

## 2. Enrolment Growth

The student population at the University of Toronto has grown steadily since we opened our doors as King's College in 1827. Beginning in the mid 1960s the Baby Boomers arrived on campus and sustained enrolment growth for approximately 20 years. Following the lexicon of U of T economist David Foot, the next demographic wave was the 'Bust Generation'. By the late 1980s and early 1990s postsecondary enrolment growth slowed as a relatively smaller cohort of young people born in the late 1960s and 1970s made their way to and through university. The growth curve, however, sharpened significantly beginning in the early 2000s with the arrival of the 'Echo Generation', children of the Boomers.

In fact, the University has experienced enrolment growth

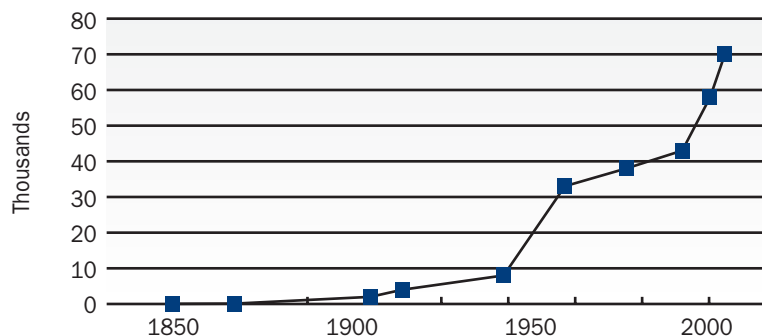
of 35%<sup>6</sup> over the past ten years, and 50% growth over the past twenty years. The University has accommodated the increased number of students across all three campuses. In the past 10 years, UTM expanded by 4,185 students (70% increase), UTSC expanded by 4,934 students (96% increase), and the St. George campus expanded by 9,377 students (23% increase). For 2006-07, the total student enrolment (headcount) at the University of Toronto stood at 72,494. The demand for university places has been driven by population growth in the 18 to 24 year age group and increasing participation rates.

Since 1997-98, enrolment in graduate professional masters programs has almost doubled, and doctoral enrolment has grown by 30%. Doctoral-stream Masters programs remained steady, increasing only by about 3%. The rapid growth in Professional Masters enrolment reflects the growing societal demand for these degrees, the increased number of offerings at the University, and shifts from second-entry baccalaureate programs. The increase in doctoral students is indicative of the growing intensity of research and scholarship at the University.

### Projected enrolment growth demands

Across Ontario, the growth in the population of 18 to 24 year olds is projected to peak in 2014, rising 118,000 above 2005 levels<sup>7</sup>. The population will then decline somewhat but remain about 80,000 above 2005 levels beyond 2030. Professor David Foot suggests that "Over the next decade Canadian postsecondary institutions can be expected to experience enrolment growth. After that, the boom becomes a bust as the declining births of the 1990s gradually impact enrolments."<sup>8</sup> However, these general projections may not take full account of changing participation rates. A

Figure 5: Full-Time Enrolment at UoT in thousands

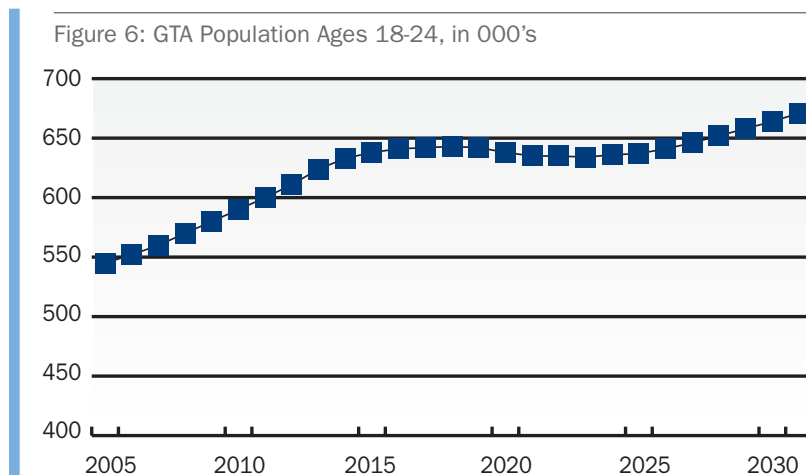


baccalaureate in today's 'knowledge economy' can be seen as an entry-level credential, similar to a high school diploma in the 1970s. That reality may lead in turn to growing demand for of second-entry undergraduate and graduate programs.

