and innovation, and to ensure that the policies of the University align with the overarching principles and core values for a quality student learning experience. These principles and values should ensure that we think creatively and holistically about teaching and learning in ways that will integrate the skills and contributions of the full range of the teaching complement, including full-time and contract faculty. These initiatives include:



- Establish a teaching and learning innovation fund.
- Create more opportunities as an institution to recognize excellence in teaching and learning including as part of T&P and through awards, etc..
- Support the education of our community about pedagogical strategies that align with agreed-upon goals. Supports might include appropriate resources, coordination, and administrative structures, and data collection.
- Expand faculty support and development by the Centre for the Support of Teaching and recognize faculty participation in CST.
- Ensure that commitments to teaching and learning are expressed throughout the University at all levels (departments, Faculties, Colleges, and administrative units) in ways that are visible and measurable.

### **Measuring Progress Towards Objectives**

One of our critical goals over the next ten years is to significantly enhance the quality of student learning. In order to be able to determine whether we are succeeding, it is crucial that we set benchmarks that will help us measure progress towards our objectives. This will require a thoughtful consideration of what measures might most appropriately and usefully be used to determine whether we are affecting a real improvement in the quality of student learning. As part of this, we will also need to establish where we are now so that we can determine reasonable goals.

Overarching indicators might include:

- retention rates;
- in-progress and graduating GPA's;
- student satisfaction rates on surveys such as NSSE and graduate satisfaction surveys, exit surveys, UPR student surveys; and
- employment placement rates.

In addition, there are more specific indicators that we could use including:

- student satisfaction with libraries as measured by LibQUAL.

While in the long-term we need to ensure that we develop sensitive and appropriate measures of the impact of what we do on quality, in the short-term we may also want to rely on more straight forward in-put measures including:

- number of students who have participated in experiential education initiatives such as CSL/CBL,;
- student/faculty ratios
  - Student/librarian ratios;
- contact time with full-time faculty, including access to full-time faculty in year 1;
- development of a coordinated advising system;
- student space ratios (library space, social space, etc.) in relation to COU data.

Benchmarks in the case of engaged teaching and curricular design might include:

- the formation of the teaching and learning innovation fund with criteria established;
- an increase in the number of awards for teaching excellence as well as a structure that allowed faculty to be recognized at increasingly higher levels (i.e., unit, Faculty, University, external awards);
- growth in the resources provided by CST;
- Senate approved tenure and promotion criteria in every unit that clearly differentiate competence in teaching from high competence and excellence that reflect the standards in the discipline or field;
- evidence that the University administration values teaching and learning; and
- completed undergraduate and graduate learning expectations for all academic programs that support the cyclical review of programs and show improvements in quality between successive reviews.

## Chapter 5:

### Promoting Quality through Internationalization

#### Introduction

We live in an increasingly globalized world, where national borders are porous and key issues in realms such as the environment, health, and the economy require an international approach -- and it is into this world that our students will graduate. We must therefore be global in our outlook, in our aspirations and in our actions, recognizing that our future competition is not just other Canadian universities, and our world is not just the GTA.

Student mobility has increased significantly in the past decade and the global competition for undergraduate and graduate students is likely to continue to grow. Cross-border research collaboration has grown with the number of internationally co-authored articles more than doubling in the last two decades. This will continue, but there will also be increased global competition for research talent. Higher education systems in Asia and Europe will gradually increase their global influence providing increased competition to North America and the European Union.

York already has a strong foundation and reputation for leadership in internationalization. This is evidenced by several award-winning programs such as the York International Internship Program (YIIP) and the Emerging Global Leaders Program (EGLP); several areas of global excellence in teaching and research, including the Schulich School of Business and the Centre for Vision Research; and many internationally known faculty. We must now build on this foundation, incorporating “international” into our institutional DNA, and continue to move forward. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that some of the innovations introduced by York have now been implemented in other institutions as well, and we must continue to innovate in order to maintain our competitive edge.

#### Objectives

Our aim is to be recognized internationally as an engaged university with local-global reach and impact, by creating and mobilizing relevant new knowledge and producing graduates who are fully aware of the local-global intersection and well prepared, with the requisite knowledge, skills and experiences, to live and work successfully in an increasingly interconnected world.

**Objective 1: Attract more high quality international students to York, particularly at the undergraduate level and in continuing professional development programs, such that their proportion in the York population is increased.**

International students bring cultural diversity and richness to the campus, and contribute a range of perspectives to our classrooms. At the present time, international students comprise only approximately 5% of the York student population (or just over 2100 FTEs), down from a high of 6.6% in 2002-2003. A number of short-term factors such as the impact of SARS and the double cohort have affected international recruitment efforts, but the longer-term trend reflects the strengthening of university education and infrastructure in major sources of students such as China over the last decade, as well as their implementation of policies to encourage their students to study at home. In addition, Ontario government enrolment “counting” and funding policies, which favour domestic students, have also provided a disincentive to the recruitment of international students. The impact of these policies has been most negatively felt at the graduate level, particularly in the sciences where the domestic pool of students has been declining for some time. Thus, 2009-2010 is the first year since the middle of the decade in which we have seen an increase in the number of international students.

The modest success in 2009-2010 provides a base from which to build recruitment efforts. So too do a number of other factors and York strengths, including:

- indications of enhanced government interest in the recruitment of international students (not yet reflected in changes in counting and funding regimes);
- York’s location in a cosmopolitan, multicultural city, where international students can make links with their cultural communities;
- attractive and highly regarded programming in areas such as business, science and information technology;
- international student support services through York International and elsewhere;
- York Libraries’ Information Literacy Program, providing an opportunity to distinguish York as the university of choice, with its unique emphasis on the research and inquiry process essential to scholarly acculturation and student engagement; and
- development of links with governments (e.g., recently in Saudi Arabia) which provide scholarship support for their students to come to York.

Given the general limits on graduate growth and current funding realities, international student recruitment will focus on the undergraduate level, as well as professional development areas, although some targeted international graduate expansion may be contemplated in programs where there is capacity.

International students’ success will be dependent on the recognition of the particular needs and interests of international students and the provision of enhanced supports and services, including financial support (especially at the graduate level), social, psychological and logistical support, English language development, and academic advising.

In order to support proactive recruitment of high quality students, we should:

- ascertain the top high schools and universities around the world and develop a strategy for attracting those students, including working with local immigrant communities in the GTA towards this end;

- expand efforts to work with governments to provide financial and other incentives for their students to come to York University;
- examine possibilities for conditional acceptance of otherwise very highly-qualified students who just miss our language cut-off; and
- expand the range of programs attracting international students

It might be noted that international students are regarded by some as a potential source of revenue for universities. This is actually not the case once recruitment and student support costs are taken into consideration. Revenue considerations should not, therefore, drive our policies on international enrolment.

