

Annual Report
of the
Budget Advisory Committee

McMaster University Faculty Association

MU

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June 24, 2008



Budget Advisory Committee, 2007/08

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Trevor Chamberlain, Finance

Ken Cruikshank, History

Ann Herring, Anthropology

Khalid Nainar, Accounting

Gladys Peachey, Nursing

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Richard Stubbs (Chair), Political Science

Do McMaster's Expenditures Reflect Its Mission?

MUFA Budget Advisory Committee June 24, 2008

The MUFA Budget Advisory Committee was formed in response to growing concerns about the amount and allocation of University resources during a time of unprecedented growth. The Committee meets periodically to discuss issues related to University funding and will, as part of a MUFA Executive mandate, issue regular reports that are intended to stimulate further discussion and critical analysis. These reports will contribute to the McMaster-wide debate on the University's budgetary and financial position which was called for originally in the June 28, 2006 open letter from Peter George, President of the University, and Don Green, then Chair of the Board of Governors, and which has since been repeated in various other announcements by senior members of the McMaster Administration. As part of the reporting process, the Committee will focus on trends over time using information obtained from Statistics Canada, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), bond rating agencies, and McMaster's own financial and statistical reports.

GOALS OF THE UNIVERSITY

This Report starts from the basic financial principle that the budget sets out the operational priorities of the University's mission in numerical form. According to the Mission Statement, the University's priorities are 'the discovery, communication, and preservation of knowledge.' The Mission Statement also goes on to assert that, 'in our teaching, research, and scholarship, we are committed to creativity, innovation, and excellence.' Similarly, the 'Vision' of the University is 'to achieve international distinction for creativity, innovation and excellence.' *Refining Directions* indicates that in order to operationalize these goals the University should have as its target, first, to be consistently among the top three Canadian universities in terms of research excellence and, second, to be consistently among the top three Ontario universities in terms of the quality of students we attract and graduate. These priorities, goals and targets can only be achieved by maintaining a strong faculty complement.

MAIN CONCLUSION

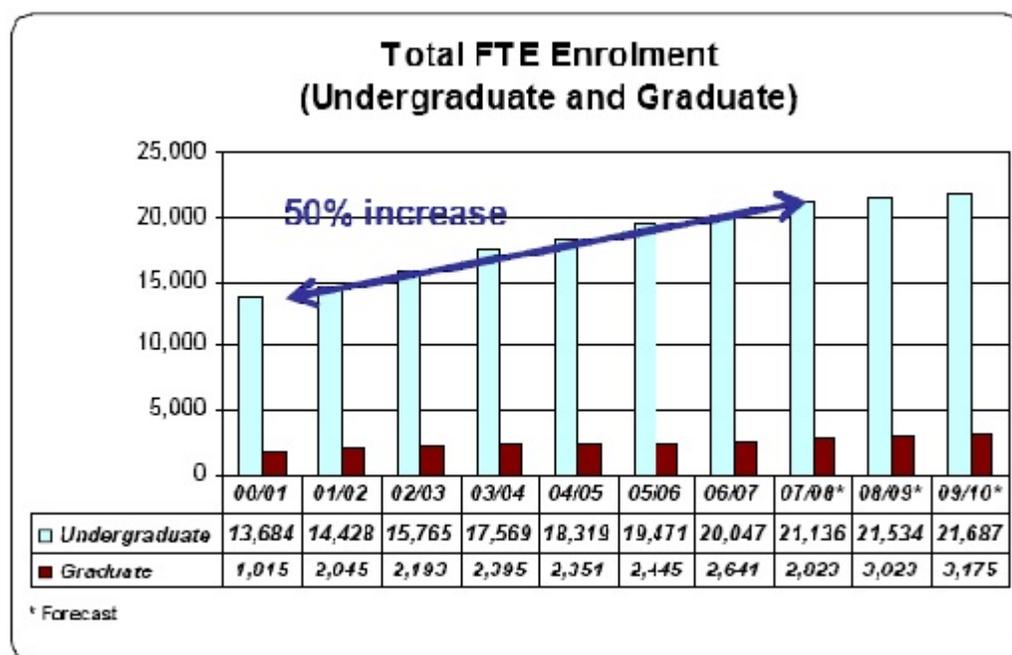
There has been a growing disconnect between the stated goals of the University, outlined in its Mission and Vision Statements and the *Refining Directions* document, and the allocation of resources within the University. In other words, the University has failed to focus on its own stated goals and targets and is instead moving in the 'Wrong Directions.' While the University does not publish its comparative performance indicators, it is clear from data provided by other institutions that, in the five years since *Refining Directions* was approved by the Board in June 2003, the University has failed to meet its targets. Most importantly, the Administration's failure to implement a plan for the renewal and development of the University's full-time faculty complement, to reduce class sizes and improve teaching quality while preserving research strength, places the future of McMaster as a premier research and teaching university in jeopardy.

FUNDING, ENROLMENT, AND STAFFING

The point is often made by our administrators that the University faces budgetary and financial difficulties because the Province of Ontario does not adequately fund universities. It is certainly true that the Province of Ontario is second last among provinces in Canada in per capita financial support for higher education and that the Province's funding is 25% below the Canadian average. Indeed, senior members of the Administration should be encouraged to redouble their efforts to lobby for increased funding for all Ontario universities. However, this report will argue that, in spite of Provincial underfunding, it is urgent to recognize and to deal with the enormous problems of overcrowded classes and a shortage of full-time faculty that have grown up at McMaster in the past five years. Furthermore, it is not an acceptable response for the Administration to say that things are just as bad at all Ontario universities. We will argue that that is not the case.

