

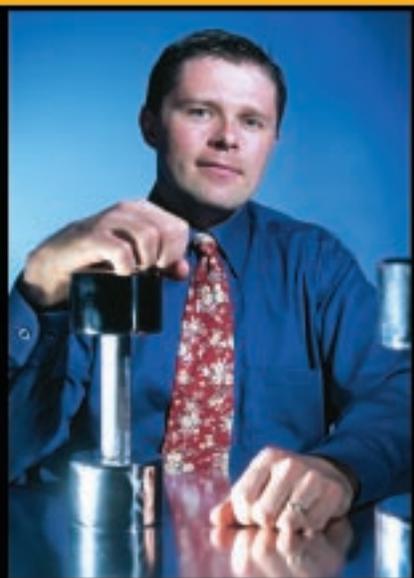
# Refining Directions

Inspiring Innovation and Discovery



McMaster  
University





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the years ahead, McMaster will be a better place to learn, to work, and to teach. We will remain one of Canada's premier universities, offering the highest quality of education and research. We will also be a stronger institution, because of our collective dedication to our vision and mission in Refining Directions. Our strategic plan provides us with a roadmap to a strong and bright future for the University.

Refining Directions will take us further in our pursuit of excellence. It is a clear, strategic, and collaborative plan that all members of the University community will strive to fulfill. Although our mission and vision remain consistent with those in the original Directions document developed in 1995, they have been updated to reflect more accurately our commitment to building an inclusive community, to lifelong, student-centred learning, and to scholarly excellence.

Meeting these newly stated goals will involve building on our current successes. For many years McMaster has garnered worldwide recognition as a leader in innovative education and our technique at putting discovery in the centre of the learning experience. We are consistently ranked as one of Canada's top research-intensive universities, with significant annual research funding helping us to develop leading-edge technologies and facilities. We are celebrated for our diverse and inclusive campus culture which establishes us not only as an integral part of the Hamilton community and gives us a strengthened platform to build on partnerships within the city and the province, but also to pursue international student recruitment and scholarly collaboration. These reputations are not to be taken lightly, and this is not a time to slow down.

Refining Directions will shape our pursuit of renewed recognition as a leading university by channeling our campus community's hard work, energy and determination. It sets goals and targets that give us the opportunity to reach higher, to reinvigorate our innovative spirit, and to concentrate our efforts to strengthen our internal, external and alumni communities. It establishes the critical success factors that will enable us to reach those goals. It provides the vision for McMaster to gain new recognition across Canada and around the world as a premier university for discovery through research and education.

My sincere thanks to everyone who participated in the development of Refining Directions, and particularly to University provost and vice-president, academic, Ken Norrie, for his exemplary leadership as chair of the steering committee who guided the entire process. Refining Directions has been endorsed by both the University's Senate and Board of Governors, and I am confident this strategic plan will serve the University well.

I invite you to join me in working toward a bright future for McMaster, and in celebrating its fruition in the years ahead.



Peter George  
President and Vice-Chancellor

## CONTEXT

### A changing environment creates new challenges

In 1995 McMaster undertook a broad planning exercise to define its priorities and focus.

Directions I provided academic, administrative and support units with the broad framework to determine their own operational goals and priorities. Directions II and Directions III, published in 1996 and 1997 respectively, provided additional focus on the student experience and on McMaster as a community of employees.

Directions drew on McMaster's long-established culture of planning, and in turn inspired and supported the development of the Academic Plan, the strategic priorities exercise, the Graduate Education Plan, the Campus Plan, the Changing Tomorrow Today campaign, and a variety of more specific budget and planning initiatives.

Directions was timely. The broad framework guided McMaster through challenging financial periods in the 1990s. As times improved, the focus on priorities allowed us to move quickly to take advantage of new research and educational opportunities. This commitment to a planning culture helped McMaster retain and advance its stature as one of Canada's premier universities.