**Objective 2: Ensure that all York students who wish to do so have opportunities to gain a genuine international experience and enhanced global understanding.**

Students' educational experience is enriched and their perspectives are broadened by exposure to cultures and approaches other than their own; international experience also helps them prepare to be engaged and contributing citizens of a globalized world.

York has been a leader in the development of innovative programs and opportunities for students to gain international experience both at York and around the world, including:

- an award-winning (and growing) international internship program that allows students to work with international agencies and institutions in Canada and abroad during the summer;
- iBA, iBBA, iMBA, and iBSc programs that allow students to combine study in their chosen program with study of an international region or theme;
- a letter of recognition of international experience awarded to students who meet specific criteria, documenting this experience for employment and other purposes;
- a wide range of language courses reflecting Toronto's multicultural communities;
- models of joint or dual degrees at both the undergraduate and graduate level, for example Osgoode's programs with the New York University Law School, Schulich's Executive MBA with the Kellogg School of Management (Northwestern University), and a dual degree in mathematics with the University of L'Aquila;
- established centres of activity abroad such as Schulich's centre in Mumbai, which could provide a base for further initiatives and outreach across the university;
- YIMA (York International Mobility Award), which provides financial support for students undertaking exchanges; and
- "Global House" and "Buddy" programs to encourage interchange among Canadian and international students on campus

Support from family and faculty members is a key factor in students' interest in international study. A major impediment to study abroad is the cost, as well as concerns about how international study fits into students' program of study and about being immersed in a new culture. Furthermore, we must ensure that these experiences provide students with opportunities to experience that culture in a meaningful way.

We will need to make progress on several fronts in order to advance this objective:

- direct efforts towards means of enhancing the financial support for students studying abroad and increasing the flexibility of opportunities in order to reduce the time away from home for students;
- expand the international internship program;
- support efforts to further renew and internationalize the curriculum and to integrate international perspectives and experiences into the classroom at the Faculty and unit levels, including use of e-learning technology to link with international classrooms;
- take full advantage of library online resources and librarian e-learning expertise;
- clarify and expand joint and dual degree opportunities to provide structure for studies;
- provide enhanced advising and logistical support for incoming and outgoing exchange students; and
- provide locations on campus where international and domestic students can meet and interact.

**Objective 3: Expand existing and develop new high quality international partnerships to promote faculty excellence in education, research, and knowledge exchange, as well as facilitating student exchanges and research opportunities.**

York has extensive and – for the most part – thriving exchange agreements with outstanding institutions around the world that enable our students to study in another country and engage fully with that culture, and that bring students from those countries to York. It is important that graduate students also be able to enhance their research and study through international opportunities, both as part of faculty collaborations and independently. The current co-tutelle arrangements do not meet the needs of all graduate students and should be augmented by more flexible exchange arrangements specifically geared to their needs. In addition, more and better use of video conferencing technology could allow our students to interact with faculty and students in other countries.

Faculty research collaborations and partnerships have been less systematically structured and have proceeded on an ad hoc basis for the most part. Expansion and increased formalization of these arrangements will bring them greater profile and thereby increase York's research profile internationally.

York has significant research strengths upon which to build in advancing this objective, including:

- the presence of leading scholars whose work is internationally known and in demand; and
- world-renowned research centres with international focus and reach, for example the Centre for Vision Research, the Centre for Refugee Studies, the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, and the York Centre for Asian Research, which can serve as a base for development of partnerships

Development of such partnerships and the mobilization of research knowledge will be facilitated by:

- articulation of principles/criteria to guide development of partnerships in strategic areas;

- development of criteria for determination of areas of the world to focus on in pursuing partnerships;
- engagement of local GTA immigrant communities and networks, as well as alumni communities, in establishing links with international institutes, NGOs, foundations, etc.;
- enhancement of our international visibility, e.g., through coordination of presentation of York's research strengths both internally and through the media and involvement of faculty members and senior administrators in international conferences and fairs; and
- leadership in the internationalization/mobilization of knowledge, e.g., adapting and implementing research findings, products and services so that they can easily be applied to specific local languages and cultures.

### **Measuring Progress Towards Objectives**

Measures of success in relation to internationalization might involve:

- increasing the number and proportion of international students in the York population;
- expansion of exchange agreements with high quality partners and the numbers of students participating;
- expansion of high quality research partnerships and opportunities for knowledge exchange;
- increase numbers of students receiving the letter of recognition of international experience;
- broadening of the number and range of opportunities for international experiences; and
- number of collaborative degrees.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Promoting Quality through Community Engagement**

#### **Introduction**

As noted in Chapter 1, engagement as a core theme in the White Paper has three central tenets that run through the various chapters that deal with the activities of the University. This chapter has as its main focus the tenet that deals with outreach and community partnerships. Community engagement builds upon strong traditions that have distinguished York University's commitments to high quality education, scholarly innovation, and social justice. It presents opportunities to deepen and more fully elaborate our distinctiveness in alignment with our mission, and it presents challenges for the university and for the communities it engages. It is important that our purposes and activities align with university goals and responsibilities, including our responsibility to foster the expression of unpopular views and to subject knowledge claims to scrutiny and analysis. Our sense of social responsibility and social justice means further developing and enhancing strategies for creating access to the university (to study in degree and non-degree programs and courses, to work and participate in co-op placements, to undertake and learn about research, to participate in recreational and social/cultural events), for creating and sustaining bridges between the university and communities that enhance both university knowledge and expertise within communities, and for preparing students for their role as responsible and engaged global citizens. York University's history and current strengths in community engagement position us to play a leading role in shaping the modern urban university in Canada and internationally.

A university vision for community engagement revolves around core principles: a focus on community issues; reciprocity and mutual benefit; shared knowledge and expertise; self-study and evaluation; transparency and accountability; and transformation within the university and the communities with which it engages. A university plan must set priorities concerning the geographical reach of engagement activities, the nature of partners to be engaged, and the desired qualities of partnerships/collaborations. At the same time, a heightened emphasis on and a more visible role for engagement carry corresponding demands for identifying appropriate levels of support, evaluation criteria, and communication strategies.

*Geographical Reach:* Glendon serves as an active participant in and hub for the promotion of Francophone culture and French language throughout Southern Ontario. Close physical proximity to the Keele campus has played a significant role in the development of engagement activities. In particular, building relationships based on trust and reciprocity has been very important in work with the Black Creek residents and local organizations to our immediate south and west. York Region, our large and rapidly-growing neighbour to the north, engages the university in cross-sector (business, municipal and provincial government, public institutions, and community organizations) research and knowledge mobilization activities. Population growth, achieved largely



through immigration, in the area immediately surrounding the Keele campus, along with significant improvements in public transit, places York University at the centre of new urban development. As York enters its second half-century, it lies in close proximity to a greater number of and more diverse communities than it did during its first fifty years. York University, by virtue of its location and resources, will need to prepare itself for managing engagement activities that involve the sharing of resources (space, library research collections, events) and responding to requests for research collaboration, community capacity-building support, and educational opportunities. At the same time, York's presence in local communities might best be served by store-front facilities (such as the York University-TD Community Engagement Centre), the use of local public spaces (libraries, community centres), or satellite campuses (the Markham site, the Faculty of Education's off-campus sites). Movement in both directions, from and to the university, within our local region can and perhaps should produce the greatest density and most durable range of community engagement activities and relationships. The President's Sustainability Council presents a vision of sustainability for York framed by core principles that guide local community engagement.