The arrival of the double cohort initiated a 50% increase in undergraduate student enrolment at McMaster (Figure 1). According to data provided by OCUFA, this was a greater increase in undergraduate enrolment than at any other research-intensive university in Ontario.

Figure 1
Enrolment data for the period 2000/01 through 2006/07



Note: Data for 07/08 is an estimate.

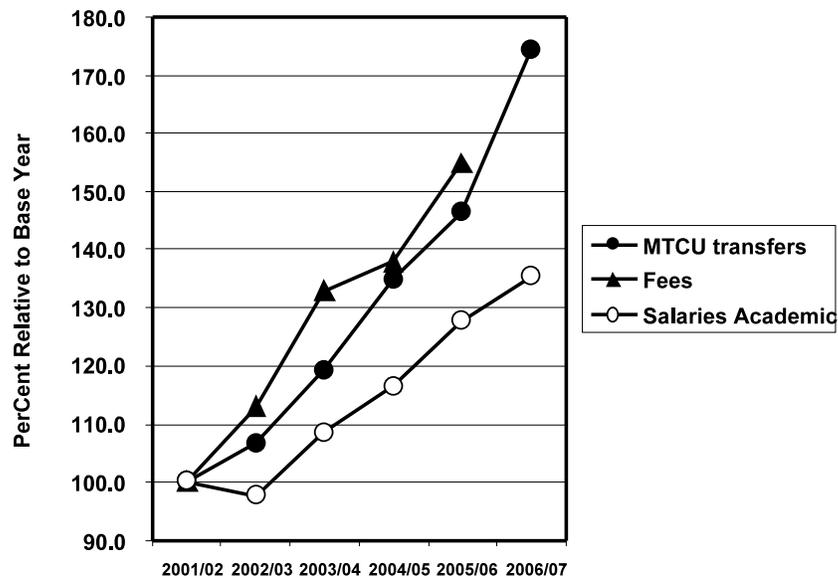
Source: McMaster University Consolidated Budget 2007/08.

This unprecedented increase in enrolment has been matched, over the six years from 2001/02 to 2006/07 by a 75% increase in Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) funding and a similar increase in total tuition income. During this period academic salary expenditures increased by only 35% (Figure 2), so the question arises, where has this money gone? How is it that this substantial increase in funding has not allowed the University to meet its goals?

The apparent conclusion is that the underfunding of universities by the Province has been compounded by the misallocation of funds within McMaster.

Figure 2

Changes in Revenue and Salaries



Note: Transfers from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) over the last 5 years. All figures are normalized to the 2001/02 base year to facilitate comparisons. Fee data for 2006/07 are not yet available. It should be clear that while major enrolment-linked revenue sources have increased substantially, investment in faculty has not kept pace.

Source: OCUFA and McMaster University

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The goals and the targets that the University has set can only be achieved by ensuring that the faculty complement is strong enough to provide students with an academic experience of very high quality. While other aspects of the University — the administrative staff, staff in the Faculties and departments, the physical infrastructure and the physical plant staff, the athletic facilities and student services — are crucially important, their purpose is to support the core activities of the University which are research and teaching — the primary function of faculty. If these core activities are allowed to deteriorate, as has happened in recent years, no amount of administrative support or athletic and recreational facilities can pick up the slack.

The shortage of full-time faculty has resulted in a situation where the bulk of our students are taught in large, over-crowded classes, more often than not by sessionals, with little capacity for evaluating their work (grading assignments or reading essays) or for providing any personal attention. This condition persists over all four years of the undergraduate experience (see “Post-secondary system needs fixing,” by Arati Sharma, Hamilton Spectator, April 23, 2008 (see Appendix 3).

Faculty development and renewal have not been given the high priority necessary to ensure that the University meets its stated goals and targets. McMaster’s faculty complement was devastated by the cuts of the Harris years, reaching a low point at the turn of the century, just before the advent of the Double Cohort. From 2001/02 to 2006/07, the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty in the Science and

Social Science Faculties barely recovered to 1994/95 levels, while the Humanities Faculty remained static (Table I). During this time, as noted above, undergraduate enrolment increased by nearly 50%.

Table I
Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty Complement

	1994/95	2001/02	2006/07
Business	45	46	53
Engineering	94	92	128
Humanities	122	101	102
Science	160	146	169
Social Science	131	111	130
Total	552	496	582

Note: Computing and Software moved from Science to Engineering in 1998. At that time it had a faculty complement of 11. For comparison purposes Computing & Software has been treated as if it has always been in the Engineering Faculty and that they had a faculty complement of 11 in 1994/95.

Source: *Data Manual*, 1995/96, 2001/02, and web.

