Academic Matters

THE JOURNAL OF HIGHER EDUCATION
LA REVUE D'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR

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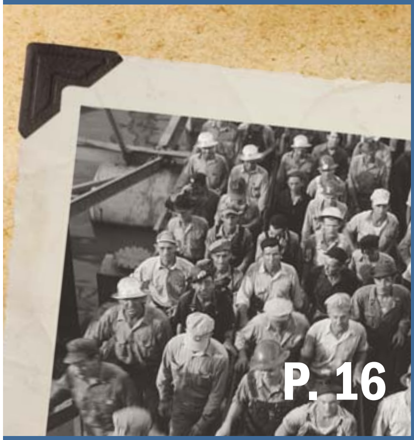

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Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

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Academic Matters is published three times a year by OCUFA, and is received by 24,000 professors, academic librarians and others interested in higher education issues across Canada. The journal explores issues of relevance to higher education in Ontario, other provinces in Canada, and globally. It is intended to be a forum for thoughtful and thought-provoking, original and engaging discussion of current trends in post secondary education and consideration of academe's future direction.

Readers are encouraged to contribute their views, ideas and talents. Letters to the editor (maximum 250 words) are welcome and may be edited for length. To provide an article or artwork for Academic Matters, please send your query to Editor-in-Chief Mark Rosenfeld at mrosenfeld@ocufa.on.ca.

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Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Graduate students are often the unsung heroes of academia and their contribution to excellent research and teaching cannot be overstated. Within their ranks are many international students wrestling with both the usual academic challenges and many cultural ones as well. This was brilliantly outlined in Fenying Xu's article, "Cross-cultural Challenges in Teaching International Graduate Students" (October/November 2008).

With so little research in this area of academia, it was especially refreshing to read a research based account focusing on the topic of international students coping with the challenges of graduate level study in Western universities.

My colleagues and I were all excited to hear of Dr. Xu's work and look forward to more.

Allan English, Centre for Intercultural Communication, University of British Columbia Continuing Studies

Dear Editor:

Fengying Xu's article "Cross-cultural challenges in teaching international graduate students" (October-November 2008) thoroughly described the problems encountered by international students. She did not discuss, however, what I believe to be the most challenging issue: the required identity shift from struggling writer and researcher to one who is capable.

I began considering this notion during my first year of studies when it became apparent some of my international colleagues were experiencing difficulties. With the support of my supervisor, I started a weekly tutorial session for international students and visiting scholars. What began as an opportunity for me to volunteer quickly morphed into a remarkable learning experience. Our group is now in its second year and we number six. I believe I am doing the greatest amount of learning. I am grateful for an environment where I can consider my identity as an educator, an ESL teacher, and a member of the community. It has been my fortune to observe group members as they tentatively, and now with greater confidence, share stories of their research and their experiences. In doing so, they begin to see themselves as capable scholars.

Sandra Jack-Malik, Ph.D student, Department of Elementary Education, University of Alberta

Dear Editor:

The new Academic Matters website looks terrific! Congratulations! This will surely prove to be a winner and a site that contains important articles and information for myriad educational and intellectual audiences, and can now be accessed far and wide.

Paul Stortz, Canadian Studies, Faculty of Communication and Culture, University of Calgary

Dear Editor:

I'm a little behind in my reading, but just finished your fabulous April-May 2008 issue on The Green University, which I much enjoyed. In that vein, might I suggest that Academic Matters consider upping its post-consumer recycled paper content and ensuring the level of paper thickness and glossiness fits the goals of greening our operations?

Cynthia van Ginkel, Business Development Manager, BCIT School of Computing and Academic Studies

University rankings generate tremendous discussion and debate about their benefits and detriments to university reputations. David Scott reviews some of the methodological problems with rankings, the complicity of universities in promoting questionable results, and the potential for future reform.

University rankings as a marketing tool: READERS BEWARE

By David Scott

The shrill cries of "We're number one, we're number one!" ring out every autumn across Canadian university campuses. Normally the reserve of triumphant varsity teams, this wild jubilation is, more than ever, caused by overexcited university administrators celebrating success in university rankings.

Love them or hate them—usually depending on an institution's faring—university rankings are a phenomenon that pronounce on the quality of the academic and student experience around the globe. According to Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Higher Education Policy , more than 30 nations now engage in some form of rankings that are regularly published.

In any discussion of university marketing efforts, the importance of university rankings cannot be overlooked or underestimated. Rankings have a distinct impact on the reputation of universities, and a university's reputation influences crucial audiences, such as prospective students, faculty, donors, alumni, and even governments.

Yet, are university rankings credible? Is it possible to describe the state of a university by one single number? The intuitive and rational response is "No." Universities are dynamic and complex organizations that cannot be reduced to a single score for quality in teaching, research, and learning enterprises.

There is a tremendous amount of work providing substantive critiques of university rankings. In sum, university

Universities are dynamic and complex organizations that cannot be reduced a single score for quality in teaching, research, and learning enterprises.

rankings are criticized for the questionable relevance of measurements chosen, the methods by which data are collected, the scoring of each measurement, and the subjective weighting given to each measurement that aggregate to a final score.

Despite criticism over their methodology, university rankings thrive and create a public pronouncement on the perceived quality of an institution. For university marketers, rankings provide a framework for either a positive discussion point about a university, or an embarrassing black spot that must be endured or overcome.

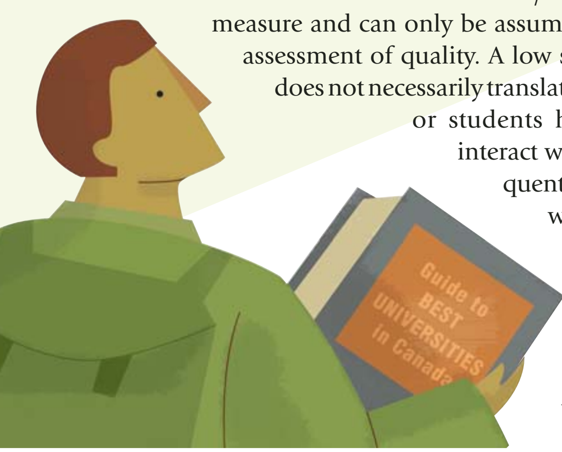
Rankings narrow the discussion about a university, when marketing efforts should be focussed instead on developing a far ranging understanding of what the university offers through its distinct mission. York University's Chief Marketing Officer Richard Fisher sums up the objective for university marketers as: "What branding can do for a university is differentiate it and elevate it, creating a destination instead of a commodity."