As well, most of Ontario's population growth in this 18 to 24 year old age group in the next two decades will be in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) region, with a 24% increase projected for 2005 to 2031 (an additional 126,000 potential students). For the same period, growth in this age group for regions outside the GTA is projected at more modest levels to 2013-2014 and then falling

to 2005 levels or below. Indeed, for the area of Ontario outside the GTA, the population of the 18 to 24 year olds in 2031 is projected to be 7% below 2005 levels. As noted, these declines are likely to be offset by increasing university participation rates<sup>9</sup>. Participation rates for Ontario universities have climbed from 18.1 % (1989-90) to 27.9% (2004-05). Although some of the recent increases are an artefact of the double cohort (caused by elimination of grade 13), labour market dynamics and immigration are likely to drive up the demand for university education even if the population of 18 to 24 year olds drops slightly.

These differential enrolment pressures across Ontario present a significant challenge for all universities, and especially those located in the GTA (University of Toronto, York University, Ryerson University, the Ontario College of Art and Design and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology). The University of Toronto provides an education to approximately 24% of all GTA residents who register for university. If we do not expand, and especially if our sister institutions expand slowly or not at all, tens of thousands of students will need to leave the GTA for higher education. The situation is particularly fluid because colleges and universities outside the GTA, particularly in northern Ontario, could well see declining enrolments in the same period. Furthermore, the province has struggled to finance current students at levels that will sustain educational quality, and undergraduate enrolment expansion will create new financial pressures.



**University of Toronto is a key provider of higher education to the GTA community**

- » In 2005, 71% of all new students entering first year at U of T originated from GTA communities.
- » Of all GTA students registered at university (2004), 24.4% came to University of Toronto.

Graduate enrolment is also expected to increase, but the first period of increase will follow a province-wide plan. In the 2005 Spring Budget, the Ontario Government announced that by 2009-10, an additional \$220M per annum will be made available to expand graduate enrolment in Ontario universities. This funding is intended to support a system-wide growth of 14,000 graduate spaces over 2002-03 levels. The University's long-term expansion target is to add 4,470 FTEs, which represents an expansion of 42% over the 2004-05 level. Implementation of this plan is conditional on availability of appropriate resources, including funding for capital, student support and research support.

### Accommodating growth without compromising quality

Management consultants sometimes speak of 'the impossible triad' – 'better, faster, and cheaper', and ask clients to 'pick any two'. The analogous attributes of education are quality, accessibility, and affordability. As one indicator of the trade-offs in the system, in 2005-06 Canadian universities on average received \$2,500 per student less operating support from the government than was provided at the beginning of the 1990s.\*\* At Toronto, the impact of chronic funding shortfalls has been felt in rising student-to-faculty ratios, bigger class sizes and depleted administrative infrastructure. An increasing number of first year undergraduate students are experiencing large class sizes (greater than 100 students per class), particularly at the Mississauga and Scarborough campuses.<sup>10</sup> This challenge is also felt acutely in higher-level courses with fewer small lectures and seminars now available to students.

Similarly, while the University of Toronto and sister institutions have done well to meet the growing demand for university degrees, students across Canada, and especially in Ontario, are receiving a very different education than is available to US students at top public universities. One of our sources of performance metrics on student experience, the National Survey of Student Engagement, indicates unsettling differences when we compare Ontario universities to their peers in the United States. The intensity of student-faculty interactions at Ontario universities is at least 25% below that seen at US peer universities. Further, the degree of active and collaborative learning at Ontario institutions is

#### U of T High Student-Faculty Ratio

In the last 10 years, the University of Toronto student-faculty ratios have increased from 14 to 24, an increase of close to 70%. Our student-faculty ratio is almost twice as high as that of the University of Calgary.