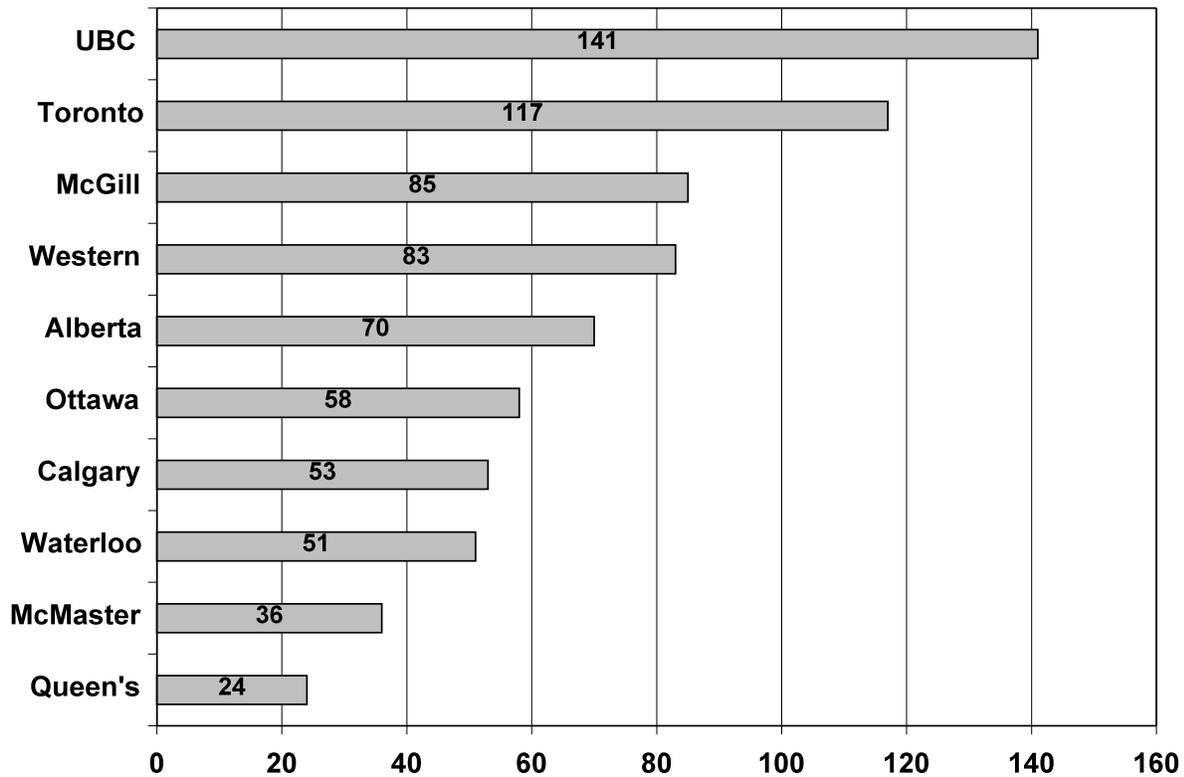
In addition, all Faculties have Canada Research Chair (CRC) appointments. For example, 42 CRC appointments are included in the 2006/07 figures. CRC appointments were intended to augment the ranks of research faculty. Without CRC appointments, total faculty complement for 2006/07 would be less than for 1994/95.

COMPARISON TO OTHER UNIVERSITIES

It is frequently claimed by McMaster administrators that all Ontario universities are in similar situations, with too many students and not enough money to hire new faculty. However, our research shows that, since the turn of the century, different Ontario universities have made different choices about how to grow and where to invest. McMaster sits at one extreme among research-intensive Ontario universities in terms of enrolment growth and lack of faculty hiring.

In 2005/06 McMaster was second last in hiring new tenure-track appointments among the G13 research-intensive universities (Figure 3). In 2006/07 the overall number of tenured and tenure-track faculty members across campus fell by eight (2006/07 Multi-year Accountability Agreement Report-Back for McMaster University, December 20, 2007). In the academic year 2007/08 the Administration's buy-out program produced a large number of retirees. These faculty have not been fully replaced, further eroding the tenure and tenure-track complement. The expectation for 2008/09, as stated by the President in the press (Canadian Press, April 16, 2008), is that once again retiring faculty will not be fully replaced. These cuts have taken place despite the University having substantial and consistent increases in BIU (Basic Income Unit) generated funding since 2002/03.

Figure 3
New Tenured and Tenure-Track Appointments, 2005/06



Source: G13 Data Exchange

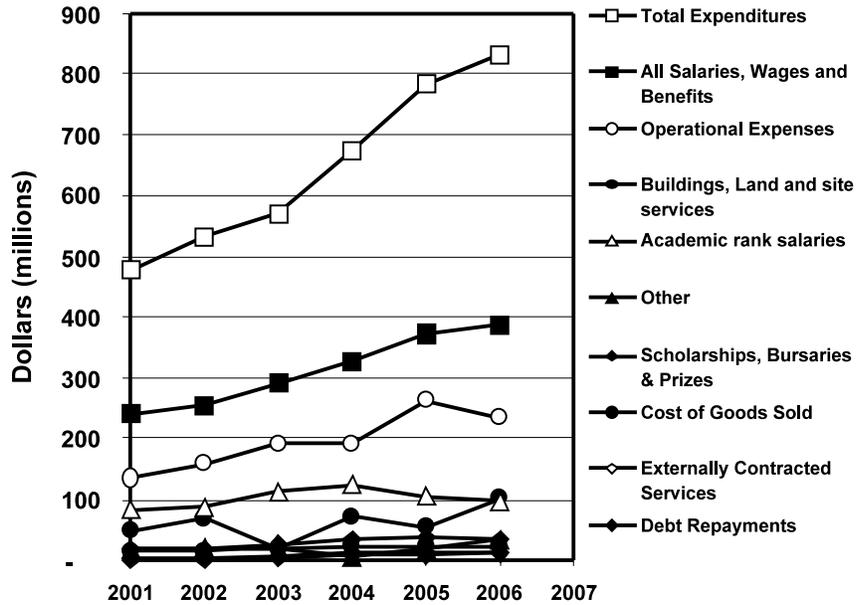
Figures 4 and 5 present data on total expenditures by McMaster in different categories and a comparison of the percentage of budget spent on academic salaries by different Ontario universities as reported to Statistics Canada. The total expenditures shown in Figure 4 are consistent with the income data presented in Figure 2, showing a 75% increase in total annual spending over the period from 2001 to 2006. The expenditures on academic salaries in Figure 4 are nearly constant, resulting in the large drop in Percentage of Budget Spent (by McMaster) on academic salaries, shown in Figure 5.