Community engagement need, indeed should not, be limited by geographical proximity however. Partnerships with other post-secondary institutions, governments, and organizations extend engagement across provincial and national borders and deepen our knowledge about the educational social, cultural and economic issues and aspirations for which we share a responsibility to understand and respond. As York University increases its commitment to Aboriginal peoples, heritage and epistemologies, traditional borders give way to new networks and collaborative opportunities and responsibilities. The GTA's immigrant population continues to grow and account for much of the growth in our catchment areas. York University's historical commitment to social justice has prompted scholarly and outreach efforts aimed at the many challenges faced by immigrant and refugee families, and the linguistic, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of our staff, student, alumni and faculty body is a resource that generates new ideas, connections, and understanding.

Many of our students, alumni and their families lead transnational lives, maintaining ties with countries of origin or living for extended periods in international contexts for business, development, or family reasons while also seeking to deepen their sense of belonging in and commitment to Canada. York University has the potential to be a leading university in a world where porous borders and new patterns of migration, displacement and settlement set the terms for new modes of engagement, scholarly exploration, educational and professional development needs, economic development, and cultural innovation. Moreover, developments in digital media not only create new and surprising communities, they also provide the means to extend community engagement activities across time and space.

### **Objectives**

Dimensions of quality outreach that have been identified in the literature include significance, context, scholarship and impact (see [outreach.msu.edu/pod.pdf](http://outreach.msu.edu/pod.pdf)). Our

approach to community outreach and partnerships might be sufficiently flexible to accommodate different community priorities that align with our own mission, values and academic goals. Several objectives have been identified in support of the overarching goal that York University become a leading university in community engagement, and examples of initiatives and strategies that might be considered to further those objectives have been provided in order to illustrate possibilities.

**Objective 1. Establish a pan-university strategy for community engagement.**

The literature that deals with community engagement consistently identifies among the common elements of highly engaged universities the inclusion of engagement as a core value of the institution; visible and strong leadership; faculty engagement including acknowledgement and rewards; effective marketing/communications; resource allocation and strategic coordination (see the President's Task Force Report on Community Engagement). For universities with missions grounded historically in access or social justice, institutionalizing engagement may involve a reconfirmation or realignment of engagement in congruence with the university's core values.

Among urban research universities, engagement is more likely if the university president and/or chancellor are supportive; there is a strategic and central locus of coordination headed by a visible senior administrator; and there is a strong connection to research activities. Despite strong championing of engagement by senior administration, the process cannot however be limited to a top-down approach. Rather, engagement agendas, priorities and opportunities should be identified through ongoing community consultation and collaboration both within the University and with external partners.

Researchers of a Campus Compact survey of engaged universities in the US recommended that large, research universities, as part of their engagement strategies, create centralized structures to facilitate community partnership access to the university and to serve as a central clearinghouse of information and resources. Deans, directors of research/policy units or schools and senior faculty also played important leadership roles both within the university and externally in major engagement initiatives.

Broadly speaking, the experience of universities that have engagement as a core value speak to the importance of having a pan-university strategy that addresses institutional outreach and partnership development. To advance community engagement, York should:

- ensure that the President, Vice Presidents, Deans, Chairs and Directors are providing academic leadership and support for community engagement activities;
- address community engagement in the University Academic Plan, resource planning and future strategic directions as well as unit and Faculty plans;
- develop degree-level and continuing studies curriculum that addresses civic responsibility and advances knowledge;
- develop measures, strategic priorities and review processes for community engagement;

- establish an Advisory Council to support the identification of needs and strategic opportunities; and
- explore the possibility of York taking a leadership role in reaching out to other post-secondary institutions in order to form a network of engaged institutions of higher learning.

**Objective 2. Establish best practices on collaborations involving the public and private sectors.**

Partners in community engagement activities must commit to university standards involving academic freedom and integrity; our collective values of openness, tolerance, and inclusion; university-based criteria for the evaluation of student performance and work; and collegial assessments of faculty teaching, service and professional contribution. The scholarly, educational, and professional expertise that is particular to academic endeavours enhances, and is affected by, knowledge produced in business, government, cultural, non-profit, and professional sectors. Partners in community engagement activities acknowledge and value the specificity of each partner's contribution, the autonomy of each partner's identity, and the knowledge and expertise brought by all partners and created within the collaboration.

The core principles identified above emphasize mutually beneficial exchange, responsiveness to community-identified needs, and transformational impact. These principles suggest that appropriate partners in community engagement include grassroots and not-for-profit organizations and public institutions. However, the university shares a vision of enhanced civic engagement, community well-being, and heightened responsiveness to pressing social issues with many external constituencies in the public and private sectors who also ground their community engagement goals and activities on principles similar to ours. Organizations with a proven record of social responsibility are potential partners; those with professed interest in developing a stronger profile might benefit from opportunities to participate and contribute.

Community engagement collaborations will necessarily reflect the mandates, priorities, and interests of the many university units, programs, departments, and student groups who initiate and undertake them. Some activities (involving events, the use of space and the management of requests of various kinds) do not involve long-term relationships. Even so, clear processes, criteria, and fee schedules will need to be developed to reflect the overarching principles and priorities that underpin our identity as an engaged university. Other activities, involving student learning, research, collaborative capacity-building projects, creative and curricular initiatives, continuing or informal educational and professional development programs, and community outreach, are built upon mutually-agreed upon and explicitly described goals, outcomes, timelines, resource contributions, and role expectations. As York University continues to learn from the relationships it cultivates, it will expand its expertise in the development, enactment and evaluation of cross-sector partnerships that require high levels of trust, accountability and mechanisms for explaining academic cultures, understanding community cultures and perspectives, and creating new cultures of engagement capable of ensuring mutual benefit

and reciprocity. Issues of intellectual property rights and copyright may need to be addressed and ethical review processes monitored.

Collaboration with external partners is a significant feature in several of the chapters and there is a dedicated section in the final chapter that takes up issues of general relevance. From the point of view of community partners, York should:

- ensure that the University has an administrative structure to act as a point of contact for potential partners and to develop resources related to best practices;
- develop protocols for responding to requests from the community for assistance and/or access to university facilities; and
- provide a means by which to share information with the community about our activities and the potential for collaboration.

**Objective 3: Enhance York University’s status and reputation as an accessible, relevant post-secondary institution for members of the local community.**

One important aim/benefit of community engagement is the potential to improve accessibility and increase the post-secondary participation rate. This aim is advanced not only directly as an objective that a university sets as part of its engagement strategy but indirectly through other engagement activities related to teaching/learning and research. Examples might include service learning that includes the mentoring of high school students in science and math, or large scale Community University Research Alliances that extend York’s presence in the community.

