

Framing Statement for *Towards 2030 Task Forces*

Introduction

"Towards 2030: Planning for a Third Century of Excellence at the University of Toronto" provides a very high-level overview of the current state of the University, and describes an array of factors that will affect the long-term future of our institution. It also poses a series of strategic questions about the directions in which the University might evolve in the next twenty or thirty years. These questions underscore that the University of Toronto must make some difficult choices if it is to continue on its path of extraordinary success in the decades ahead. The 2030 Task Forces have been initiated to help navigate this path.

Each of the Task Forces faces two fundamental questions: First: "*What is our vision for the preferred future of the University of Toronto?*" And second: "*What are the implications of that vision for our strategic positioning in the years ahead?*"

If we are successful in this initiative, then, by 2030, the University of Toronto will look and feel differently than it does today. But at the same time, some things cannot and should not change. The purpose of this framing statement is to highlight the features and boundaries of the landscape within which the Task Forces must do their work.

Variations on an Institutional Theme

Today, the University of Toronto is among the finest public research-intensive universities in the world. The Province of Ontario remains our single largest source of funds, and tuition levels are closely regulated. We have a continuing mandate to offer higher education across a range of disciplines, serving regional as well as national and international graduate and undergraduate populations. The University operates on three distinct campuses, all located within the dynamic urban context of the Toronto region. These are fundamental characteristics of the University of Toronto's current identity, and part of the foundation on which the Task Forces must build.

To define the boundaries of institutional possibility, it may be useful to contrast the University of Toronto with four well-known universities in the USA.

Williams College is one of a number of elite undergraduate colleges in the USA focused on the liberal arts. In the fall of 2006 Williams had 2,124 undergraduates and 46 graduate students. Tuition fees were US\$33,478, but 44% of students received aid from the college. The annual family incomes of those assisted ranged, remarkably, from zero to US\$190,000. In finances, Williams contrasts with the University as a whole. In mission, it contrasts with our St. George campus. Further, despite their primarily undergraduate orientation, the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses already have five-fold greater enrolment than Williams and many similar colleges in the USA.

The *Massachusetts Institute of Technology* enrolled 10,253 students in 2006/7, but 60% were in graduate or professional programs. MIT's reputation in research is truly global. However, only 4.3% of MIT's total enrolment is in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. This disciplinary concentration is untenable for the University of Toronto, given our scholarly strengths in the social sciences and humanities, and our role as a national educational resource in these disciplines for undergraduates and especially for graduate students.

Unlike MIT, the *University of Chicago* – another outstanding research-intensive institution – has an enrolment at both undergraduate and graduate levels that is balanced across the physical and life sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences. In 2006-7 Chicago had 4,526 undergraduate students and 8,932 advanced students split more or less equally between graduate and professional or other specialized programs. Chicago's ability to sustain its low overall enrolment is dependent on its high tuitions and a massively greater per-student endowment. As a private institution, it is also insulated from the regional and provincial enrolment demands that U of T has faced in the last decade. At the same time, our distribution of graduate, professional and undergraduate students appears misaligned with the distributions found at Chicago and among many of our research-intensive peers.

The City University of New York (CUNY) is respected for its scope, commitment to access, and collaborative network of different post-secondary institutions in a single urban area. CUNY is publicly-financed and tuitions remain low, at US\$2,000 per semester. Spread over 23 colleges, CUNY had a total enrolment of over 163,000 in the fall of 2006. The 'senior colleges' had 15.8% graduate FTEs. However, its spectrum of sites and programs also includes community and polytechnic colleges, and its total research footprint is modest, notwithstanding the institution's size and the many fine scholars on CUNY's staff. CUNY accordingly stands as a very different model for an institutional response to post-secondary enrolment pressures in a major urban area.

Current Institutional Reality

This brief overview highlights that the University of Toronto has more in common with institutions such as the University of Virginia or the better-established institutions in the University of California system, than with the four institutions profiled above. Even those comparisons, however, must be drawn with a number of caveats.

Not least among the distinguishing features of U of T is the extent of variation across the three U of T campuses. The St. George campus differs from the east and west campuses in age, in size, in funding measured as endowment per student, in the ratio of undergraduates to graduate and professional program students, and in the mix of academic programs available. At the same time, the Scarborough and Mississauga campuses are each larger than about one-third of the universities in Canada. Both campuses have recruited outstanding scholars and developed unique programs. As a

result, the University of Toronto can no longer be viewed simply as one campus with two satellites; rather, it has advanced a considerable distance towards a multi-institutional university system. In this respect, then, it will be important for task forces to consider the experience of American institutions that also operate as regional systems.

Last, not unlike, say UCLA, the University of Toronto benefits from a unique urban environment. The Toronto region is growing quickly, and already has what is arguably the most ethnoculturally diverse population in the world. The region's concentration of cultural institutions and knowledge-based industries is remarkable, as is its potential to serve as a global exemplar for dynamic development and social solidarity in the face of unparalleled diversity.

Some Themes for the 2030 Task Forces

Against this background, Task Force members may reasonably ask: Are there some broad desiderata for the evolution of the University? And what are the cross-cutting themes that all Task Forces will need to consider? We suggest the following.

- I. The University of Toronto must continue to enhance all dimensions of the experience of our students. For undergraduates in particular, the University must give priority to initiatives that will improve the satisfaction and engagement of students on all three campuses.
- II. The University of Toronto will remain an institution with a tremendous breadth of educational programs and scholarship. However, given the evolving post-secondary educational landscape, the Task Forces should not hesitate to raise issues related to lack of focus or selectivity in our academic programming.
- III. The University of Toronto will continue to prize not only first-class teaching, but outstanding scholarship. The Task Forces must find a balance that preserves key elements of the institution's research-intensive character, while ensuring that education remains at the core of the University's mission.
- IV. The University serves students from the Toronto region, as well as from across Canada and around the world. Changing demographics will also drive greater local participation in continuing education programs. The Task Forces will therefore need to consider how to align student recruitment with our institutional mission and varied mandates.
- V. Major universities world-wide now recruit more students and faculty from other nations, engage in more exchanges and partnerships with sister institutions abroad, and undertake more international projects and issues. The Task Forces must consider how the University of Toronto can play a leadership role in responding to these trends.

- VI. The three campuses of the University have all grown and changed dramatically. Each Task Force must in some way consider the future of the three-campus system.
- VII. The University must sustain and ideally enhance the quality of the working life of faculty and staff. Task Forces should consider how their recommendations affect our ability to recruit and retain not just the best and brightest students, but outstanding employees.
- VIII. The resource base of the University is constrained, among other factors, by our low per-student grants from the provincial government and regulated tuitions. The Task Forces must be realistic about the financial prospects of the institution, but should also consider a range of possible future states including those in which resource restrictions are eased.
- IX. The University cherishes its autonomy and the academic freedoms of its members. At the same time, for the sake of future students, the University must be responsive to changes in our society and our economy. Task Forces must therefore consider societal expectations of the University and the University's role within society. .
- X. The Task Forces can set out long-term strategic directions and begin to chart a path forward for the University of Toronto, but we need signposts to measure our progress. Each Task Force should therefore propose markers relevant to its mandate that will define success for the University of Toronto between now and 2030.