McMaster administrators have informed MUFA that the academic salaries data submitted to Statistics Canada by McMaster, which were used in Figures 4 and 5 and Appendix I, are incorrect. They have provided MUFA with revised data, which appear in Figure 2. However, Figures 2 and 5 are consistent in showing a dramatic decrease in the fraction of McMaster spending used for academic salaries.

Furthermore the faculty complement data of Table 1, taken together with the 75% increase in overall spending shown in Figure 4, are also consistent with a sharply decreasing fraction of the budget being spent on academic salaries.

How does the revised spending on academic salaries by McMaster compare to reported spending by other Ontario universities? Comparative faculty hiring data, such as that shown in Figure 3, along with the smaller rate of increase in spending on academic salaries compared to total income shown in Figure 2, suggest a decline in the fraction of budget spent on academic salaries which would still place McMaster below its Ontario peers. Unfortunately this conclusion is clouded by reliability issues surrounding McMaster's financial reporting.

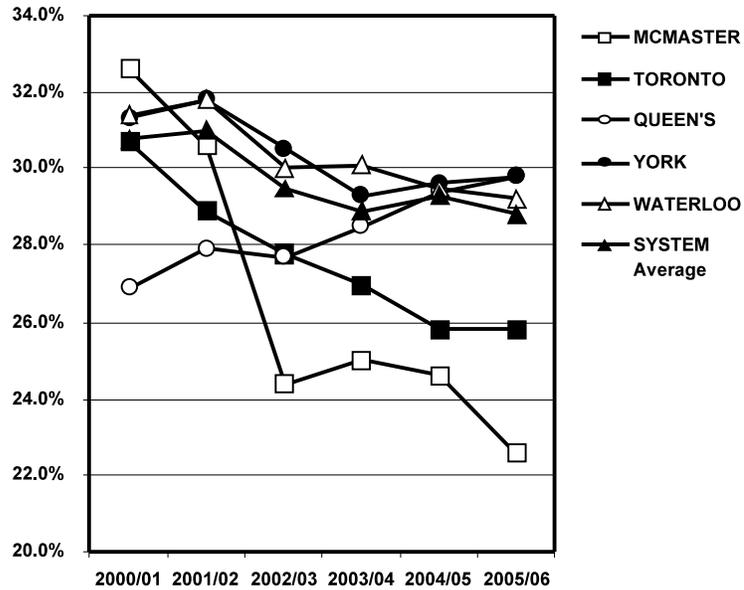
Figure 4
Expenses



Note: Quantitative changes in expenses. Like revenue, major expense items have increased while academic salaries have languished.

Source: Statistics Canada Reports for McMaster, 2001-2006

Figure 5
Percentage of Operating Budget Spent on Academic Salaries



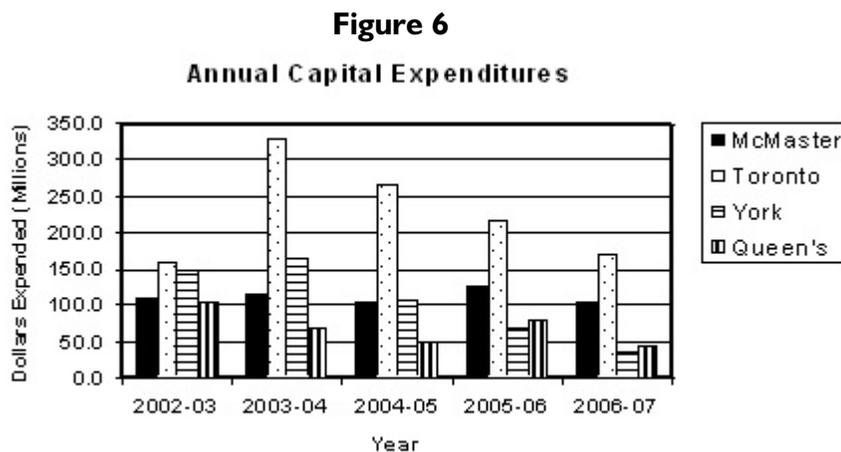
Source: OCUFA Website, Table 4.9

WHERE HAS THE MONEY GONE?

If the substantial increase in funding received from the Province over the last six years has not gone into faculty renewal and development and enhancing the learning experience of McMaster students, where has it gone?