The York University Inventory of Community Engagement captures many of the activities upon which our institution has established its reputation for accessibility. Among the many examples that might be mentioned are the bridging programs for internationally educated professionals, our college transfer initiatives, Women’s Bridging, the Faculty of Education Westview Partnership, the Liberal Arts and Professional Studies *Step to Arts* program, and most recently, the Transition Year Program. Glendon College adds a further dimension to accessibility by making York the only university in Toronto where it is possible to complete your studies in French.

Strategies to further this objective might include:

- Enhance strategies for recruiting and supporting students from vulnerable communities (access initiatives, academic and social supports, university-school/community partnerships).
- Increase bursaries and scholarships in support of access initiatives.
- Increase mentoring initiatives for students for compulsory school aged children and youth and university students.
- Further enhance college transfer opportunities.
- Develop degree and continuing education programs to address identified community needs and interests.
- Support student-led initiatives that address community needs and develop leadership skills and qualities.
- Engage alumni in community outreach activities.

- Initiate and participate in events that address issues of significance for the public.

**Objective 4. Recognize community engagement activities both within and outside the university.**

Community outreach and collaborations must be acknowledged and faculty members supported if the University expects to enhance these activities and be recognized internationally as an engaged institution. A wide range of suggestions emerged throughout the consultations and are provided below:

- Provide development opportunities and support for faculty and staff.
- Foster dialogue and debate on the academic contributions of community engagement research, scholarship and creative endeavours (e.g., panels, invited speakers, research projects).
- Create incentives for faculty, staff and students (e.g., inclusion in tenure and promotion criteria, project and research funds and grants, awards, teaching development initiatives, travel and study funds).
- Provide opportunities to share information, inquire into, and disseminate knowledge about community engagement within the university and beyond (e.g., local, national and international conferences and workshops; resources and toolkits, academic journal, media stories, university retreats)
- Develop a communications strategy that positions York University as an engaged university.
- Regularly update and make available on York's website the inventory of community engagement activities as a basis for communicating and disseminating knowledge about community engagement at York.

**Objective 5: Create an engaging environment: space and sustainability.**

Building a sense of community in a large university with a significant proportion of students who commute to campus for their classes and then leave has its challenges. It is necessary to consider not only the activities on campus but also the physical environment if students are to experience a welcoming ambience. It is also our expectation that all members of the York community will demonstrate an understanding and promote awareness of sustainability issues. This understanding will be nurtured and reinforced in an environment that offers adequate and appropriate spaces for quiet study, group study, relaxation, informal social interactions, and recreational activities. Efforts to support engaging physical spaces are ongoing. At Keele, the Scott Library learning commons will provide new learner-centred spaces to enhance student academic success. There is nevertheless room for further improvements.

A significant enhancement would be a better integration of the built and natural environments. The woodlots on the Keele campus are a particular concern. Any future development on the Keele or Glendon campuses should give consideration to enhancing the natural spaces and/or restoring earlier spaces. The situation for York is unlike that of Ryerson and the University of Toronto. The University is set somewhat apart and that can

be used as an advantage to enhance the “community of York.” With the eventual completion of the subway on the Keele campus, York could have the best of both worlds – easy access but a separate space of its own.

Other projects that might be undertaken to improve the physical space at the Keele and/or Glendon College locations include:

- Update the college residences to be more appealing.
- Increase office and lounge space for graduate students within their units to facilitate increased opportunities for interactions with faculty and peers.
- Enhance classroom spaces, technology, and other facilities to support innovative as well as traditional course delivery models.
- Review underused spaces that could be used to improve the campus experience.
- Utilize the Council on Sustainability that has developed a Report for the President to establish a set of recommendations for the UAP and/or the committee that develops the Master Plan for the campuses.

### **Measuring Progress Towards Objectives**

The Carnegie Foundation’s Community Engagement Classification framework, which encompasses aspects of curricular engagement and outreach and partnerships, will provide a useful frame of reference for developing measures in the area of community engagement. Examples of measures/benchmarks that the VPA/Provost might include in an annual report include the following:

- longitudinal institutional data gathering and analysis of access and support initiatives;
- the number, amounts and reach of new bursaries and scholarships;
- scope and number of mentoring initiatives and evaluation protocols;
- transfer agreements; tracking of numbers and progress of students coming from colleges;
- inventory of curricular approaches to community engagement;
- inventory of degree and continuing education and other initiatives developed;
- data base of alumni with interest in and capacity to engage in community outreach initiatives; inventory of such activities;
- development of strategies for identification and recording of issues of public interest
- publication of an annual report on community activities and interactions;
- inventory of funding opportunities;
- extending partnerships and outreach;
- enhanced reputation as a leading engaged university; and
- extent of impact on the community

## Chapter 7:

### Promoting Quality through Strategic Enrolment and Program Development

#### Introduction

During its first fifty years, York experienced remarkable growth, in both its student body and its faculty complement, in tandem with the development of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and adjacent regions that form the primary catchment areas for the University's student population. York has developed a reputation for excellence for its outstanding programs in many areas of the humanities and social sciences, business, law, and fine arts. Yet York's challenge today remains much the same as was identified in *Vision 2020* nearly two decades ago: without diminishing its recognized strength in the humanities and social sciences, we must seek ways to enhance the reputation for quality and innovation in areas that have not traditionally been associated with York, such as science, engineering, health and medicine. Further movement in this direction is fundamental if the University is to be increasingly recognized as an institution of international excellence in an era when competition for reputation and resources has become a global phenomenon. One of our principal challenges in becoming more comprehensive is to grow and strengthen those programs which are currently smaller than we might expect given our size and complexity, while preserving accessibility to our larger and more established programs. Moreover we must pursue these twin objectives while facing stiff competition from the other GTA and Southern Ontario universities.

The introductory chapters to this White Paper Companion describe the Ontario and GTA post-secondary environment as it will affect York's enrolment and program plans. The discussion in this section builds upon the environmental scan to identify the implications for York. In this regard, three factors are particularly relevant:

- the tendency of GTA students to stay in the GTA for their university education;
- predicted immigration-driven growth affecting York's catchment areas of York and Peel Regions; and
- the characteristics, decision-making patterns, and interests of this immigrant/first-generation Canadian population with regard to university study, particularly their tendency to seek programs considered relevant to career development, in areas such as applied sciences and engineering, health and medicine, and commerce and business.

Notwithstanding York's ability to provide an expanded array of innovative programs, there remain some key questions with respect to enrolment planning, including:

- Should – or could – the university grow?
- If so, under what conditions?

- How could York use the opportunities presented by GTA demographics to enhance its objectives in relation to the range, quality, and delivery of its academic programs and to better serve its communities?
- How many highly-qualified students should, or could, the University attract, and in what program areas or disciplines?

