

Refining Directions Implementation Plan Committee
Phase I Report
October, 2009

Context

In the Fall of 2002 McMaster University embarked on a strategic planning exercise to craft a framework within which the university could meet challenges, create new opportunities and continue to excel and improve. The resulting plan, was adopted by the Board of Governors in 2003 and reaffirmed in 2008.

Refining Directions sets three goals for the university, goals which flow from the mission and vision statements first set out in *Directions* (1995). Those goals are:

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

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

To build an inclusive community with a shared purpose.

The plan outlines a number of targets related to these goals, as well as a series of factors critical to achieving them.

The three general goals are every bit as valid today as when they were first articulated in 2003.

To create an implementation strategy for *Refining Directions*, a steering committee and six working groups were created in 2003. Thanks to the efforts of faculty, staff and students across our campus, the implementation process led to numerous positive changes at McMaster. For example, the Collaborations for Health initiative was a direct result of *Refining Directions*, and helped establish the McMaster Health Forum comprising researchers, policy makers and citizens who gather to address important cross-disciplinary problems in health. Collaborations for Health has also provided seed grants across campus for health-related research, expanded the Centre for Health Economics and Policy Analysis, been instrumental in the creation of the Child Health Institute's Development Across the Lifespan, and founded the Controversies in Health inquiry course. Other examples of initiatives funded as part of the implementation of *Refining Directions* include the creation of a student portal on our website, the establishment of the Knowledge Commons in Mills Library, the development of branding guidelines to enhance our external visibility, and the opening of Bridges Café.

Although the successes in implementation of *Refining Directions* were significant, the implementation plan stalled a few years ago, primarily due to transitions in leadership

at McMaster University. In the past year, a new *Refining Directions Implementation Plan Committee* has been struck with a mandate to revive, update, and continue implementation of *Refining Directions*. This report is the first public product of the new committee. It provides a framework for action that consists of a list of roughly 100 objectives to address. The report also provides a brief description of the methods used in producing this framework and the next steps which will be taken to continue strategic implementation of our *Refining Directions* goals. Members of the committee are Naresh Agarwal, Jill Axisa, Ilene Busch-Vishniac (co-chair), Ken Cruikshank (co-chair), Susan Denburg, Andy Hrymak (resigned June 2009), Abigail Payne, Allison Sekuler, Tracey Taylor-O'Reilly, and Mary Williams.

Why should we produce an implementation framework for *Refining Directions* now? After all, the original plan was produced in 2003, the resources to dedicate to new initiatives may be in short supply, and President Peter George's successor could very well want to develop his own strategic plan. The members of the committee believe that the three central goals of *Refining Directions* are sound and will remain unchanged in any strategic review. Since the objectives outlined below speak to achieving those goals, this implementation framework will permit us simultaneously to make progress and to inform any new strategic planning exercise that might ensue. It is true that resources are limited, but that situation speaks to the need for focus and prioritization – both of which are best served in the context of clearly stated objectives.

Methodology

In creating this framework, our relatively small implementation team relied upon the valuable work already undertaken as part of the original *Refining Directions* implementation plan. We reviewed the objectives, comments and specific initiatives proposed by the various working groups and specific units. Based on that review, we created a set of objectives that speak to the goals of *Refining Directions* and the activities that define McMaster University. Each objective remains at a relatively high level – speaking to desired outcomes rather than how to achieve them. Thus, the objectives serve as a framework for further work.

The draft objectives were shared with a variety of individuals, committees and task forces for comment, and significant revisions were made based upon the suggestions received. Thus, what follows reflects a consensus view of the committee, built upon both historical considerations and the views of targeted members of the affected campus community. The implementation committee presents the framework at this time for broader comment across the campus. We will review all suggestions and make appropriate revisions.

Next Steps

We have identified 103 specific objectives clustered under our 20 priority objectives. Some of these 103 will be pursued as part of a coordinated strategy, whereas others may require departments and units to reflect on how they can integrate them within their own planning. The committee would like to identify up to six specific objectives to become a focus of our coordinated implementation activities in the near term. We therefore are particularly interested in receiving suggestions for which of these specific objectives deserve our immediate attention. For the objectives chosen, the committee will flesh out how we might achieve the objective, who will champion or be responsible for each identified task or series of tasks, what resources will be required and how they will be found, what metrics of success will be used, and a timeline for action. Defining these items puts fabric over the implementation framework in the areas designated as top priority. It is this work which is the important next step or second phase for the implementation committee.

In addition to identifying a few specific objectives to focus upon, it is clear that existing task forces and committees have already been at work on a number of the objectives. For some of these committees, such as the Task Force on Teaching and Learning (TOTAL), their mandate falls broadly within a single category of the framework – in this case “Education.” For other committees and task forces, such as the Task Force on Evaluation, Accountability and Measurement (TEAM), their work spans multiple categories of objectives. In either case, it is clear that as an institution we will be able to focus on groups of objectives that fall under the mandate of committees and task forces. We may also choose specific objectives that lie outside an established committee. The key to success will be to coordinate carefully between various groups. The implementation committee will enable and monitor this coordination.