And yet, university rankings are purposefully designed to create a commoditized view of universities by sustaining the impression that simple comparisons among institutions can be made in a like-for-like manner.

To understand the limitations of university rankings, it is informative to look at two examples: first, how a seemingly important measurement can be, and is, distorted within university rankings; and second, how the widespread use of opinion research within rankings provide data that have limited credibility.

Student/faculty ratios are one of most common measures of quality in rankings. The ratios are used primarily as a measure of the quality of the student experience.

What is clear is that a student/faculty ratio is an input measure and can only be assumed as a proxy for an assessment of quality. A low student/faculty ratio does not necessarily translate into smaller classes or students having a chance to interact with faculty more frequently than at institutions with higher ratios. Furthermore, the institutional measure is an aggregation from programs across the university and will not necessarily reflect the experience of each department, discipline, or even an undergraduate as compared with a graduate experience.



Even after the limits of using student/faculty ratios are set aside, one would assume that the actual counting of faculty and students would be easy enough, but this is not the case. The University of Toronto has published an online critique of student/faculty ratios wherein the challenge of accurately and consistently counting students and faculty are exposed.

The key challenge appears to be the use and interpretation of common definitions. When counting students, should an institution only count registered students pursuing degrees? Or is it more meaningful for the institution to count individuals pursuing diplomas and certificates, those taking continuing education courses, or even postgraduate medical trainees?

Counting faculty is even more problematic. Again, as the Toronto critique points out, there are many different categories of academic appointments and many ways to count them. Faculty can be categorized by appointment status (e.g. tenure-stream, teaching-stream, short-term contract, adjunct), by rank (e.g. assistant, associate, and full professors), by time commitment (full-time, part-time), by job description (e.g. research scientists, clinical faculty), or by salary source (university or affiliated institution).

As one looks at the range of academic appointments, the challenge of assessing and counting each individual faculty member's contribution to teaching and learning becomes daunting, if not impossible.

Turning to one example, one sees these definitional challenges in the *Times Higher Education Supplement (THES)* "World University Rankings" in how it reports student/faculty ratios and the wide disparity in results if consistent definitions and interpretations are not used by institutions.

The 2008 THES rankings contain three Canadian universities in the top 100 worldwide: McGill (20), University of British Columbia (34), and University of Toronto (41). But a comparison of student/faculty ratios among these three schools is quite surprising. McGill has a student/faculty ratio of 6.0, compared to UBC's 9.8 and Toronto's 27.5. For comparison purposes it has been necessary to use published headcounts as THES does not provide full-time equivalent information for all universities

Obviously, Toronto and McGill used significantly different interpretations, which produced a result that shows McGill employing more than four-and-a-half times the faculty per student than Toronto. This result is simply not credible. It clearly demonstrates that the lack of common interpretations—or any auditing and vetting by the THES editors—has reduced the value of published student/faculty ratios within the THES to virtual meaninglessness.

To underscore the impact of definitions, these same three institutions have published student/faculty ratios using the *Maclean's* methodology. McGill's ratio increases its THES result by 176 per cent to reach 16.6, UBC moves up to 16, and Toronto improves to 24.9.

The point of the above is not to ascertain a superior method of evaluating student/faculty ratios. Rather, it is meant to caution that different approaches to definitions, assumptions, and collection methods can contribute to a range of results that can make a large, urban university look like it rivals the class sizes at Aristotle's Lyceum.

Many university rankings also employ opinion surveys. These surveys are usually given significant weight in the overall ranking score. For example, the THES provides a weighting of 40 per cent to its academic peer review and an additional 10 per cent to its employer survey.

It is evident that the THES goes to great lengths to build a robust academic survey that prevents the selection of a home institution and also weeds out any discipline bias in the event that an over-sampling of natural scientists from Australasia occurs. Furthermore, there are questions designed to corral respondents into the most appropriate academic sphere, so that engineers are responding to their knowledge of engineering schools rather than schools with Slavic language programs. Yet, it is important to point out that this survey screen is self-selecting. There are no benchmarks—it relies solely on how the respondent views their individual knowledge.

And yet, even after screening respondents for discipline and regional appropriateness, the survey still sets out a challenging task when it asks respondent to assess up to 10 other regional universities. By way of example, let us assume that a respondent has identified that they have regional knowledge of Canada and that they select themselves as having broad knowledge in the arts and humanities with specific subject area knowledge in history and French.

The respondent will then be provided with a list of 46 Canadian universities and be asked to select up to 10 universities the respondent regards as producing the best research in the arts and humanities.

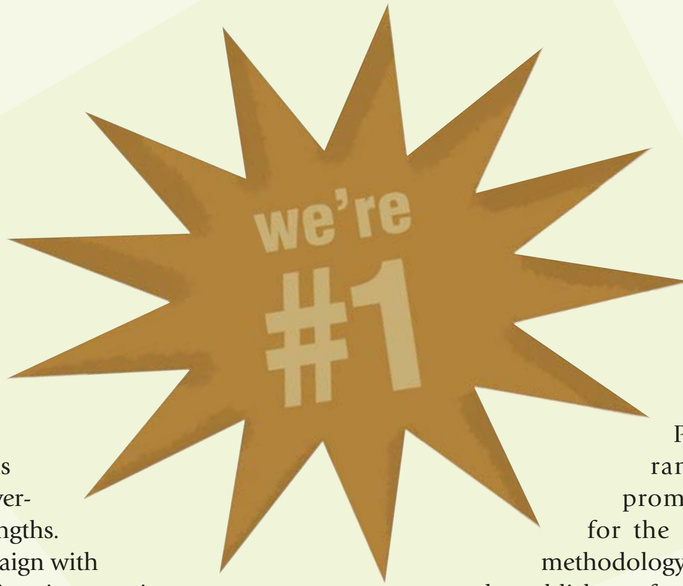
The survey provides no criteria for how one defines "best research." That interpretation is left to the individual respondent, which, of course, undermines the consistency behind how the question is answered. Furthermore, the survey requires no consistency of knowledge that the respondent has for each of the selections. At best, respondents will be in a position to assess the contributions of academics at other universities in a shared discipline. Yet, how can that relatively narrow assessment be extrapolated to pronounce on the quality of a department, or a school, or the overall capabilities of the institution to deliver a robust research environment?