A key component of McMaster's approach to planning is the recognition that the demands, the expectations and opportunities for the University continue to evolve. Successful planning is a dynamic activity; the status quo is never an option. The challenges facing McMaster, and other universities across the country, are significant and include the following:

- Broadening expectations of the role universities should play in Canada
- Increasing enrolments in the short and long term
- Preparing for a significant shortage of and increasing international competition for professors
- Expanding but expensive research infrastructure
- Lingering legacy of significant financial restraints
- Increasing and more aggressive competition in the post-secondary education sector

### And challenges create new opportunities

- New appreciation of the important contributions universities make to local, provincial and national economic and social goals
- New public and private funding for education and research
- International partnerships and interaction through globalization
- Advancing technology for learning and research

The Refining Directions exercise was launched in the Fall of 2002. The objectives were clear: to evaluate how McMaster had met the goals in the initial planning documents, and, more importantly, to construct a framework that would guide the University's course for the next five to ten years. This paper is the first product of the Refining Directions exercise. Rooted in Directions, it provides a broad framework for meeting future challenges and seizing future opportunities. It sets out McMaster's mission, vision, highest level goals, and some critical success factors. This framework will guide and inform more specific plans and strategies, some already in place and many yet to take shape.

## MISSION AND VISION

McMaster's mission and vision statements were clearly set out in Directions I. The statements therein position McMaster as a student-centered, research intensive university. There is a clear purpose: the discovery, communication and preservation of knowledge. This purpose is advanced through inspiring and supporting a passion for learning, appropriately so for learning is at the centre of everything we do. There is a commitment to excellence, and to integrity and teamwork.

Through the Refining Directions consultation process there was general and wide-spread satisfaction with the mission and vision statements. We heard, however, that we should celebrate our growing diversity and be more explicit in our commitment to lifelong learning. With these additions, McMaster's highest-level aspirations become:

### The Mission

At McMaster our purpose is the discovery, communication and preservation of knowledge. In our teaching, research, and scholarship, we are committed to creativity, innovation and excellence. We value integrity, quality, inclusiveness and teamwork in everything we do. We inspire critical thinking, personal growth, and a passion for lifelong learning. We serve the social, cultural, and economic needs of our community and our society.

### The Vision

To achieve international distinction for creativity, innovation and excellence.



# Refining Directions

Inspiring Innovation and Discovery

## GOALS

To move forward, we must set some general goals. These goals should flow directly from the mission and vision statements, should suggest broad institutional targets, and should be specific enough to shape and inform detailed work plans.

### McMaster has three goals.

**Goal:** *To provide an innovative and stimulating learning environment where students can prepare themselves to excel in life.*

A McMaster education should enable students to develop sets of life and learning skills that promote a continuing ability and desire to learn, and a set of technical and professional skills that permit a range of career choices. The best way to do this, we believe, is in an environment in which the linked concepts of scholarship and teaching can flourish. Put differently, and in words that resonate particularly well at McMaster, this means placing discovery at the centre of the learning experience.

McMaster's reputation for innovation in education is well founded. We have unique interdisciplinary programs such as those in Arts and Science, Bachelor of Health Sciences, Engineering and Society, and Multimedia. Problem-based learning, experiential education and Inquiry programs have developed new approaches to learning in both disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs. Innovative new graduate programs in technology and culture, engineering and public policy, and cultural studies are in the planning stages. A wide range of distinct part-time and continuing education programs provide lifelong learning opportunities. This reputation for innovation allows us to attract and retain the top students from Ontario, other provinces and around the world, and these students go on to achieve great success in their lives and careers.

But we cannot be content with the status quo. The pace of innovation in education at McMaster is varied. In some areas new programs have continued to evolve at a rapid pace. The University is facing stiff competition in attracting top students to a broad range of programs and our challenge is to extend the pockets of innovation across the University. This must be the norm if we are to strengthen our place as a destination of choice for high-quality students, and we must do this by being recognized consistently as the top Canadian university for innovation in education, for making discovery the centre of the learning experience, and for providing high quality student support and opportunities outside of the classroom.

**Target:** To be consistently among the top three Ontario universities in terms of the quality of students we attract and graduate from our undergraduate and graduate programs as measured by appropriate indicators.