It is fair to say that we encountered some difference of opinion during the consultations about whether and how York should grow, with the general view being that future incremental growth should be approached with a good deal of caution and care. Frustrations have been expressed at the impact that the recent surge in graduate growth has had on both student experience and program capacity. At the same time, it was broadly accepted that selected growth as a result of targeted and quality-driven program planning has the potential to advance the goals of the institution, provided that sufficient funding is provided to support it. Many colleagues believe that we can utilize York's traditional emphasis on innovation and interdisciplinarity to reinvigorate our efforts to attract high-quality students in areas not traditionally identified as areas of strength at York. With reference to both Canada's aspirations in the global knowledge economy, and the academic aspirations of principal segments of the population in York's local catchment areas, there is widespread recognition of the need for a renewed effort to develop distinctive programs especially in the areas of science, engineering, health and medicine, many of which will require transdisciplinary input from across the University. While other universities may engage in similar efforts, York's location in a region with tremendous population growth and interest in science and technology gives us an immediate competitive advantage. The challenge is to ensure that we deliver high quality programs that are relevant to the circumstances of a modern knowledge society.

### **Objectives**

With the overarching goal of enhancing York's quality and reputation, several objectives are proposed relating to enrolment and program planning that address comprehensiveness (i.e., the relative size and mix of programming), quality in student performance, program quality and graduate education.

It must be clear at the outset that the pursuit of any plans for enrolment growth and/or diversification of programming are dependent upon corresponding growth and/or diversification in the faculty and librarian complement, and specifically in the full-time complement. Additional students and faculty will also need greater library capacity in terms of engaging study spaces and expanded collections to support new teaching and research areas. These are key to attracting and retaining high quality faculty and students.

**Objective 1: Continue to develop York as a more comprehensive university by expanding the scope of the university's teaching and research activities in engineering, the applied sciences, health and medicine, business-related and professional studies.**



While increased comprehensiveness remains an objective, it is the case that we have made significant progress in this regard over the past decade:

- The sciences have grown, a fact that may have been obscured by corresponding growth in other areas of the university, particularly the liberal arts, although the proportion of enrolments in the sciences remains small when compared with other universities of our size.
- Health-related programming has expanded and gained prominence, with the establishment of the Faculty of Health, and as a result of pioneering research and innovative programming in this area, as well as links established with community partners both locally and internationally. The Faculty is a leading partner in developing a York Health System, a population health focused network for learning and research involving hospitals, primary care, community health care, public health, and health promoting organizations in York Region.
- Both of these areas (the sciences and health) will provide a strong platform should government approval to proceed with planning for a medical school be forthcoming.
- A small but highly regarded School of Engineering has been established within the Faculty of Science & Engineering to offer programming in areas where York has particular strengths: computer engineering, geomatics engineering, and space engineering.
- Both Osgoode and Schulich are consistently recognized as among the best professional programs in the world.
- The array of business-related programming offered at York has expanded, largely through the introduction of new professionally-oriented programs in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies.

A number of initiatives have the potential to further develop the university's comprehensiveness, building in new ways on the longstanding commitment to interdisciplinarity in all of York's programs:

- In areas where there is demonstrated demand and appropriate funding, we should seek to develop new programs in the sciences, technology, engineering, health and medicine, as well as in relevant professional studies, to attract the full range of students, including new constituencies.
- In so doing, we should build on areas of strength and consider opportunities to develop programming, including those in distinctive "niche" areas and those that reach across Faculties and disciplines.
- Plans should be put in place to expand enrolments in engineering programs such that they would support the creation of a separate Faculty of Engineering should this be deemed desirable on academic grounds, and in order to enhance the program's profile. In developing programs to support enrolment growth, colleagues in Engineering should reach out to other Faculties where synergies may be found (e.g., Fine Arts and Environmental Studies).
- While growth and diversification will be focused at the undergraduate level, consideration should be given to areas where some growth may be attainable and beneficial at the graduate level in the sciences and health, where there are opportunities for graduate students to participate in and contribute to leading edge

research programs. Given increasing demand for career-oriented master's programs, there may be opportunities to develop new professional programs as well.

A major obstacle to greater comprehensiveness and diversification is resources: new initiatives, such as a medical school, require investments – sometimes substantial – in full-time faculty, librarians and staff, and in space, library resources, and equipment. Colleagues will wish to be assured that funding is secured to support such initiatives, and, additionally, that York's institutional autonomy is not compromised.

**Objective 2: Enhance the quality of student performance in York's programs including admission average.**

A key factor that both reflects and drives program quality is the quality of student performance in those programs. Student learning and student satisfaction are the focus of Chapter 4. A further consideration is ensuring that the students that we admit to York have the necessary qualifications to succeed given the supports that they have available to them. An important – though not the only – predictor of success at university is entry grades. Projections of increased demand for university spaces provide an opportunity to achieve enhancements in this area and to improve retention and student performance. Therefore:

- With the expected increase in demand for university education in the GTA over the remainder of the decade, as well as potential program changes, we propose to gradually raise admission standards for secondary school applicants: to 74% by 2010, 75% by 2011, 76% by 2014 and 77% by later in the decade.

It should be noted that some Faculties and programs already significantly exceed these cut-offs. We were also reminded during our consultations that high school grades should not be the only determinant of students' admissibility; indeed some argued that this proposal would undermine York's traditional commitment to accessibility. While we do not accept that quality and accessibility are in conflict, it is worth recording that although published admission standards for high school applicants will increase, the processes that enable us to make more nuanced judgments about students' potential for success at university, taking into account a range of factors, will remain in place, as will the range of supports for their success. We should continue to seek out young people with the potential for leadership and creativity and to take steps to attract them to study at York. It should also be noted that this objective is not intended to diminish our traditional commitment to the recruitment and success of students not coming directly from high school.

**Objective 3: Enhance program quality and accessibility through curricular innovation, technology, and flexible scheduling.**

A good deal of the discussion in Chapter 4 that deals with the undergraduate and graduate student learning experience is relevant to issues of quality programs and engaged

learning. We therefore touch on only a few aspects and opportunities that are relevant to program development.

*Enhancing Flexibility in Program Delivery:*

As noted in Chapter 4, program planning and development must take into consideration rapid changes in the ways in which our students study and learn. This includes the realities that many of our students are commuter students, many come from non-traditional backgrounds, and many need to work while studying part-time. In our program delivery, we must respond to the needs of these students for flexibility and accessibility. There are many existing strengths at York. The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies retains its commitment to part-time and mature students, and the Atkinson Centre for Part-time and Mature Students (ACMAPS) has been working with the Faculties to develop and/or expand flexible scheduling and delivery formats. These initiatives should include the expansion of opportunities for evening, summer, and weekend study/programming, as well as expansion of e-learning opportunities. While many faculty members are eager to integrate web-communication and web-based teaching components into their courses, York's overall record in this regard has been modest. Several suggestions for further enhancements are offered below:

- ACMAPS should continue to work with Faculties to develop and/or expand evening, summer and weekend study options as well as the online delivery of courses and programs where this is consistent with the overall aims of the courses/programs.
- Faculties need to make an increased effort and provide support for faculty members to improve York's record in blended-learning and technology-enhanced learning, such that York comes to be seen as a leader in this field.
- Collaboration between librarians and faculty can help to ensure that students have access to online tools that help them learn how to find, evaluate and use information in their online course work.