The above two examples are presented not as a decisive methodological critique of rankings—far from it. Rather, they are meant to demonstrate that a high degree of caution should meet any claim of rankings as a credible source of objective and consistent information to evaluate institutions.

One would assume that the methodological problems of university rankings would lead to a great degree of resistance from universities. Although many university presidents take pains to distance themselves from rankings, there is still a great deal of effort on the part of universities to use rankings as marketing platforms.

Many universities have implicitly endorsed rankings by trumpeting rankings results through press releases and other communications vehicles, such as letters to alumni. Some universities have adopted rankings results into broader awareness-building campaigns. One such institution is the University of Guelph, where an aggressive print advertisement campaign has been underway for several years to raise awareness of the institution.

According to Guelph's director of public affairs and communications, Chuck Cunningham, the campaign was designed to raise awareness among influencers, such as business leaders, about the university's research and teaching strengths. Cunningham credits the campaign with boosting awareness of the university, as evidenced by several factors, including increased applications.



Guelph's campaign included ads highlighting the university's number one ranking among comprehensive universities in Maclean's magazine. Interestingly, Guelph was undeterred when it fell out of first place in the Macleans rankings. The university changed its advertising copy to cite instead a ranking produced by Research InfoSource Inc. which ranked Guelph first in research among comprehensive universities. Research InfoSource restricts its measures to financial inputs and research outputs, and is, therefore, quite different than *Maclean's.* Clearly, the imperative for Guelph was to ensure that it could claim a number one rank to mesh with the thrust of its advertising.

Even if a university wished to, it is difficult to ignore rankings, as they appear to influence some segments of students. According to a U.S. study, the year after a school fell in the rankings, the percentage of the applicants it accepted increased, but it received fewer acceptances from its admitted students. Furthermore, its entering students' SAT scores fell.

The impact of rankings has led to decisions at universities specifically designed to improve rankings performance. Some universities discount tuition and boost financial aid to attract better students, with the aim of improving rankings scores that favour higher entering grade point averages. Other universities create two-tier MBA and law programs so that students with low test scores are placed into part-time programs, while those with high scores are enrolled in full-time programs that are counted in certain rankings.

Such efforts that could disadvantage students are troubling and have inspired new inquiries. The Institute for Higher Education Policy has sponsored a series of research projects to assess the impact rankings have on university decision-making among American schools.

Furthermore, efforts are underway to try to improve and refine rankings. In 2006, the International Rankings Expert Group undertook to develop the Berlin Principles—a set of good ranking practices that will promote greater accountability for the quality of data collection, methodology, and dissemination among the publishers of university rankings.

While this attempt to drive greater accountability and transparency for university rankings might be laudable, there are questions as to its probable success.

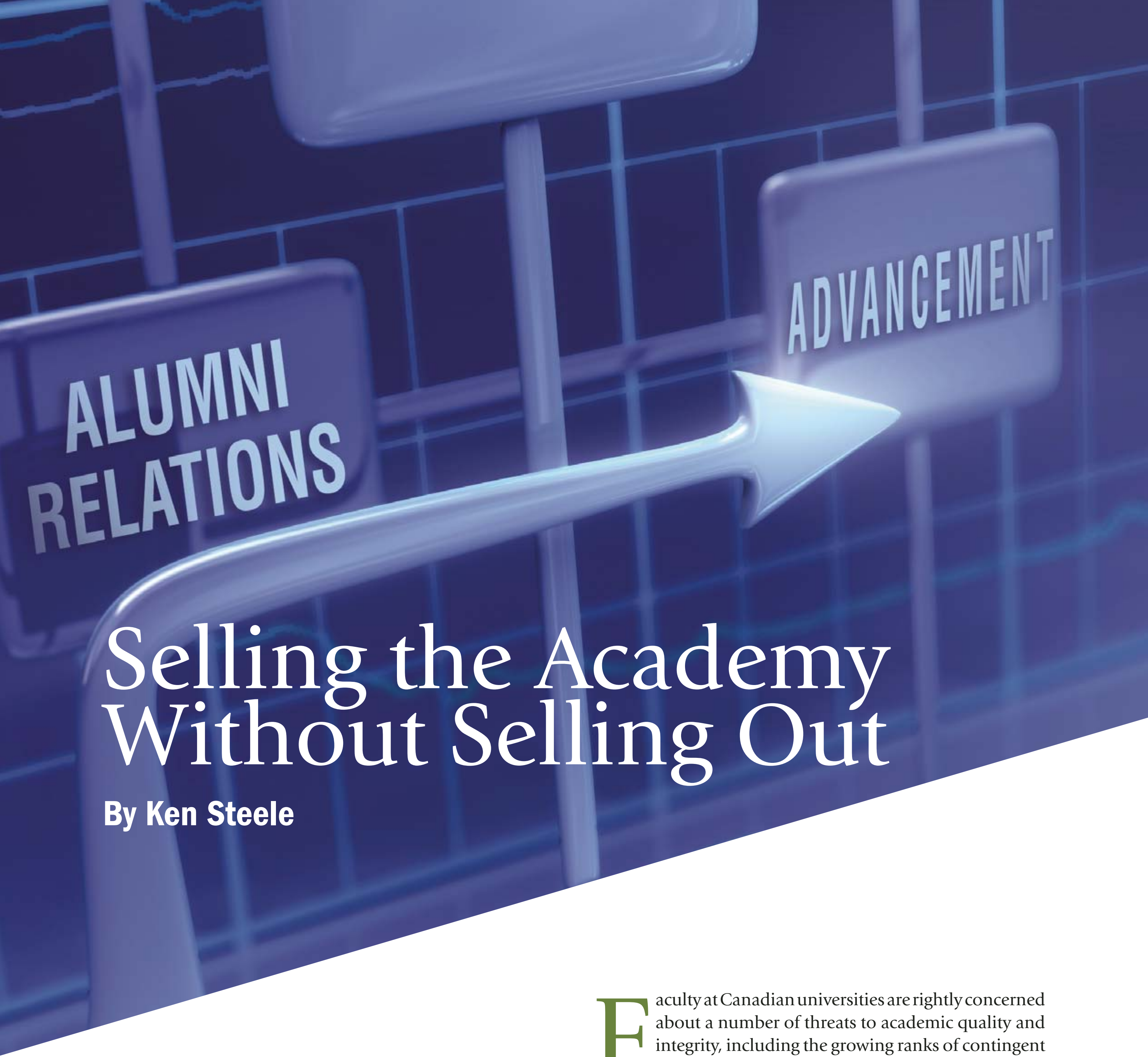
First, many rankings publications are conducted by private sector organizations that are motivated to sell copies of—and sell advertising within—their rankings issues. It is doubtful that a Canadian magazine like *Maclean's* will be motivated to ensure its publication meets criteria established by an international body—especially if the criteria seek to dilute the view of universities as commodities that can be evaluated in a simple manner.