**Goal:** *To provide an innovative and stimulating learning environment where students can prepare themselves to excel in life.*

**Goal:** *To achieve the next level in research results and reputation by building on existing and emerging areas of excellence.*

**Goal:** *To build an inclusive community with a shared purpose.*

## GOALS

**Goal:** *To achieve the next level in research results and reputation by building on existing and emerging areas of excellence.*

McMaster is one of Canada's leading research-intensive universities, and this reputation generates tremendous pride among faculty, staff and students. Our researchers are not content to rest on their laurels, however. Rather, they are working to advance to the next level in research results and reputation, and are confident of their ability to do so. McMaster is a relatively small institution and cannot excel in every field. The University has a long tradition of setting priorities and building on its strengths. We are likely to remain a relatively small member of the group of research-intensive universities in North America, and it is therefore essential that we continue to identify research priorities in areas of traditional strength and in selected emerging sectors. With these areas identified, we must aim to be among the best in Canada and in the world.

**Target:** To be consistently among the top three Canadian universities as measured by appropriate indicators of research excellence.

Research excellence and graduate education are inextricably linked. World-class researchers attract top graduate students, and top graduate students and postdoctoral researchers play an important role in expanding the University's research reputation. But universities will also be faced with increased demand for broadly based interdisciplinary Masters programs as educational expectations in society rise. These programs will draw on research strengths, but typically in more than one area.

**Target:** To increase the importance of graduate education so that McMaster's graduate population reaches 20% of the University's total full-time enrolment and is highly ranked in indicators of graduate educational excellence.



## GOALS

**Goal:** *To build an inclusive community with a shared purpose.*

The concept of a McMaster community, or the village atmosphere of campus, is ingrained in the University's culture. There is a strong attachment to the idea and to the sustainability of an attractive campus environment. This goal is inextricably linked to the other two. A strong sense of community is essential for achieving excellence in learning and research, and this excellence in turn generates pride in being members of the McMaster family. But there is also an understanding that this sense of community is strained by rising enrolments, growing diversity among students, staff and faculty, the new expectations universities face, and the legacy of periods of financial stringency. Recognition is given to the steps that have been taken in the past few years to meet the challenges, including "Working at McMaster" initiatives and the President's Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community. But much remains to be done to work with employees to help them realize their potential. This includes professional development, and the creation of opportunities that provide employees with more regular input and recognition.

Communities are united when they share a mission and a vision. McMaster's stated purpose is the discovery, communication and preservation of knowledge. Whatever our roles, this is the ultimate purpose we serve.

**Target:** To ensure that all members of the McMaster community feel recognized and valued for their contributions to this shared purpose.



## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

*Take Risks and Innovate*

*Reduce Boundaries and Barriers*

*Be Nimble and Efficient*

*Build Our Internal and External Relationships*

*Define a Distinctive Reputation*

*Measure, Evaluate and Be Accountable*

*Secure Adequate Resources*

McMaster's goals are ambitious. Each one is critically important and calls out for a detailed implementation strategy to be developed as the next steps in this planning process. Successful implementation will be a significant measure of the success of the entire Refining Directions process. In developing these more detailed work plans, however, it is important to acknowledge that there are some common critical success factors in achieving these goals. These are not ends in themselves, but are steps that must be taken if we are to be successful in achieving our ultimate goals.

### **Take Risks and Innovate**

McMaster is known for being innovative. But a concern that this trait is not uniformly embraced by all areas of campus means it is essential to provide the opportunities and rekindle the spirit of innovation if we are to meet the challenges and take advantage of new opportunities in learning, discovery and community building.

Innovation is far more than just developing a new program. It is inspired by an attitude that there is always a better way. This attitude must pervade the entire institution. McMaster needs to encourage and celebrate a culture that promotes new ventures and rewards initiative. We must find ways to identify those who are disposed to innovation and risk-taking and provide the encouragement and support that enables new thinking. A condition of risk-taking is that not every idea will work every time. Being afraid to fail smothers the innovative spirit and we must learn to accept failure in order to risk success.

### **Reduce Boundaries and Barriers**

Any large organization has policies, protocols and processes that help to ensure its smooth operation. At times, however, they can impede new developments in learning and discovery, be a source of frustration and annoyance, and detract from a commitment to inclusiveness. Considerable progress in breaking down barriers has been made at McMaster, but this work is not complete. While respecting those protocols that carry real significance, such as professional accreditation, we must reduce and eliminate administrative processes and boundaries between units, modify operations that impede innovation and efficiency, and improve effectiveness in aligning planning and resource allocation.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

### Be Nimble and Efficient

McMaster's commitment to a planning culture is well established. There is broad agreement that the philosophy of decentralization must continue to guide academic and administrative units. The alignment of resources with responsibilities that decentralization brings promotes efficiency and accountability. Multi-year budgeting also encourages long-term planning, and revenue-sharing encourages flexibility and nimbleness. But much remains to be done. Long-term academic and financial planning need to be better integrated. Some distortions and omissions within the budget framework need to be addressed. Further, some significant investments are required in information technology, data access and institutional planning so that these areas are able to provide the support needed to meet the University's goals and objectives.