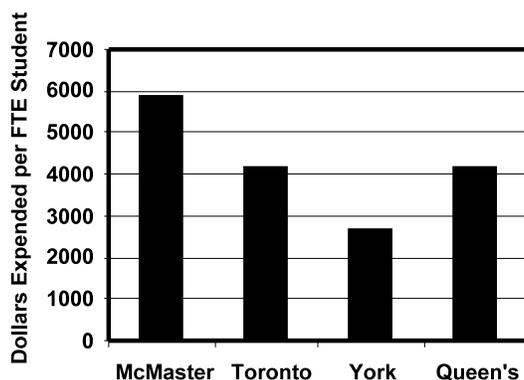
Buildings: One major area of expenditures has been the expansion of the University's physical infrastructure. Too often construction projects have been initiated without full funding being in place, and a number of projects have experienced substantial cost overruns (Appendix 2). This requires top-up funding from other sources, producing a drain on the operating budget. In addition, new buildings require power, heating/cooling, cleaning, maintenance, security, and are sometimes funded by debt, creating recurring drains on the operating budget.

Bond rating reports are a useful resource in comparing University statistics because unlike audited financial statements, bond rating agencies (such as Dominion Bond Rating Service [DBRS]) comment on the institutional priorities and goals and, more importantly, provide standardized comparative information including capital expenditures. These reports show that recent capital expenditures at McMaster are surprisingly large, and they reveal (Figures 6 and 7) striking differences in McMaster's capital spending relative to other universities. While other universities built to accommodate the double cohort and subsequently scaled back new projects, McMaster continues to spend approximately \$110M each year. McMaster received less in 'SuperBuild' funding than comparable institutions, and so other sources of funding have had to be found. Overall, the concern is that new construction has taken precedence over academic staffing, leading to both one-time expenses and continuing costs which drain the operating budget and further limit McMaster's ability to educate its greatly expanded body of students. Thus capital expenditures in recent years have often detracted from, rather than helped to achieve, the stated goals and targets set by the University.



Source: Dominion Bond Rating Reports for Selected Universities

Figure 7
Average Capital Expenditure per FTE Student 2002-2006



Note: The data shown in the previous figure were averaged and divided by the average FTE of each institution. Enrolment data for 2006/07 were not available for all universities and so only four years were used. The data clearly show that McMaster spends much more than other universities on capital expenditures.

Source: Recent DBRS reports for selected universities.

We note that this disequilibrium between capital expenditures and spending on academic staff may be connected to the superficial process by which capital projects are reviewed and approved by the University Planning Committee, as well as the lack of any oversight by the Budget Committee or the UPC of annual capital expenditures.

Expansion of the Administration: Parts of the Administration have expanded rapidly over the last seven years. This is in spite of the fact that administration, unlike teaching, is a place where efficiencies of scale can be achieved without sacrificing quality. For example, the implementation of new technology provides the opportunity to manage a larger enterprise with the same number of, or fewer, administrative staff. Unfortunately, recent implementations of new technology, such as the new MacVIP payroll system, seem to have gone in the opposite direction.

There are little reliable, consistent data available on expenditures by the administrative side of the University. One source is the Information Returns that the University must file with the Canadian Revenue Agency and the US Internal Revenue Service in order to maintain its tax exempt status as a charitable organization. Although it is difficult to relate the absolute magnitude of the reported data to actual total expenditures on administration, the trends seem significant. For example, the line item, Professional and Consulting Fees in the Information Return filed with the CRA has increased by 386% from April 2003 to April 2007 (from \$1.4M to over \$7M). Similarly, General Management and Administrative expenditures have increased by 67% over the period 2003 to 2007 (from \$15.6M to \$26M), while, according to the same reports, overall University expenditures increased by only 40% over the same period.

While the Administration provides little data on the amount of resources devoted to its own staff, it does appear that the Human Resources Department has grown by between 60 and 100 percent since 2001. In one year, 2006/07, the central administrative staff increased by twenty-three positions while the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty across the campus was reduced by eight. It is also significant that

while five Faculties are said to be currently in deficit, no department of the central administration presently shows a deficit. The conclusion appears to be that, while the Faculties are significantly underfunded for the tasks they are asked to perform — tasks that are at the heart of the University's mission — the central administration is well funded in its supporting role. The University clearly needs to re-examine its priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the University develop performance indicators to show how close it is to achieving the 'Targets' set out in *Refining Directions*. The performance indicators currently used do not adequately address the key targets in *Refining Directions*. Other research-intensive universities provide appropriate comparative academic performance indicators. We should do the same.

McMaster University McMaster University Annual Report:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/bms/pdf/mac-2007fs.pdf>

Queen's University Annual Report: <http://www.queensu.ca/fins/info/pdf/AnnualReport2007.pdf>

University of Western Ontario

Annual Performance Report: http://www.ipb.uwo.ca/documents/2007_performance_indicator.pdf

Financial Report: http://www.uwo.ca/finance/finstate/2006_07/complete.pdf

University of Toronto

Annual Performance Report:

<http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/public/reports/performanceindicators/2007pi.htm>