Second, the 16 Berlin Principles are not prescriptive. The principles seek to motivate rankings' publishers to pursue greater clarity and rigour in the construction of rankings. The Berlin Principles do not set out clear guidelines on appropriate measures, collection methods, or data aggregation from which one could decisively criticize a particular ranking.

Although a great deal of criticism has been, and will continue to be, levelled at rankings, it is highly doubtful they will be leaving the stage soon. University rankings are big business for the private sector publishers, who sell millions of copies of their respective issues and guidebooks. So long as a demand from prospective students exists, university rankings will be published. In addition, the Faustian bargain that many universities have made adds a veneer of legitimacy to many rankings that is probably unwarranted.

In the end, it comes down to the ultimate "consumer" of rankings, the prospective student, to assess what is being measured and whether those elements are of any relevance to her or his individual needs, values, and goals. AM

David Scott is a member of the Advisory Committee to Academic Matters *and an unranked communications consultant living in Toronto.*



Selling the Academy Without Selling Out

By Ken Steele

Marketing expert Ken Steele argues that university marketing, far from dumbing down the university mission, can have the opposite effect, raising entrance averages and enhancing institutional selectivity.

Faculty at Canadian universities are rightly concerned about a number of threats to academic quality and integrity, including the growing ranks of contingent faculty, larger class sizes, corporate research sponsorship, grade inflation, and a "new managerialism"[1] on campus. University marketing, however, should not be one of them. For decades now, institutional "marketers" have been among the most dedicated professionals on campus, working in a range of offices from student recruitment, high school liaison, and public affairs, to advancement and alumni relations. These marketers aim to support academic quality and advance the purposes of the institution and its faculty. They seek to raise public awareness and enhance the reputation of the institution, attract more (or more qualified) applicants, and position the institution as worthy of public, corporate, and philanthropic support. Functionally and teleologically, university marketing is a staunch ally of faculty.

Of course, in practice this alliance is often strained, largely because of mistrust and misunderstanding. As a lapsed academic who has now spent more than a dozen years in education-related marketing, I appreciate and respect the virtues of both worlds and believe it is possible to maintain a kind of cultural bilingualism and bridge what can sometimes be two solitudes on campus.

The impetus to market universities

University education used to sell itself. The past five decades saw unprecedented growth in Canadian universities, thanks to baby boomer demographics, an increasingly knowledge-based economy, and rising participation rates. New institutions were established, and existing institutions expanded to meet steadily growing demand. Entrance requirements inched upwards as leading institutions could be more and more selective in admissions, and new applied and professional programs were introduced to meet the objectives of undergraduates uninterested in pursuing scholarly careers. The domestic supply of new undergraduates was also augmented through international recruitment, particularly from China and India.

The enrolment boom for most Canadian universities is already over. Overall post-secondary enrolment by traditional-aged students in Canada is projected to decline by more than 100,000 between 2012 and 2026.[2] Although the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada predicts stable undergraduate enrolment at Canadian universities, it assumes strong participation rates. Moreover, some of this university enrolment may well come at the expense of Canada's community colleges. More significantly, national projections disguise increasing regional disparities. In major urban centres such as Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver, immigration is leading to surging youth populations. Our studies have demonstrated, however, that new Canadians and first-generation Canadians are significantly less interested in leaving their parents to attend university away from home. For cultural and financial reasons, they are much less mobile students. In contrast, some universities in the Atlantic provinces, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia are already feeling the enrolment pinch, as those regions of the country begin what is projected to be a precipitous slide of as much as 35 per cent in their youth cohorts by 2026.[3] Even in northern Ontario youth cohorts are shrinking rapidly. The Lakehead Public School Board has closed more than half its schools in recent years. It hardly seems coincidental that Lakehead University has become one of the country's more daring and aggressive marketers.

Despite the demographic challenges facing many universities, none wants to contemplate downsizing. Instead, institutions investigate student engagement and retention strategies, strategic enrolment management, distance education offerings, and non-traditional markets. Many of these strategies have major implications for student support services and affect the academic quality of students and classes. Some of these strategies have a limited lifespan as many overseas markets establish their own universities at a staggering rate. The election of Barack Obama will make the U.S. a more attractive destination for international students again, and

Rather than shifting campus culture to embrace mainstream marketing, it is far easier, and ultimately more productive, for marketers to transform themselves and their discipline, to listen attentively, rethink their approaches, and build rapport on common ground.

distance education markets are dominated by multi-billion-dollar corporations like Apollo Group (parent of the University of Phoenix and Meritus University).

Most Canadian universities are therefore broadening their recruitment efforts beyond their traditional catchment areas, to keep classrooms full and faculty employed. Virtually every regional university now seeks to recruit students nationally, and our national universities are jockeying for position as Canada's *international* universities. Canada's few youth demographic "hot spots" have attracted a student recruitment feeding frenzy, from university fairs and mass media advertising campaigns, to the construction of satellite campuses and new universities to serve these growing markets. With about 100 universities across Canada and thousands in the U.S. and overseas competing for a diminishing pool of applicants, it is becoming more challenging for university marketers to cut through the clutter and establish a memorable position in the higher education landscape. Some have opted to take the "hard-sell" approach.

Unseemly competitiveness?

In recent years, Ontario has seen a number of controversial, aggressive advertising campaigns for postsecondary institutions.[4] In spring 2004, York University launched a "subway domination" campaign at the St. George subway stop, just coincidentally at the doorstep of the University of Toronto. In August 2006, Lakehead University made international headlines with its very low-budget "Yale Shmale" campaign, consisting of a few hundred posters in downtown Toronto featuring an unflattering photograph of U.S. president George Bush and the subhead, "Graduating from an Ivy League university doesn't necessarily mean you're smart." Just last fall, newly minted Algoma University launched an even more blatant negative ad campaign targeting "Colossal U," complete with a mock booth at the Ontario Universities' Fair and a fictitious website, with menu options for "Current Sheep," "Prospective Sheep," "Shepherds", and "Mutton." For some institutions, collegiality has given way to bare-knuckled competitiveness.