### Build Our Internal and External Relationships

Relationship building did not figure prominently in Directions but has since come to be recognized as a key success factor. McMaster's best ambassadors are its students. Significantly more attention should be paid to the student experience and to alumni cultivation to generate strong levels of active support. The Changing Tomorrow Today fundraising campaign exemplified the success that can be achieved and the significant contributions such campaigns make to the University's ability to make innovative ideas a reality. In the past year, a new focus on and appreciation of the positive role government relations play in McMaster's development have led to increased attention to the University's relationships with all three levels of government.



The University's closest and most physical relationship is with its community. As McMaster evolves so too does the impact it has on the city. This impact can be both positive and negative. Economic and other partnerships strengthen both the University and the City of Hamilton but such initiatives, and the growth that they and other developments engender, create a plethora of issues for those who live closest to campus. A strong residential and business community in West Hamilton benefits the University. Relationships, communications and support for community issues that have been established in recent years need to be strengthened and maintained.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS



### Define a Distinctive Reputation

The competitive environment in which McMaster currently exists will only intensify as other universities and competing educational and health institutions vie for financial and human resources. A consistent theme in almost all discussions about the University's future is the importance of building McMaster's reputation on a national and international level. Defining this distinct reputation is guided by the goals of the Refining Directions process and has the potential to influence significantly McMaster's ability to recruit top-quality students, staff, faculty, donors and other private and government supporters. Elements of the institutional framework required to make this happen are in place, and current media relations and promotional successes provide the foundation for the required integrated, institutional marketing approach that will allow McMaster to advance its role as one of Canada's premier universities.

### Measure, Evaluate and Be Accountable

A commitment to accountability is a key recommendation of the Refining Directions exercise. Measurement and evaluation are necessary for effective planning and enable us to determine how we are doing with respect to our goals. It is also essential for transparency and accountability to members of McMaster's internal and external communities. Each department and unit along with the University as a whole will be accountable. At times, this will be difficult as measurement and evaluation in an academic environment are complex and must be handled with sensitivity. The University Planning Committee (UPC) will play a key role in this success factor and the recent restructuring of UPC is a significant first step in the process.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

### Secure Adequate Resources

Refining Directions will guide McMaster into the future but without adequate resources it is unrealistic to assume that real progress can be made on the goals it contains. This success will require investments in faculty, staff, student services and support, library resources, and space. The University must also continue to make strategic choices about those areas on which it wishes to focus and fund.

There are potential options for enhancing University revenue. Advocacy for increased operating funds or increased tuition, where feasible, are two possibilities. New opportunities for specialized programs will arise and we must be prepared to take advantage of those that fit with the University's strategic objectives. Fundraising for specific purposes will continue to finance some initiatives. Technology in teaching and administrative systems may also provide cost efficiencies to the operation.



## NEXT STEPS

### Implementation Process

All indications are that demand for undergraduate and graduate education will increase substantially over the next decade due to increases in the university-age population and participation rate. The size of the University is not always within our control, but in our long-term planning we must make it an essential foundation for our decision-making. Thus our first task will be to determine what long-run enrolment targets are most consistent with achieving our three goals. We view size as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. We will ask how, if at all, size relates to our ability to realize success in our three goals.

There is a need for additional information and debate on this issue in order for the University to make an informed decision in a timely manner. An implementation team will recommend target enrolments to the Senate and the Board of Governors by December 2003. Approved targets will guide the future size of the University and will be periodically reviewed.

We will develop detailed work plans for achieving our three goals. These plans will contain specific strategies, targets, performance indicators, time lines and evaluation criteria. Setting priorities among competing goals and objectives will be an essential part of the implementation process.



# Refining Directions

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## THE PROMISE

Refining Directions is a promise. It is a promise to ourselves to make a McMaster that closes the gap between our concept of what we want to be and our experiences of what we are. The words “McMaster University” articulate an identity. We want that identity to be the living fulfillment of the promise that began the Directions process in 1995 with the expression of a vision: “To achieve international distinction for creativity, innovation and excellence.”