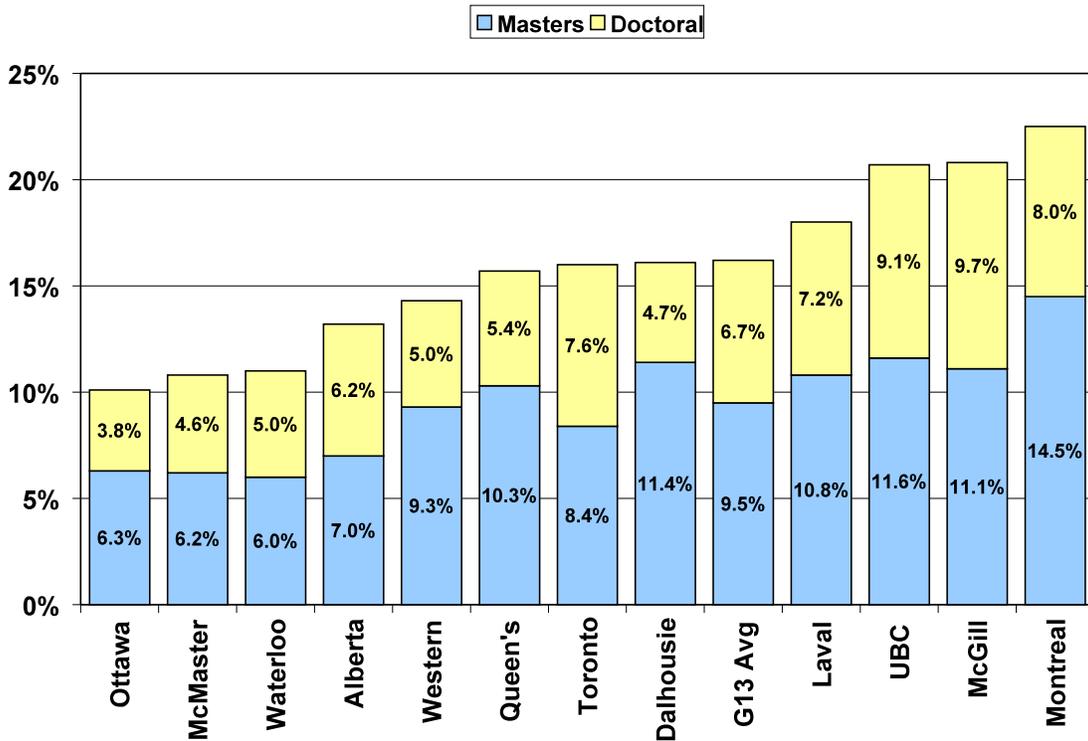
Summary:

<http://www.provost.utoronto.ca/Assets/assets/Performance+Indicators+2007+Summary.pdf>

These performance indicators should be disclosed in a standard annual report similar to that of other major Ontario universities. The indicators should focus on both financial and non-financial metrics associated with research and teaching excellence, including student/faculty ratios, national awards, library holdings, funding rates, etc. This annual report should be separate from mandated financial reporting and should be presented on a single web page under the Provost's Office.

2. That the University's highest immediate priority should be funding faculty renewal, ensuring that all Faculties of the University have the tenured and tenure-track faculty to provide a high quality education to McMaster's greatly expanded undergraduate population and proper supervision to an increasing number of graduate students. The *Refining Directions* target of 19:1 undergraduate student to faculty ratio should be taken seriously as should the target that 20% of overall enrolment should be graduate students (Figure 8).
3. Greater responsibility for planning and monitoring capital expenditures should be shared by the Board and the University Planning Committee. Specifically, the responsibility for monitoring capital cash flow should be undertaken jointly by the Budget Committee of UPC and by the Finance and Planning & Building Committees of the Board.
4. In the future, physical infrastructure projects should not be started until all funding is guaranteed, all costs fully and appropriately budgeted, and funds have been set aside to cover the operation of the project when it is finished. Additional debt should only be used to finance new construction that is self-funding, such as student residences or parking.

Figure 8
Full-Time Masters and Doctoral Students as a Proportion of
Total Full-Time Student Enrolment, 2005/06



Source: G13 Data Exchange

5. A review should be conducted of the expansion of the staff of the central administration, and attention should be paid to how economies of scale and better technology can reduce administrative costs. Critical audits should be performed on recent administrative programs, for example the MacVIP initiative.

6. The Annual Financial Report should show spending on key functions of the University, e.g. academic function, administrative function and certain parts of it, such as legal fees, physical infrastructure and so forth, compared with peer institutions. Further, these figures, particularly administrative items, such as legal fees and settlements, should be presented in segmented form by Faculty or administrative department to promote transparency and accountability within the University.

Appendix

I: Percent Spent on Academic Salaries at Ontario Universities

UNIVERSITY	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
BROCK	35.20%	34.10%	35.20%	33.30%	32.20%	31.90%
CARLETON	33.00%	34.30%	31.90%	30.60%	30.40%	30.30%
GUELPH	29.60%	30.30%	28.60%	28.60%	30.50%	31.80%
LAKEHEAD	35.40%	39.90%	40.10%	35.50%	35.50%	36.60%
LAURENTIAN	39.50%	40.90%	39.80%	39.50%	39.70%	39.90%
ALGOMA	40.60%	37.90%	35.90%	38.10%	35.90%	31.80%
HEARST	34.90%	37.20%	34.50%	35.00%	37.40%	35.70%
MCMASTER	32.60%	30.60%	24.40%	25.00%	24.60%	22.60%
NIPISSING	35.50%	35.70%	33.40%	34.00%	35.10%	35.70%
OTTAWA	29.20%	29.80%	28.10%	26.90%	27.00%	25.30%
QUEEN'S	26.90%	27.90%	27.70%	28.50%	29.40%	29.80%
RYERSON	25.70%	26.20%	25.50%	23.30%	23.20%	21.20%
TORONTO	30.70%	28.90%	27.80%	27.00%	25.80%	25.80%
TRENT	35.20%	36.00%	35.10%	35.80%	37.00%	37.00%
WATERLOO	31.40%	31.80%	30.00%	30.10%	29.50%	29.20%
WESTERN	29.80%	32.20%	31.60%	31.20%	37.60%	36.60%
W.L.U.	37.60%	37.70%	36.70%	35.80%	35.50%	36.90%
WINDSOR	29.70%	29.00%	29.60%	28.50%	31.10%	31.00%
YORK	31.30%	31.80%	30.50%	29.30%	29.60%	29.80%
System Average	30.80%	31.00%	29.50%	28.90%	29.30%	28.80%