*Collaborative Programming:*

York has been a leader in the development of partnerships with other post-secondary institutions, particularly colleges of applied arts and technology through collaborative programming and affiliation agreements, which have made applied aspects of their fields of study more readily available to students. At a time when government is promoting student mobility, these relationships provide a foundation and a range of models from which to build. There is also growing interest globally in undergraduate and graduate dual/joint degree programs.

- Consistent with the theme of engagement, we envisage a greater openness to partnerships with other post-secondary institutions (colleges as well as universities, locally and internationally) as well as institutions in the broader public and private sectors.

These efforts can be seen as part of a holistic approach to engagement that encompasses student programs as well as research cooperation and partnerships. The development of new programs in areas of emerging social need, such as in environmental science,

neuroscience, arts/cultural management, global migration, sustainability and energy systems engineering, may therefore serve the needs of not only our students but also of society at large, as catalysts for engagement at a much broader level.

*Programs for Internationally Educated Professionals:*

York offered its first bridging program for internationally educated professionals (IEPs) in the School of Nursing in 2004, and added two new programs in business and information technology in the current academic year. Given the reliance on internationally educated professionals for the Canadian workplace and the significant immigration to Toronto, and York Region specifically, our surrounding community will be increasingly looking to us to contribute by assisting internationally educated professionals in successfully bridging to career-appropriate employment.

- York should continue to explore the significant opportunities to build on its leadership in providing education for internationally educated professionals to prepare them for the Canadian workplace.

York is well-positioned to continue to play a leadership role in providing bridging programs to relevant (and often required) Canadian degree programs while providing English-language support and Canadian work experience (e.g., through internships, practica). York not only builds educational capacity but benefits from a diverse student population with insights from around the globe.

**Objective 4: Enhance the quality and sustainability of graduate education at York.**

York has a well-deserved reputation for innovative interdisciplinary graduate programs that draw upon expertise and approaches from across the university. Priorities in relation to graduate education are to ensure the quality and sustainability of our graduate programs and of the experiences of the students enrolled in them, and to encourage excellence and innovation in our research and teaching.

Data indicate that the master's level is the fastest growing sector in higher education, leading to opportunities for development of master's degree programs – both in the traditional research-led domain and in more practice-oriented areas, including professional, para-professional, and terminal master's degrees. In responding to such opportunities it will be important to understand and articulate the ways in which they differ from research-based programs. Graduate students are also changing. That is, they are becoming more diverse in terms of both background and aspirations. Many do not aspire to academic positions and instead look to careers in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors where even entry-level positions often expect a post-baccalaureate degree. Even those who do pursue academic careers are facing a situation in which the number of tenure track jobs falls far short of demand and they need to be better prepared for alternative careers. Graduate education needs to adjust to meet the needs as well as the expectations of this group. A number of recently-introduced programs, such as those in Human Resources Management, Disaster and Emergency Management, a direct entry PhD program in Health, and the bilingual Masters of Public and International Affairs at

Glendon College, offer examples of York's leadership in developing graduate programs to address new needs and interests.

There are also significant opportunities at the graduate level to address the growing appetite for collaborative programming and mobility, including dual and joint degree programs and study abroad, and York has already begun to position itself to respond more effectively to international collaboration by:

- pursuing agreements with other universities, countries and NGOs to facilitate mobility;
- changing graduate admission requirements to make them more amenable to Bologna-style degrees;
- introducing a checklist to assist in negotiating "cotutelle" arrangements; and
- reviewing current policies governing dual/joint degrees.

The following section highlights initiatives that were identified to further enhance graduate education.

*Graduate students and graduate programming:*

The focus of planning in relation to graduate education is on the quality of students and programming; therefore, the objective is not to grow graduate studies, although, as noted, the achievement of the objectives of becoming more comprehensive and more research intensive may entail some growth in research MSc programs and PhDs in areas such as health and the sciences. Attracting top national and international students to our programs and ensuring an excellent experience enriches the academic environment for all concerned and furthers our commitment to enhancing the research culture at York. As discussed in Chapter 3, greater attention must also be paid to postdoctoral fellows. Therefore:

- It will be important to develop and resource a sustainable long-term strategic recruitment plan to attract the best students to York's graduate programs.
- An important component of the quality of the graduate experience will be mechanisms to increase the number and proportion of graduate coming to York with external awards, scholarships and fellowships.
- Once here, the closer integration of research and graduate education will provide students with opportunities to develop their research capacity and gain recognition of their contributions to research, and will advance York's research profile.
- As increasing numbers of students are entering graduate education to prepare them for careers that are not necessarily within academe, York needs to develop the capacity to offer more training in professional/transferable skills, so as to be able to compete with other institutions that are increasingly offering this kind of training.
- Opportunities to further integrate experiential education, e.g., internships, into graduate programming should be explored.
- We should explore opportunities for more collaborative programming at the graduate level.

- We must contemplate expanding opportunities for postdoctoral studies across the University as part of graduate planning, and seek to create an environment that attracts and retains them as members of our community.

*Graduate completion rates:*

A significant challenge for graduate programs is the very considerable number of students, particularly at the PhD level, who either never complete their degrees, or who take much longer than what is provided for by the university. This benefits neither the students nor the institution. At the same time, the objectives of these students and their demographics are changing.

- We need to enhance completion rates/times and position ourselves in an increasingly competitive environment by putting in place supports for students' progress and success, for example through review of curricula and best practices informed by an appreciation of the increasingly diverse mix of programs, increased support for students' research activities, expanded opportunities to develop professional/transferable skills, and more attention to the needs of students requiring special accommodation.

*Structures supporting graduate education:*

The recent report on *Academic Planning and Graduate Education at York University* by Dr. George Fallis provides a foundation for these initiatives, reminding us that graduate education involves everyone. It spells out clearly the need for better mechanisms and processes to enhance collaboration and consultation across Faculties and units on campus. Following up on this report, we should:

- Pursue initiatives aimed at improving the governance and organization of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and graduate structures, to promote collaborative planning around graduate education at York, including the clear identification of the "anchor" Faculty or department for each graduate program and steps to facilitate participation of faculty in graduate programs across the university.
- Develop more effective and timely methods of integrated planning and communications to encourage greater participation in and understanding of graduate education while ensuring common quality standards and equitable treatment of students.

At the same time, we need to be mindful that an overly centralized, one-size-fits-all approach does not do justice to the diversity of programs at York and can stifle innovation and undermine quality.