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Refining Directions was produced through the dedicated efforts of many individuals from McMaster University as well as the Hamilton community and surrounding area. Their participation in this project was essential to its success. Their collective insight and suggestions allowed McMaster to update the University's vision and mission that will guide our growth and development in the years ahead. They also made an outstanding contribution to the effective development of McMaster's goals, targets and critical success factors designed to achieve the University's big picture vision.

My sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to the Refining Directions process. The outcomes provide a clear path for a strong and vibrant McMaster in the years ahead. Thank you for your time, insight and dedication to this initiative. You have helped create a strategic plan that we can take pride in and I welcome the opportunity to implement it together.

Peter George  
President and Vice-Chancellor

## Steering Committee:

*Chair:* Ken Norrie

Doug Barber	Roger Trull
Karen Belaire	John Kelton
Susan Elliott	Niky Melichar
Bruce Gaulin	Mamdouh Shoukri
Peter George	Adam Spence
Alan Harrison	Trish Sullivan

*Project Manager:* Mary Williams

Andrea Farquhar, communications  
counsel and support

George Granger, enrolment  
management counsel and support

Heather Grigg, computing & information  
systems support

Mark Haley, human resources counsel  
and support

Shelly Khosla, administrative support

Anne McInnis, performance measure  
counsel and support

Lilian Scime, financial counsel and support

## Working Groups:

### *Undergraduate Education Work Team*

Susan Denburg (Co-Chair)	John Medcof
Carolyn Eyles	P.K. Rangachari
Fred A. Hall (Co-Chair)	Geoff Rockwell
Del Harnish	Sarah Rogers
Martin Horn	Dale Roy
Betty Ann Levy	Peter Smith
Michelle MacDonald	Adam Spence
Ruta Valaitis	

### *Research and Graduate Education Work Team*

John Berlinsky	Andrew Hrymak
John Capone	Susan Pattison
Thomas Crossley	Carl Richards
Laura Finsten	Mamdouh Shoukri (Co-Chair)
Fred L. Hall (Co-Chair)	Imre Szeman

### *External Activities Work Team*

Joseph Barbera	Jayne Johnston
Earl Cochrane	Rod Morrison
Luke Chan	Mary Romeo
Mohamed Elbestawi	Peter Sadlier-Brown
Andrea Farquhar	Mark Sproule-Jones
George Granger	Roger Trull (Chair)
Julie Hyde	

### *Internal Community Work Team*

Linda Axford	Anthony Miele
Brian Baetz	Sam Minniti
Stephanie Cherwinski	Jackie Osterman
Shelly Easton	Therese Quigley
Cathy Kelly	Peter Turner (Co-Chair)
Shelley Lancaster	Tanya Von Hunnins
Philip Wood (Co-Chair)	

### *Planning and Managing Work Team*

Karen Belaire (Co-Chair)	Ken Norrie (Co-Chair)
Mo Elbestawi	Lilian Scime
Turlough Finan	Roberta Shaw
Stuart Mestleman	Ryan Wiley

### *Branding Work Team*

Suzanne Crosta	Ken Norrie
Susan Denburg	Therese Quigley
Lori Dillon	Elliott Schreiber
Andrea Farquhar (Chair)	Peter Sadlier-Brown
George Granger	Peter Sutherland
Fred A. Hall	Julia Thomson
Fred L. Hall	Roger Trull
Kathleen Martin	

### *Writing:*

Andrea Farquhar  
Scott Koblyk  
Ken Norrie

### *Design and Layout:*

Kristy Paone

### *Photography:*

Courtesy of Student Liaison  
Office, McMaster University

### *Printing:*

Design & Copy Centre

### *Approvals:*

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of Governors: June 12, 2003



1280 Main Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8S 4L8

(905) 525-9140  
[www.mcmaster.ca](http://www.mcmaster.ca)

This a summary of the approved McMaster University Refining Directions Plan for 2003-2007.  
For a copy of the Refining Directions Plan, please contact the Office of the Provost at  
(905) 525-9140, ext 24301, or [provost@mcmaster.ca](mailto:provost@mcmaster.ca)