Whether these aggressive ad campaigns are effective or appropriate is a controversial question. Lakehead's student council and faculty union both publicly denounced the "Yale Shmale" campaign as tasteless and repugnant. Yale, to its credit, declined comment, but the campaign sparked a firestorm of international media attention worth millions of dollars. Something about the negative campaign approach smacks of desperation. Yet it is difficult to argue with the results. Within a single month, Lakehead had logged almost 83,000 hits to its recruitment website, and more than 1,100 prospective students entered the contest to win a SmartCar. Although market studies suggest that few of the target audience recall the campaign, by spring it was clear that applications to Lakehead had increased noticeably.

Evidently, Lakehead and Algoma share the belief that desperate times call for desperate measures. As a marketer, I emphasize to university clients that negative campaigns, particularly in Canada, run the risk of backfiring and damaging institutional reputations in the long term. The more positive and effective long-term strategies involve developing a distinctive, credible, and compelling institutional position, such as the University of Waterloo's strong association with engineering and technology, or the University of Western Ontario's promise of "Canada's best undergraduate student experience." Competitive differentiation is more positive than competitive denigration, although it can seem just as simplistic and narrow-minded to faculty, who know their institutions in all their complexity.

A zero-sum game

As a taxpayer, I share faculty concerns that our universities are being forced to divert much-needed funds into a marketing arms race, whereby they compete with each other—and with universities worldwide—in an increasingly cluttered and fragmented media landscape. There are limited numbers of bright students, top-notch faculty, and wealthy philanthropists to go around. The traditional undergraduate market in most regions of the country will only shrink in the decades ahead, and non-traditional markets may be particularly

receptive to non-traditional institutions, such as accelerated private colleges, online multinationals, open courseware, and open source learning. Few provincial governments, unlike public school boards, are willing to make the politically unpopular decisions to close or relocate postsecondary institutions.

Those concerned about the growing profile of university marketing can take some solace from the fact that Canadian institutions invest nowhere near as much in recruitment marketing as their American counterparts. A 2007 study found that public universities in the U.S. spent an average $398 to recruit each student and that private universities spent a staggering average $1,941 per student.[5] If universities were commercial enterprises, like Apollo Group, they might well spend as much as 15 per cent of their total annual operating budget on marketing. (The University of Phoenix spends about a *half-billion* dollars annually on marketing, out of $4 billion in tuition revenues.) With regulated tuitions and limited resources, no public university in Canada will market at that scale in the foreseeable future.

Marketing beyond the age of advertising

For those uncomfortable with university marketing, another encouraging trend is a steady transition away from expensive and inefficient print materials and mass-media advertising campaigns towards more sophisticated and efficient reputation management tools, including online marketing, media relations, social media, viral marketing, ambassador programs, and other forms of enhanced word of mouth. Printed viewbooks are becoming slimmer, and printed course calendars are moving online. It will always be vital to distill the mission, values, and distinctive essence of a university and to express it in a compelling, credible way (what marketers understand as branding), but universities are ideally suited to make use of alternative channels to communicate that brand and to engage with their audiences. Universities generate newsworthy science, political, and human interest stories daily, and many have become masterful at media relations. Universities have literally an army of students, faculty, staff, and alumni ready, and in most cases eager, to spread positive word of mouth about their institution. Prospective students are the one demographic that is 100 per cent online and extremely active in social networks. University websites are highly-trafficked hubs through which rich audiovisual messages can be shared with interested stakeholders.

Academic purists and skinflint taxpayers alike can take comfort from the likelihood that universities will increasingly use subtle, sophisticated, and intelligent communication channels, steering away from traditional mass-market advertising. Campus marketers are increasingly focused on encouraging and supporting enthusiastic students to blog, post YouTube videos, connect on Facebook, and spread the word about their campus experience. Interested faculty will be assisted to promote their research, podcast their lectures, reach out to high school teachers and students, and be available for media commentary and interviews—becoming public intellectuals in an era of new technologies.

Campus marketers need to reinvent themselves

In my experience, when misunderstandings and mistrust arise between university faculty and campus marketers, they usually spring from negative preconceptions about marketing, cultural misunderstandings, or the lack of a common language or conceptual framework for discussing the operations of the institution. Many universities are now hiring marketing expertise from the private sector, often from knowledge-based industries like high technology or information systems, and the two environments could not be more dissimilar. Campus marketers need to recognize that common marketing terminology—"branding", "targeting", "product", and "competitor", to name a few examples—is emotionally loaded and intellectually suspect in academic circles. Campus marketers also have to accept the fact that

they influence only one of the traditional "four Ps" of marketing: Promotion. They can expect to have little input on Price (tuition, scholarships, and bursaries), Product (program offerings), or Place (campus master plans and distance education offerings).

Universities are highly complex communities of intelligent and vocal stakeholders in which decentralized authority and academic autonomy are cherished principles. A campus marketer who hopes to transform attitudes throughout the institution will face immense challenges. Rather than shifting campus culture to embrace mainstream marketing, it is far easier, and ultimately more productive, for marketers to transform themselves and their discipline, to listen attentively, rethink their approaches, and build rapport on common ground. If campus marketers learn to bend a little, faculty will come to understand and support their efforts.

Faculty need to understand branding

Academic training and the academic mindset teaches critical thought, cherishes complexity and consensus, and abhors oversimplification. University faculty often identify with their institutions and, consequently, may dislike institutional marketing that does not reflect the way they see themselves or want to be seen. Nonetheless, I urge faculty to understand that effective marketing brings great value to a university. It can achieve broader public awareness and understanding of the research and scholarship conducted on campus. It can differentiate an institution's mission and values from its peers, thus attracting faculty and students who will cherish the institution and advance its success. Ethical marketing does not fabricate untruths, but it does absolutely require the distillation of the essence of the institution—a grand oversimplification—in order to cut through the media clutter and communicate meaningfully with audiences. Effective university marketing must identify what is credible, compelling, and truly distinctive about an institution, and express that kernel of truth creatively in language that resonates with the target audience—usually high school seniors.

Faculty, alumni, and current students should remember that in most cases they are *not* the target audience of university marketing efforts. Effective recruitment marketing will often appear to be a dumbing down of the academy, but if it attracts more—and more higher-achieving—applicants, it will actually have the opposite effect, raising entrance averages and enhancing institutional selectivity. The central purpose of university recruitment marketing is to attract the attention of prospective students with very little true comprehension of higher education. Marketing aims to resonate with its target audience, addressing their current concerns and priorities with a simple, focused, and often emotional appeal. Marketing does not and cannot challenge the intellect, open minds, or expand horizons; namely, perform the transformative role of faculty, once applicants become students.