Refining Directions Framework of Objectives

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

Education

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 1: FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT OF COLLABORATION, QUESTIONING, EXPLORATION, AND REFLECTIVE RISK-TAKING

- 1.1 Expand and adapt Inquiry and Problem Based Learning approaches.
- 1.2 Create interactive and engaging instructional environments and support a diversity of pedagogical strategies suitable for students with different learning needs.
- 1.3 Broaden the number of cross-disciplinary opportunities for students.
- 1.4 Expedite and facilitate curriculum change.
- 1.5 Support and mentor experimentation.
- 1.6 Permit flexibility in evaluation of student performance, being attentive to ensuring the accessibility of education to all students.
- 1.7 Produce a broader scope of credited learning experiences.
- 1.8 Support appropriate learning technologies to encourage collaboration and questioning.
- 1.9 Engage the campus community in dialogue on effective teaching and learning practices.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 2: DEEPEN THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION.

- 2.1 Advocate and support disciplinary and trans-disciplinary research and educational programs across the campus, in keeping with our character as a research-intensive university.
- 2.2 Increase graduate enrolment so it becomes at least 20% of the total student enrolment.
- 2.3 Enhance interaction between graduates and undergraduates.
- 2.4 Prepare to respond to and actively shape strategic priorities within the federal and provincial government's innovation strategy.
- 2.5 Develop new, non-thesis graduate programs to meet student demand without detracting from existing research-based programs.
- 2.6 Promote and facilitate flexibility in the types of programs available to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders
- 2.7 Support graduate students in their research and knowledge translation activities, including commercialization and contribution to public debate and service.
- 2.1 Foster the scholarship of teaching and learning.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 3: REINFORCE THE QUALITY AND STATUS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 3.1 Place the highest priority on recruiting and retaining core faculty of the highest caliber.
- 3.2 Expect tenured and tenure-track faculty to participate in graduate and undergraduate education as well as research throughout their careers.
- 3.3 Support and offer ongoing professional development for all aspects of faculty responsibilities, including undergraduate mentoring and graduate student supervision.
- 3.4 Encourage stakeholder engagement in decisions relating to education.
- 3.5 Establish evidence-based processes for evaluating and assessing success in teaching and learning.
- 3.6 Enhance recognition and exposure for teaching and learning.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 4: ENSURE A WELL-ROUNDED AND FULFILLING STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- 4.1 Foster an inclusive learning and living environment.
- 4.2 Promote and support a diverse community of international students.
- 4.3 Develop and maintain services appropriate to a diverse learning community.
- 4.4 Ensure that all students enjoy a successful transition to and from University.
- 4.5 Expand the range of professional development programs and services
- 4.6 Provide vibrant extra-curricular opportunities.
- 4.7 Build a sense of community among our graduate students.
- 4.8 Highlight and celebrate the successes of our students.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 5: BE STRATEGIC

- 5.1 Develop a coordinated and comprehensive strategy for new education and outreach initiatives.
- 5.2 Base continuing education programs upon current and anticipated community and market needs.
- 5.3 Create and maintain a broad range of high quality continuing education opportunities for diverse audiences, including for-credit and custom professional and executive training programs, as well as professional development workshops and courses.
- 5.4 Explore and identify international education opportunities.

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

Research

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 6: BUILD ON EXISTING STRENGTHS, EMERGING AREAS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE WORLD-CLASS EXCELLENCE

- 6.1 Identify and continuously review the university's areas of strategic priority in light of existing and emerging strengths and external opportunities.
- 6.2 Link institutional initiatives to areas of strategic priority.
- 6.3 Develop new academic programs related to the areas of strategic priority.
- 6.4 Encourage and facilitate provincial/national as well as international research opportunities.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 7: PROMOTE BOTH DISCIPLINARY AND TRANS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

- 7.1 Encourage and reward scholarly publication, creative performance and research contributions to public service.
- 7.2 Expect researchers and the institution to actively and collaboratively pursue opportunities to enhance research.
- 7.3 Maintain strong support services for researchers to assist them in obtaining and managing external funding and partnerships.
- 7.4 Strengthen institutional support for research by providing, where possible, advanced research equipment and facilities, administrative support and knowledge translation infrastructure that minimizes duplication and maximizes common use.
- 7.5 Support and enable interdisciplinary research at all levels of the institution.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 8: VALUE AND SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION OF OUR RESEARCH OUTCOMES

- 8.1 Engage policy makers.
- 8.2 Inform professional practice.
- 8.3 Develop and implement a University commercialization strategy.
- 8.4 Encourage and reward public outreach and community engagement.

To build an inclusive community with a shared purpose.