Source: COU-COFO Financial Report of Ontario Universities

2: Selected McMaster University Major Building Projects, 2000-2008

Capital Project	Date Approved	Original Budget	Date Revised	Revised Budget	Funding Source
#681 New Residence & Dining Facility	June 15, 2000	\$21 million	October 15, 2001 April 25, 2002 (Internal Loan)	\$26,300,000 \$17,300,000	Bank Financing
#684 Manufacturing Research Institute	April 25, 2002	\$3,114,318	April 23, 2003	\$3,257,307	SuperBuild \$351,276; CFI \$700,000 Dept \$2,017,451; Other \$45,591 Unknown \$142,989
#690 E-Commerce Annex DSB	October 19, 2000	\$3,424,000	October 25, 2001	\$4,457,600	Dept \$272,517; Private - \$1.5 mil SuperBuild-\$910,333; ORDCF \$674,619 Unknown \$1,100,131
#722 Misc Projects re Residence Bldg	April 25, 2002	\$1,534,000	June 12, 2003	\$1,834,000	Unknown \$1,834,000
#724 Addition to Tandem Accelerator	37055	\$1.1 million	December 13, 2001	\$1.9 million	ORDCF \$100,000; CFI \$394,231 Mac Cap \$98,559; Dept \$1,057,210 Unknown \$250,000
#725 ET Clark Chiller Expansion	October 19, 2000	\$11.0 million	October 31, 2002	\$13,715,086	Unknown \$13,715,086
#726 Health Science Expansio	37341	\$57.4 million	April 25, 2002	\$60.5 million	CFI \$16.1 mil; HHSC \$7.8 mil; SuperBuild \$3,994,000; Bond Proceeds - \$32,528,000
C for Molecular Medicine			April 25, 2002 April 24, 2003	\$28,280,854 \$28,659,754	ORDCF \$500,000; CFI \$15,660,428; Private \$1,500,000; Other \$395,755 Unknown \$10,603,571
Incubator/Hosp Space			April 25, 2002 April 24, 2003	\$11.8 million \$12,189,232	Other \$8,711,623; Unknown \$3,477,609
Classrooms			April 25, 2002 April 24, 2003	\$10,402,000 \$17,310,137	SuperBuild \$15,374,251 Unknown \$1,935,886
FHS Academic			April 25, 2002 April 24, 2003	\$10 million \$12,836,123	Unknown \$12,836,123
			October 31, 2002	\$71 million	Additional 10.5 million: \$9.2 million - Bond proceeds; \$1.3 unknown

Capital Project	Date Approved	Original Budget	Date Revised	Revised Budget	Funding Source
#729 3 rd fl GSB	March 22, 2001	\$912,066	April 23, 2003	\$961,888	SuperBuild \$912,066; Dept \$49,822
#761 ITB Building Expansion - T16 Renovations	December 13, 2001	\$7.5 million	April 25, 2002	\$8.6 million	SuperBuild \$3.7 million; CFI \$787,076; Dept \$4,112,924
MUMC Life Safety Systems	October 19, 2000	\$3,690,000 (Mac share)	October 31, 2002 reported March 2008	\$6,594,000 (Mac share) \$6,200,000 (Mac share)	Unknown: \$6.2 million
#830 Stadium	June 16, 2005	12 million	February 16, 2006 December 14, 2006 reported March 2008	\$13 million \$22 million TOTAL: \$34.5 mil	Private \$19.4 million to be funded by donations & grants; parking fees & levy
Underground Parking	December 15, 2005	\$10.5 million	reported March 2008	TOTAL: \$34.5 mil	
#844 BSB & GS Renovations	February 26, 2004	\$30 million	reported June 2008	\$43.6 million	Capital Fund \$17,580,464 MTCU \$8,763,390 MUSC Principal Repayments - \$3,656,146
# 875 Building Complex for Faculties of Eng, Sci, & HSC - Phase I	December 15, 2005	\$8.6 million	December 14, 2006	\$38 million	Grad Expansion \$12 mil; F/R \$10.9 mil Fac of Eng \$5.0 mil; CFI \$1.6 mil Private \$7.0 mil; University \$1.5 mil

Source: Based on a review of the Minutes of the Board of Governors, 2000-08.



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Post-secondary system needs fixing

ARATI SHARMA

The Hamilton Spectator

(Apr 23, 2008)

You can't get into the elective course you want. There are no seats left in your lecture theatre, so you sit at the back of the classroom. You can't see or hear your professor, and by looking at the e-mail address on the syllabus, you know she's a sessional who doesn't even work at McMaster.