Ultimately, selling the academy is not about selling out the academy but about raising its perceived value amongst the general public, alumni, donors, and prospective students and faculty. AM

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[1] Rosemary Deem, "Unravelling the Managerialist University and its Implications for the Integrity of Academic Work," in James L. Turk, ed., *Universities at Risk: How Politics, Special Interests, and Corporatization Threaten Academic Integrity,* Toronto: Lorimer, 2008.

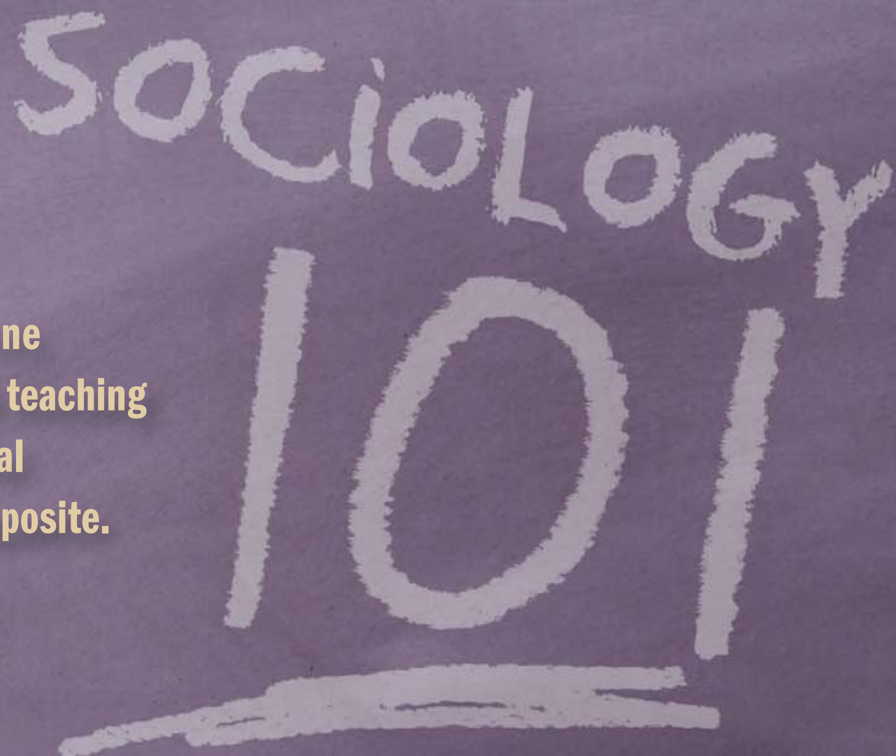
[2] Canadian Council on Learning, *Report on Learning in Canada,* 2007.

[3] Statistics Canada, *Population Projections for Canada,* projections for the 18-21 age cohort.

[4] Academica Group preserves some of the more notable, innovative, or controversial ad campaigns in the "AdSpotter" section of our website, at www.academica.ca/AdSpotter.

[5] 2007 study of marketing expenditures, including salaries for recruitment and marketing, at American universities and colleges, conducted by Noel-Levitz.

Ken Steele is senior vice-president and co-founder of Academica Group Inc., a leading provider of higher education market research and marketing counsel.



Sociologist Robert Brym is one academic who doesn't believe teaching introductory courses is menial academic labour. Quite the opposite.

Why I Teach Intro

by Robert Brym

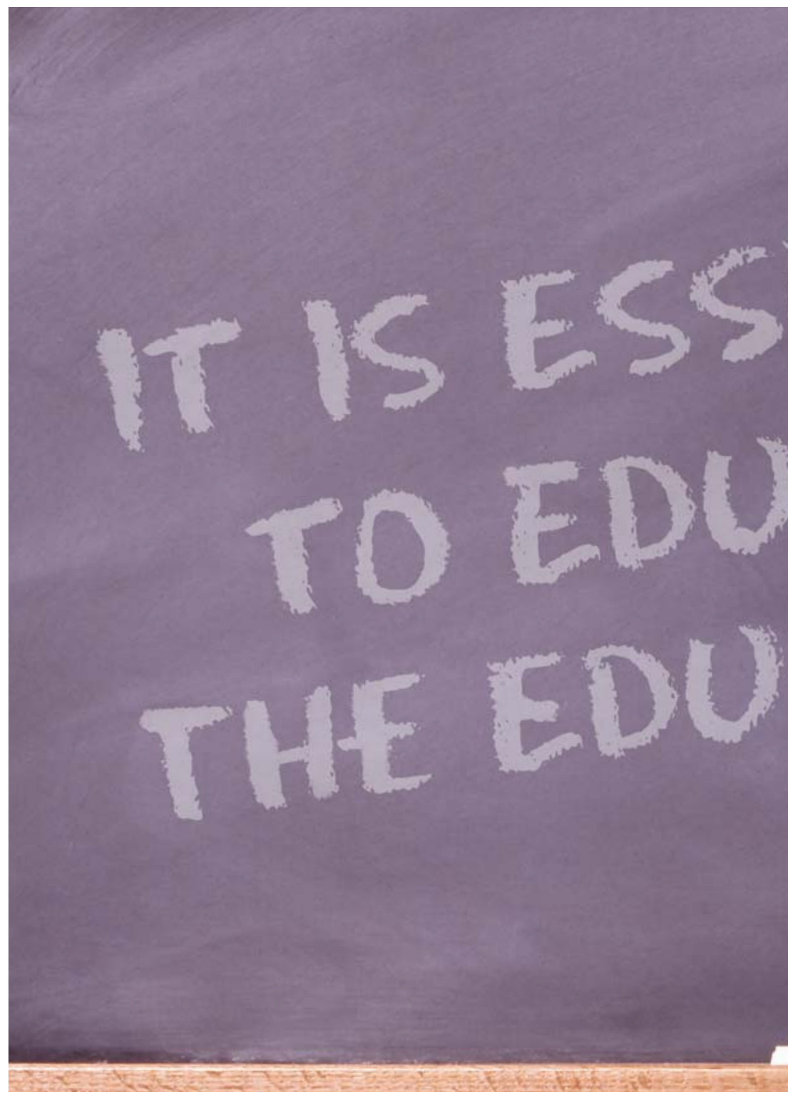
You probably recall that in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the authorities bring Winston Smith to a torture chamber to break his loyalty to his beloved Julia. Perhaps you do not remember the room number. It is 101.