### **Measuring Progress Towards Objectives**

Measures of success might relate to:

- increase in entering grades of new students;
- expansion of study options for students, i.e., availability of flexible delivery in day, evening, summer, weekends, and online across the institution;

- an increase in the proportion of students in the sciences, engineering, health and professional programs;
- the establishment of a Faculty of Medicine;
- expansion of Engineering and consideration of the possibility of a separate Faculty of Engineering;
- the development and implementation of a recruitment strategy for both domestic and international graduate students;
- an increase in the number of postdoctoral fellowships and external awards and other supports for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows; and
- improvement in completion times/rates for PhD students.

## **Chapter 8:**

### **Conclusion: Realizing Our Goals**

The White Paper represents only the first step in York's development of its directions, distinctiveness, and priorities. It is significant in that it provides a framework, based on extensive consultation within the York community, for the development of the next *University Academic Plan* that will articulate the strategic priorities and objectives for the next five year period. A shared understanding of the longer term direction for the University is also essential for Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) that aligns our resources with those priorities. Furthermore, the White Paper will guide and require greater integration with resource (human and financial), capital, infrastructure, and operational planning processes in the institution to effectively support the academic mission. The implementation of plans to give meaning and substance to our shared goals will be taken up as a next step at the institutional, divisional and Faculty levels. This chapter points to some of those elements of institutional planning, describes the organizational framework in support of integrated planning, and suggests next steps.

#### **Objectives**

##### **Objective 1: Align resources with academic priorities.**

This White Paper is being released on the heels of the 2010 Provincial Budget that makes a commitment to post-secondary education and the need to address new enrolment pressures. This is welcome news. Nevertheless, over the past decade, higher education institutions worldwide have struggled with managing growth and increasing costs. The impact of the recent recession has compounded an already challenging fiscal environment for universities and has forced many to examine how to meet these challenges while protecting their core academic activities. The devastating effects the recession has had on endowment and pension fund investments will take several years to overcome.

These factors create a complex fiscal environment in which universities must plan, manage and be accountable. Strategies to prioritize resources, manage risks and ensure sustainability, given the potential instability of income sources and internal costs, are needed to succeed and to fulfill fiduciary responsibilities.

The fiscal context does not mean that the setting of priorities and the ability to achieve them is a futile task. Rather, it emphasizes the need for strategic resource management to achieve our goals. This requires an increased level of sophistication within our resource management practices and the critical need to carefully plan our future and make sustainable choices that continue to move us towards where we want to be five and ten years down the road.



To be successful in achieving our goals within this challenging fiscal environment, budget decisions need to be informed by planning processes and priorities, protect the core activities of the university and support emerging priorities. We already have in place a strong mechanism to support this alignment. The university's Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) framework provides the mechanisms and processes to demonstrate the alignment of resources with priorities and ensure responsible, accountable use of resources. The key impetus for the White Paper, the UAP and Faculty Academic plans is to identify the academic priorities that existing and new resources will support.

The priorities identified in the White Paper, the UAP and Faculty Academic Plans will have significant implications for existing and new resources. Alignment of existing resources, combined with careful investment of new dollars through integrated resource planning, is how we will be able to realize our goals. If we rely solely on new funding to support our initiatives, our outlook becomes short term and reactive and we will only be able to make marginal changes with limited success. Instead we must examine the university's entire resource base to maximize current revenues where possible, and seek new, alternative funding sources to support our priorities to ensure planned, long-term strategic outcomes.

If we are to make progress towards our priorities and support the academic planning processes that will follow, it will be important for us to:

- Continue to utilize the IRP framework to ensure the strategic alignment of academic priorities and resources through transparent, accountable resource allocation and resource management practices.
- Develop appropriate structure(s) to support and provide Faculties with opportunities to supplement their operating resources through alternate revenue generating streams.
- Procedurally encourage transparency in funding opportunities and provide Faculties with the discretion/flexibility to align their resources with priorities.

**Objective 2: Increase the full-time complement and organizational structure to advance university priorities and objectives.**

In addition to financial resource requirements, we must also have regard to the importance of having the people (faculty, librarians, and staff), processes and procedures in place to support our academic priorities. Putting in place these key components will ensure that the university community can work effectively within these structures and make progress towards achieving common priorities.

Particular attention needs to be paid to increasing the full-time faculty complement. There is near-universal consensus within the York community that we must replenish the losses in complement that have been experienced in recent years to provide stability in planning for curricular innovation; to support graduate education and supervision; to enhance research; and to maintain and expand long-term partnerships with other sectors.

At the same time, it is important to recognize the significant teaching contributions of our contract faculty. With the emphasis in the White Paper on enhancing quality in teaching and learning, we have an opportunity to think creatively about how to engage our full-time and contract course directors, including librarians, in such a way as to allow for a dialogue about best practices. Initiatives aimed at integrating faculty, supporting teaching and learning, and acknowledging teaching innovation must be designed with all our teaching complement in mind, including both full-time and contract.

The President's December 2007 report "Moving Forward with the University Academic Plan" and the recommendations in the 2007 Budget Process Review Final Report also highlight the need to review the university's administrative infrastructure to ensure that the committees and procedures are responsive, accountable, transparent, and integrated and that they support the business of the university. Administrative committees must also complement and support the mandates and business of the university's governing bodies, Senate and the Board of Governors, and be consistent with the university's IRP framework. An effective administrative structure depends upon the staff that support the committees and academic units across the University, and attention should be paid to how we might enhance their professional development.

An overview of our administrative structures has already begun. In May 2009, the President announced a reorganization of the senior management portfolios at the university to better align with the university's priorities. As part of implementing the IRP framework at the university, the IRP Office undertook a review of the administrative committees at the university to document committee authority, responsibilities and membership.

Moving forward with the priorities and directions outlined in this Paper requires that the associated administrative support and decision making structures be in place to ensure that the implementation of initiatives occurs within the broader IRP framework of the university. Building on the important work completed to date, and in keeping with the attributes of the IRP framework, an accountable, responsive, administrative infrastructure needs to be further developed.

The infrastructure should give consideration to the key institutional plans that will need to be developed in order to advance university priorities including, most notably, the complement plan, enrolment plan, budget plan and capital plan. Committees supporting these activities should have representation from relevant divisions to clarify interdependencies and ensure both horizontal and vertical planning. Faculties and units will continue to develop their own plans within the broader framework of the institutional plans. Consideration should also be given to the relationship between centralized and decentralized decision-making and support services in order to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

Making progress will require that we:

- increase the full-time faculty complement;

- develop a new administrative structure for York that will allow for a more transparent decision-making process for the University based on inter-divisional planning that will complement and facilitate the implementation of the institution's academic and strategic plans;
- develop integrated institutional budget, complement (faculty and staff), enrolment, capital and infrastructure plans;
- create a university-wide working group to support the business and process reengineering within Faculties and units; and
- provide development and training for faculty and staff to be successful in their roles and maximize their contributions to the university.