You go through your class syllabuses only to realize all your mid-terms and essays are at the same time. Just another semester at one of Ontario's top universities.

The time comes to think about your future. You start to look for jobs only to find out that an undergraduate degree is just the basic requirement. You start to have panic attacks and realize a master's is the new bachelor's.

You apply to graduate schools by filling out pages and pages with "why you are the best candidate for this program." You are required to have references and you think back to the professors with whom you forged relationships.

Wait, most of them are gone because they were never permanent employees anyway. Or out of the 200 people in the class, they could only talk to 10 students after class and, honestly, you gave up.

The hunt begins and you finally find a professor who may have answered a couple questions about your essay mark. She is hesitant, but in to the desperation in your voice.

In the current discussion concerning enrolment numbers in Ontario and the consequent budget cutbacks in universities across the province the victims of university deficits are not highlighted. Students across the province are fed up with courses not being offered, part-time faculty being cut and many front-line services reducing hours.

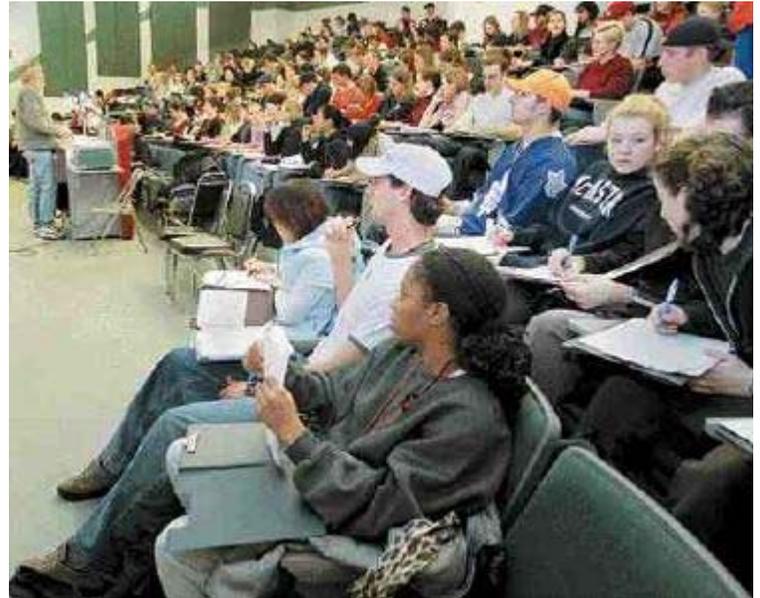
Today's undergraduate classes are astronomically larger, and at the undergraduate level, faculty-student ratios are soaring.

There are a few reasons why all this is happening and why students aren't getting their money's worth.

Let's begin with high schools and the ever-changing curriculum. New research tells Canadians that we won't be able to compete in the global economy; that more than 70 per cent of the "careers" left in Canada will require some form of post-secondary and, most likely, postgraduate degrees.

Parents become scared, and by scared I mean they call and harass high school guidance departments. Guidance councillors then fill students with fear and angst about their futures. Sixteen-year olds must pick if they want to enter university, college or apprenticeship programs and they want to pursue science, math, humanities or social sciences. Education turns into a commodity.

Enter university. With the demand for post-secondary education in this province, Ontario universities have no space left for students. They don't have enough funds in the budget to keep tenured and associate professors teaching undergraduates, while trying to offer more graduate spots to fill the demand.



Hamilton Spectator File Photo

Because of their budget deficits, they are cutting sessionals and part-time instructors, the ones who actually teach at the undergraduate level.

How can professors be prepared for younger students coming out of high school who are maybe not as prepared as they should be? How do they "train" professors to teach, especially new instructors and teaching assistants?

Where is the balance between research and teaching and learning? How do they find that balance with continued pressure to be Canada's leading research institution, so they can get enough donors to keep the campus running?

Where can they get more funding to provide students with a holistic learning experience?

Enter the provincial government. Funding for post-secondary education in Ontario has been a priority of the Liberals and has been greatly appreciated. But targeted funding for infrastructure isn't going to balance the books at our institutions.

Ontario's numbers are clear: Compared with our peers in other provinces and jurisdictions, we have the highest student-faculty ratio at 2 and we're significantly underfunded in per-student operating grants. Ontario universities are bursting at their seams and the quality of the student experience is being compromised at every level.

Education's major competitors for funding are health care and anti-poverty efforts. But where are these trained medical professionals coming from if they can't get through high school or university? Where are Canadian business leaders coming from if they can't get the funds from OSAP or the Canada Student Loans Program? How can Canada compete with innovative technology if we aren't funding education?

The government wants to tackle poverty in Ontario. How can those high school students who come from low-income homes think about a form of post-secondary education when they have to drop out and start working to pay rent or put food on the table to help out their parents?

The system is broken.

I know I'm being negative, so I'm going to give students some hope before they all drop out and start working for call centres in India.

There are groups within our institutions and in the province that recognize these challenges. There are student groups out there providing educated solutions to the government. They write submissions day and night pleading for them to fix the system.

Faculty members do what they do best: provide us with research and data to face the challenges of today's post-secondary education sector.

But the time has come to find a solution to our post-secondary education system.

The provincial and federal governments need to come together with institutions, student groups and faculty associations and find a pan-Canadian solution to education to ensure the quality, accessibility, affordability and accountability of the entire sector.

The system is broken. Fix it.

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