U of T student-faculty ratios run 60% higher than American peer average and 20% higher than the Canadian peer mean.

The St. George campus currently serves **51,000 students**, a number that is larger than any university campus in Canada and, among US university campuses, ranks second in size following Ohio State University (at 51,800 students).

\*\* In real terms (2005 dollars).

lagging at least 15% below that of the US peer group. Notwithstanding concerns over rising tuition levels, evidence from multiple indicators suggests that our ability to maintain – let alone enhance – quality is being severely constrained.

Physical capacity is a related concern. Facilities on all three campuses are very heavily booked during the fall and spring semesters. Summer enrolments are growing. Additional growth is clearly possible, but there are differing views on ‘trimesterization’ and the cost-efficiency of greatly-increased summer enrolments. By the space standards of the Council of Ontario Universities [COU], all three campuses – but particularly UTM and UTSC – already fall significantly short of the square footage recommended for our configuration of faculty, staff, and students. Facility expansion is needed given current enrolments and staffing, not least the ongoing growth in the numbers of graduate students. However, with both the UTM and UTSC campuses situated near ravines or conservation areas, with the St. George campus located in an area of costly real estate in downtown Toronto and with GTA construction costs rising steadily, physical expansion is not without obstacles. Even in the health sphere, where several of the fully-affiliated research hospitals are expanding their physical plants, the availability of real estate constrains growth near the St. George Campus.\* Meanwhile, the peak in GTA population growth among 18 to 24 year olds will be reached in only seven years, raising acute questions about whether and how we might accommodate a new wave of undergraduates.

### **Our Future Enrolment Patterns**

The University of Toronto is at a critical juncture in decision-making about enrolment. Reflecting on the increases in student-faculty ratios, large class sizes and our performance on several measures of undergraduate student satisfaction, it appears unlikely – absent radical changes in funding – that bigger will be better. We have limited physical and human capacity to absorb more students on our three campuses. Yet, we also are expected to be responsive to the educational aspirations of residents of Ontario and particularly our citizens who live in the GTA. Those aspirations and associated population dynamics all point towards undergraduate growth at exactly a point in time when the majority of our colleagues and staff seem to be leaning in the precisely the opposite direction. The University is currently working with York and Ryerson as well as the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to explore regional options. The immediate challenge, however, is to clarify our own long-term goals so that short-term decisions can be made within a sound strategic framework.

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‡ Seven institutions are relatively land-locked. The exceptions are: Sunnybrook with its large tract of University-owned land; the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health with its new Queen Street campus; and Toronto Rehabilitation Institute which has under-developed sites.

## TOWARDS 2030: Some strategic questions to promote dialogue ...

What is the optimum student enrolment for the University overall, and for each of the three campuses?

From a system-wide standpoint, there are a number of options the University might consider when reflecting on its participation in the Greater Toronto Area during a period of increasing participation rates and enrolment growth. They are not mutually exclusive and include:

- a) Limit further undergraduate enrolment increases, assuming that students will move out of region to other universities in the 'Golden Horseshoe' and beyond
- b) Develop a fourth University of Toronto campus in a region of the GTA with high population growth
- c) Increase enrolment across one or more of the three campuses to the greatest extent possible
- d) Develop partnerships with one or more colleges to facilitate transfers to degree programs, or with other universities outside the GTA to assist their entry into the GTA market
- e) Work collaboratively with government, colleges, and university partners to create another university in the GTA.

In light of the long-term position of the University, which of these (or other) options should be advanced?

Assuming a particular enrolment or growth scenario, what is the optimum blend of domestic and international students? Do absolute growth targets alter our institutional views about the optimum balance of undergraduate and graduate students?

The University of Toronto's enrolment has been described as 'two Gs' (GTA and Global). What type of students are we seeking to enrol and from what geographic areas? Given those goals, do we have the right methods of recruitment and selection?