**Objective 3: Develop and support long-term and mutually beneficial partnerships with other post-secondary institutions, government, and the public and private sectors.**

Collaboration in teaching and research among postsecondary institutions, both domestically and internationally, continues to increase in importance on all fronts of university planning. From the development of new academic programs to the creation of both basic and applied research, collaboration is an essential characteristic of the academic enterprise. At the same time competition is intensifying among institutions wanting to recruit the best students and faculty locally, nationally and internationally and the market for academics is increasingly global.

We have seen this theme emerge in many different aspects of the White Paper process. Strengthening and deepening existing partnerships as well as creating new ones will be crucial to the achievement of York's long term goals - whether that be in intensifying research activities, teaching and learning, improving the student experience, becoming more international in perspective or becoming more engaged with our surrounding community. If York truly wants to become a leading engaged university, it will have to do so in collaboration with others.

In today's global environment, partnerships will take many forms. York must seek to form partnerships with many types of institutions from both the broader public sector - including colleges, universities and other not-for-profits (e.g. hospitals, NGOs) along with the private sector.

For the future, impetus from governments, external partners and funding constituents will also require us to focus outward on partnerships. Thus, York must develop and maintain meaningful relationships with influential individuals inside and outside of government and look for areas of strategic alignment with our external partners and funders. It is important that these relationships are long-term in nature and emphasize meaningful, direct linkages between the university and the communities and society it serves.

A particularly important example of an area where partnerships could yield significant benefits is the demographic shifts expected in the GTA. The next decade will bring major challenges such as providing newcomers with adequate social services and

meaningful entrance to the economic and political spheres of society. York University's ability to acquire and mobilize resources towards achieving its own strategic goals in the next decade will often be tied directly to its pursuit of innovative solutions to the pressing needs and issues faced by York Region and the GTA as a whole. It is clear from the research on this issue that no single institution will be able to completely accommodate all existing growth and viable solutions will require collaboration among all postsecondary institutions. Colleges and universities are expected to collaborate effectively and at the same time compete vigorously with each other. York should look for partnerships that will strengthen its strategic position and achieve the goals outlined in this White Paper.

This issue is further intensified by the Ontario Government's recent focus on "credit transfer." York is already an established leader in providing opportunities and pathways for students to move between colleges and universities. Building on this leadership position, York is poised to link with one or more college and/or university partners to establish the kind of significant partnership that will entrench York's position locally and nationally. The role of technology in facilitating partnerships will also need to be taken into account.

While there will be many opportunities to find areas of strategic alignment with possible partners and many different models for partnership and collaboration, the focus moving forward should be to:

- Expand partnerships with other stakeholders who have common interests and share our concerns so as to leverage the resources that we have at our disposal to advance priorities.
- Develop guidelines that will provide a "roadmap" for how the university will engage with all possible partners to best leverage York's strengths, ensure consistency and achieve excellence in all of our on-going activities.

A related, though separate, activity is university advancement/fund-raising. University advancement activities are meant to raise good will and ultimately funds amongst alumni, community and other donor groups playing a role in building an engaged university and enhancing reputation. Institutional fundraising priorities are designed to support the vision established by the university. The themes presented in the White Paper will help the university and the York University Foundation set the case for giving to York. These priorities are the catalyst to generate enthusiasm and financial support among the university's many dedicated alumni and to engage supporters and friends. As the White Paper process unfolds, there will be opportunities to better integrate fund-raising activities with academic priorities.

#### **Objective 4: Measure and report on progress.**

With the priorities articulated in this paper, we need to be able to answer the question: How will we know if we are making progress towards and achieving our goals? At the outset, we indicated that if we advance the priorities as set out in the White Paper, we

expect our successes to have a demonstrable and positive impact on quality and York's reputation as a leading institution of higher education. It will be necessary to have a set of specific indicators that will allow us to measure and monitor our progress towards expected outcomes and develop a priority-driven accountability framework for our internal and external communities.

Currently York reports on a number of indicators and measures to Senate, the Board of Governors, government and various community groups/members through presentations and publications, in particular the annual *Planning, Budget and Accountability* report. These indicators (related to performance in research, enrolment, student experience etc.) of success have not always been explicitly linked to institutional priorities, and do not currently permeate all levels of the university's planning and priority-setting processes.

Some key performance indicators (KPIs) are set by external bodies (e.g. government, external rankings, etc.) and used for accountability and funding purposes. There are, for example, three mandatory institutional KPIs set by the government that all Ontario universities must report on: 1) OSAP default rates; 2) degree completion rates; and 3) post-graduation employment/placement rates. Although the university does not set these indicators, it can affect performance within two of the three indicators (degree completion and employment/placement rates) through programs, initiatives and partnerships, etc. Other external measures are also published in venues such as *Macleans* and the NSSE results, and have the potential to influence our reputation.

It is widely understood that York must identify indicators and measures that can/will effectively gauge our progress and successes. Indeed, a preliminary notion of measures of progress towards objectives has been incorporated in many of the preceding chapters. A variety of quantitative and qualitative measures will be required to capture/assess our progress effectively. Inherent in any discussion surrounding measures and indicators is the tension surrounding what measures and/or indicators best/appropriately demonstrate the intended outcome or meaningful progress towards priorities. We were reminded during the White Paper consultations that the measures need to be sufficiently nuanced to capture a range of priorities/activities relevant and appropriate to the range of disciplines encompassed by York. This chapter will not resolve these issues, but outlines a process that builds on the White Paper consultations to identify a set of institutional indicators that will establish baseline information and track progress on the themes and priorities identified in the White Paper.

We therefore propose that:

- An institutional level measures working group be established in conjunction with and reporting regularly to APPRC (with membership from both the administrative and academic leadership) and charged with developing broad-based consensus on a set of measures/KPIs that could be used to assess institutional priorities set out in the White Paper and/or *University Academic Plan* (understanding that individual Divisions or Faculties might supplement those agreed-upon indicators with other measures that are also deemed to be relevant to their specific unit).

Finally, we must not simply measure and report on our progress and success; we must develop strategic plans to communicate and celebrate our successes, both within York and to the broader local and international communities.

### **Building Canada's Engaged University**

We conclude by returning to the theme with which we began. A particular and overarching imperative for York University at this stage in its development is to focus on enhancing academic quality across the range of our activities. We believe that this goal can best be advanced by embracing a commitment to engagement – both within our institution and with our external communities – as a core value. As we have attempted to describe in this paper, we believe that this commitment will improve the quality of the student experience, attract and retain better students, and improve the relevance and impact of our research activity. These outcomes will not be easily achieved, and will require a focused and determined effort from many within the community. It is our hope that the process that has led to this White Paper, and the vision it outlines for York over the next decade, will provide us with the framework and the direction we require to achieve our collective goals and to enhance the reputation of our fine institution.

*By 2020, York will enjoy an international reputation as a leading engaged university that enhances learning and research through academic excellence, diversity, social relevance, and civic engagement.*