Building an Inclusive Community

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 9: ENHANCE INCLUSION AND EQUITY

- 9.1 Develop and act upon an Inclusion Plan for the University.
- 9.2 Integrate the University's commitment to inclusion into its organizational structure and operations.
- 9.3 Create models for enhancing inclusion on campus and provide structural support for implementing them.
- 9.4 Recruit candidates to senior administrative and other key positions with clear attention to inclusivity in both process and outcomes.
- 9.5 Be proactive in addressing human rights issues on campus.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 10: FOSTER OUR CULTURE OF COLLEGIALITY, CIVILITY, DIGNITY AND RESPECT

- 10.1 Establish and communicate standards for respectful and scholarly dialogues about difficult issues.
- 10.2 Create opportunities for meaningful discussion of the diversity of perspectives on campus.
- 10.3 Promote and celebrate behaviours and activities on campus that resonate with our shared purpose and values.
- 10.4 Nurture the potential and value the talents of all members of the university community.

Critical Success Factors

Outreach

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 11: ENHANCE MCMASTER'S VISIBILITY AND REPUTATION LOCALLY, NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

- 11.1 Provide strategic and timely communication to internal and external audiences.
- 11.2 Sustain our integrated marketing strategy.
- 11.3 Identify and facilitate opportunities for recognition of excellence.
- 11.4 Increase the profile and awareness abroad of McMaster.
- 11.5 Celebrate international linkages and influence on our campus.
- 11.6 Foster an institutional image that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 12: CREATE, PROMOTE AND SUSTAIN INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 12.1 Create and support international exchange and collaborative agreements.
- 12.2 Develop and implement an integrated international activities strategy.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 13: BUILD AND SUSTAIN STRONG EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

- 13.1 Foster pride and participation in the University.

- 13.2 Promote the values of good citizenship within the University and our communities.
- 13.3 Promote a lifelong relationship between the University and its alumni and friends.
- 13.4 Build McMaster's role and visibility as an active member of the Hamilton and surrounding communities.
- 13.5 Develop and implement an integrated government relations strategy.
- 13.6 Support and enable strong partnerships with non-government agencies, including corporations, foundations, and NGOs.
- 13.7 Ensure accountability, goodwill and awareness of the University through excellent stewardship.

Resources

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 14: SECURE ADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

- 14.1 Develop strategies for increased government support for research, operational and capital purposes.
- 14.2 Develop a tuition fee structure that reflects the true cost of education, while ensuring student accessibility.
- 14.3 Encourage units and programs to explore non-traditional funding opportunities in support of core activities.
- 14.4 Cultivate and steward donors, including individuals, corporations, foundations, and government agencies.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 15: ATTRACT, RETAIN AND MOTIVATE OUTSTANDING FACULTY AND STAFF

- 15.1 Align recruitment strategies with expectations of excellence.
- 15.2 Provide opportunities for career progression and renewal, including leadership development.
- 15.3 Recognize and reward excellence across all spheres of activity.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 16: INVEST RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO MAXIMIZE SUPPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

- 16.1 Engage in planning that identifies specific strategic priorities, develops incentives to reward those priorities, and identifies appropriate resources to support them, including funding, staffing and space.
- 16.2 Develop and implement a new budget model for internal budget allocations, and support this model with appropriate tools and training.
- 16.3 Identify and sustain efficient management through sound accountability systems including risk management and internal auditing.
- 16.4 Ensure that additions and improvements to campus infrastructure and the built environment are environmentally, socially and financially sustainable, and consistent with strategic priorities and commitments to accessibility.
- 16.5 Enhance and improve physical and virtual spaces.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 17: BE ACCOUNTABLE

- 17.1 Review and evaluate programs, services and priorities on a regular basis.
- 17.2 Ensure regular and reliable reporting of progress on objectives for internal and external constituencies.
- 17.3 Improve budget transparency and encourage campus-wide appreciation of the budget.

Technology Services**PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 18: CREATE A ROBUST TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 18.1 Develop and communicate an information technology strategy which speaks to priorities.
- 18.2 Set standards to ensure security and respect of privacy.
- 18.3 Establish, communicate and monitor technology standards.
- 18.4 Ensure effective flows of data from and interaction between critical systems.
- 18.5 Identify and manage key technological or human risk areas in critical systems.
- 18.6 Deploy our technologies to demonstrate good accountability practices.
- 18.7 Expand our access to historical and current research materials, including those in print and electronic formats.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 19: ENSURE CONTINUOUS EVALUATION AND RENEWAL

- 19.1 Analyze internal trends to identify commonalities in strategic areas for cost effectiveness and improved efficiency.
- 19.2 Identify and resolve technology barriers to effective business processes and business process barriers to effective technology services.
- 19.3 Ensure stakeholders are actively engaged in every stage of project development and review.
- 19.4 Leverage partnerships and shared service models.
- 19.5 Encourage a healthy balance of centralized and deployed services.
- 19.6 Encourage sharing of best practices.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVE 20: ENABLE INNOVATION

- 20.1 Expand technology-rich opportunities for conferencing, communicating and collaborating.
- 20.2 Promote networks among units, programs and instructors to coordinate innovation and excellence in research and teaching.
- 20.3 Encourage and mobilize innovations that respond to distinct disciplinary and professional uses, while protecting the integrity of systems that are critical to the functioning of the university.