The modern university institutionalizes Orwell's association of the number 101 with torture. Faculty and students often consider introductory courses an affliction. I suspect that colleagues award teaching prizes to 101 instructors partly as compensation for relieving themselves of the agony of teaching introductory courses—a suspicion that first occurred to me last year, when I shared an award with the University of Toronto's Centre for the Study of Pain, much praised for its relief of suffering.

Today, many scientists routinely and proudly acknowledge that their job is not just to interpret the world but also to improve it, for the welfare of humanity; much of the prestige of science derives precisely from scientists' ability to deliver the goods.

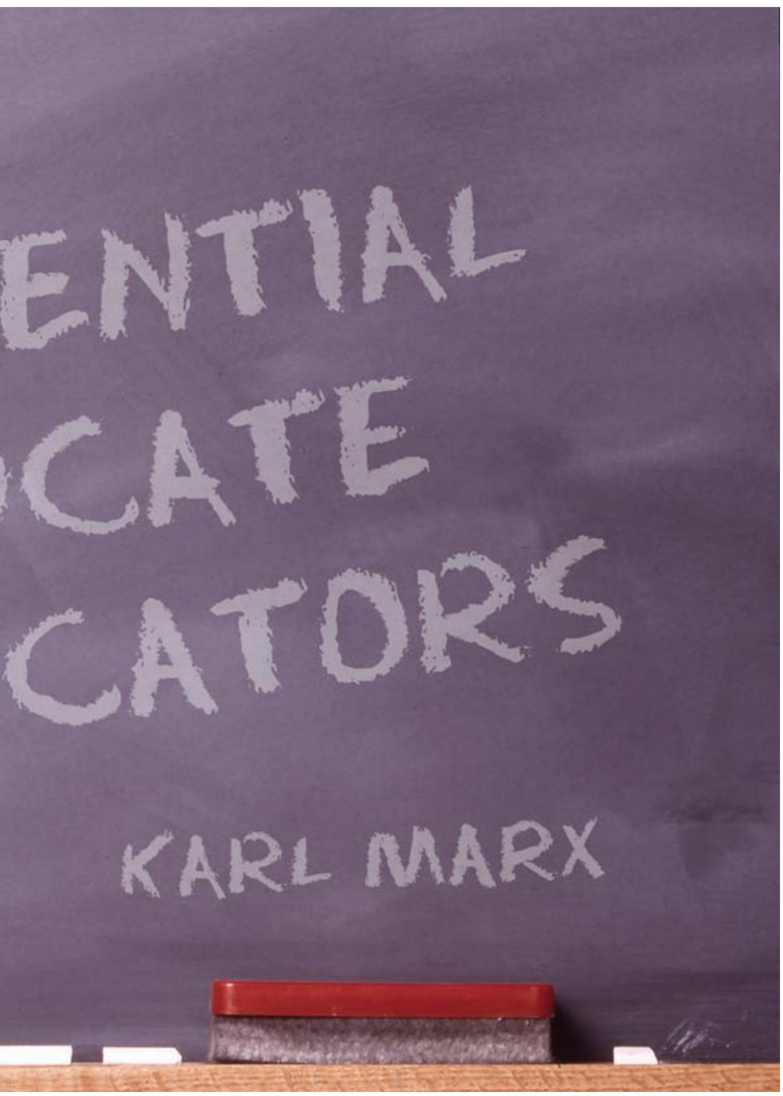
colleagues have been too polite to remind me of the alleged downsides, but they are well known. First, teaching an introductory course is often said to be a time-consuming activity that interferes with research and writing—the royal road to prestige, promotion, and merit pay. Second, it is reputedly boring and frustrating to recite the elementary principles of the discipline to young students, many of whom could not care less. Third, the 101 instructor performs supposedly menial work widely seen as suited only to untenured faculty members, advanced graduate students, and other personnel at the bottom rung of the academic ladder. Although I understand these arguments, I do not find them compelling. For me, other considerations have always far outweighed them.

In particular, teaching intro solves, for me, the much-discussed problem of public sociology. Some sociologists believe that working to improve human welfare is somehow unprofessional or unscientific. They hold that professional sociologists have no business drawing blueprints for a better future and should restrict themselves to analyzing the present dispassionately and objectively. However, to maintain that belief they must ignore what scientists actually do and why they do it. Sir Isaac Newton studied astronomy partly because the explorers and mariners of his day needed better navigational cues. Michael Faraday was motivated to discover the relationship between electricity and magnetism partly by his society's search for new forms of power. Today, many scientists routinely and proudly acknowledge that their job is not just to interpret the world but also to improve it, for the welfare of humanity; much of the prestige of science derives precisely from scientists' ability to deliver the goods. Some sociologists know they have a responsibility beyond publishing articles in refereed journals for the benefit of their colleagues. One example is Michael Burawoy's 2004 presidential address to the American Sociological Association, a gloss on Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach", in which Burawoy criticized professional sociologists for defining their job too narrowly and called for more public sociology. Still, many sociologists hold steadfastly to the belief that scientific research and public responsibility are at odds–largely I suspect, because they are insecure about whether their research is really scientific at all, so feel they must be more papist than the Pope.



Setting such anxieties aside, one is left with the question of how to combine professional pursuits with public responsibility. One option is conducting research that stimulates broad discussion of public policy. Some of my colleagues study how immigration policy limits the labour market integration and

On such occasions I know that I have taught them something about limits and potential—their own and that of their society.



upward mobility of immigrants; others how family policy impairs child welfare; and still others how tax and redistribution policies affect inequality. To the degree they engage educated citizens in discussion and debate on such important issues, they achieve balance between their professional and public roles.

I have chosen a different route to public responsibility. I have conducted research and published for a professional audience, but I have also enjoyed the privilege of addressing hundreds of thousands of members of the public over the years by teaching Sociology 101 in large lecture halls and by writing textbooks for intro students in several countries. As Orwell wrote, communicating effectively to a large audience may be motivated by aesthetic pleasure and egoistic impulses. Who among us does not want to write clear and compelling prose and to be thought clever for doing so? But in addition, one may want to address a large audience for what can only be deemed political reasons.

In 1844, Charles Dickens read his recent Christmas composition, *The Chimes*, to his friend William Charles Macready, the most famous Shakespearean actor of the day. Dickens later reported the reading to another friend as follows: "If you had seen Macready last night—undisguisedly sobbing, and crying on the sofa, as I read—you would have felt (as I did) what a thing it is to have Power." I understand Dickens. I, too, relish the capacity to move and to sway a large audience to a desired end because it signifies that my influence will not be restricted to a few like-minded academics and that I may have at least some modest and positive impact on the broader society. I find most students burn with curiosity about the world and their place in it, and I am delighted when they tell me that a lecture helped them see how patterned social relations shape what they can become in this particular historical context. On such occasions I know that I have taught them something about limits and potential—their own and that of their society. Teaching intro thus allows me to discharge the public responsibility that, according to Burawoy and others, should be part of every sociologist's repertoire.

In Marx's words, "it is essential to educate the educators"—especially those who persist in believing that teaching intro bores, frustrates, interferes, and suits only the academic proletariat. AM

Robert J. Brym, a professor of sociology at the University of Toronto, has published widely on the social bases of politics in Canada, Russia, and Israel. His most recent book is Sociology as a Life or Death Issue *(Toronto: Nelson and Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 2009).*

Universities and The Great Depression: Then and Now?

by Paul Axelrod

As economists predict a major crisis for the world economy, perhaps as profound as the Great Depression, York University historian Paul Axelrod looks at the university experience of the 1930s and its possible implications for the present.

It is positively eerie for a baby boomer like me to hear talk of a possible "Depression" in Canada. Having come of age in exceedingly prosperous times and conditioned to believe that life would only get better, my generation is undoubtedly aghast at the prospect of revisiting—first hand—the challenges faced by our parents and grandparents in that woebegone era.

How did universities fare during the 1930s, and is there anything instructive today's academics can learn from those years about what may lie ahead? Are you ready to ponder the once-imponderable?

A modest collection of denominational and secular institutions, universities in early twentieth-century Canada served a comparatively small part of the population. Some

Photo credits: Toronto Star/Library and Archives Canada

2.8 per cent of the 20-24 year old age group attended universities in 1930, which enrolled, in total 33,000 students. Most students came from middle-class backgrounds, though they were far from uniformly affluent. Like today's students, they aspired to "respectable" and financially-secure professional careers. Before the Depression, in a country where a high school diploma was still a relative rarity, university graduates would have fared well.

But the economic collapse disrupted many grand plans. Jobs, even for university graduates, dried up. Many dropped out, and a significant number of those who remained in university faced severe financial challenges. At the University of Saskatchewan in 1934, the administration accepted promissory notes from one-third of its students because they were unable to pay their fees. There was practically no student assistance available across the country, and individual professors were known to lend or give individual students funds on an ad hoc basis.

Universities themselves could do little to ease the plight of the financially challenged. Budgets were cut everywhere. Between 1930 and 1935, university operating revenue declined by almost 30 per cent. The University of Manitoba's fiscal plight was compounded by the machinations of the institution's bursar, who was found to have embezzled close to $1 million. (He died in prison following his arrest.)

History demonstrates that in poor economic times, those able to pay the fees seek to enhance their educational credentials in anticipation of better days ahead.

Notwithstanding these crises, the universities survived the Depression, diminished but intact. No institutions were closed; indeed enrolments rose by some 10 per cent during the period. History demonstrates that in poor economic times, those able to pay the fees seek to enhance their educational credentials in anticipation of better days ahead. From an employment perspective, that day came with the Second World War, which enlisted tens of thousands of young Canadians, with or without university education.

By most measures, full-time university professors managed relatively well during the 1930s, particularly in light of declining prices for consumer goods. A national survey in 1937 found that three-quarters of faculty earned more than $2,500 per year. The average national wage was $965. On the other hand, there were casualties. A number of faculty at the University of British Columbia and Acadia University lost their positions. In the wake of the embezzlement scandal, the University of Manitoba suspended the practice of tenure in

1934 and issued only one-year contracts for a number of years. Salaries were cut at the University of Toronto, and McGill was one of several universities that ended professors' right to teach beyond age 65. Faculty and staff who worked part-time, in libraries or as laboratory assistants (which included many women), were rarely renewed. Full-time hiring was essentially frozen, so professors worked hard, teaching 15 to 18 hours per week (at least twice the load of faculty today).

Furthermore, as Michiel Horn explains in Academic Freedom in Canada: A History, faculty who were politically outspoken—and left wing—were especially vulnerable during the Depression. Several, most notoriously, University of Toronto historian Frank Underhill, were reprimanded, or worse, for expressing politically incorrect views on such topics as Canada's relations with Britain, immigration, and the capitalist system. Most held on to their jobs. But Eugene Forsey and Leonard Marsh, of McGill, and J. King Gordon, of Montreal's United Theological College, did not.

What does any of this tell us about the university's prospects in the wake of a new Depression? History, of course, never replicates itself entirely, but there would be some haunting echoes. Students, whose current participation in postsecondary education exceeds the rate in the 1930s by a factor of about 10, would be likely to endure the heaviest burden. Since higher education is already considered essential (but not a guarantee) for securing high-quality employment, they will do all they can to complete their degrees and will, increasingly, consider enrolling in graduate school as an added credential hedge against the future. But unless they have very affluent parents, they will feel the weight and stress of accumulating debt, with limited immediate job prospects, except, perhaps, in very select fields (e.g. medicine, law enforcement).

Universities and government will continue to provide scholarships, bursaries, and loans, but the amount available will not match the growing needs. Unless enrolment declines dramatically, universities will not lower tuition fees because their own revenues from government will be reduced.

Hiring of full-time faculty will diminish or be frozen, particularly in institutions with deep (possibly structural) deficits. (A lot of this is not terribly difficult to predict, since in some institutions, it is already happening.)

But there are some critical differences between then and now that might well blunt the impact on universities of a severe economic downturn. First, faculty associations will do everything in their power—short of striking—to preserve full-time jobs and protect professors' academic freedoms. Some positions may be lost, but collective agreements should ensure that transparent processes are followed. Owing to seniority provisions, contract and newly hired faculty will be the most vulnerable.

Second, universities are viewed by politicians as important instruments of economic growth and development. To some degree, this has always been true—but they are now perceived to be key drivers of the "knowledge economy" in a "globalized" environment, something which takes on added importance as manufacturing jobs continue to disappear.

Photo credits: Toronto Star/Library and Archives Canada

> Owing to seniority provisions, contract and newly hired faculty will be the most vulnerable.

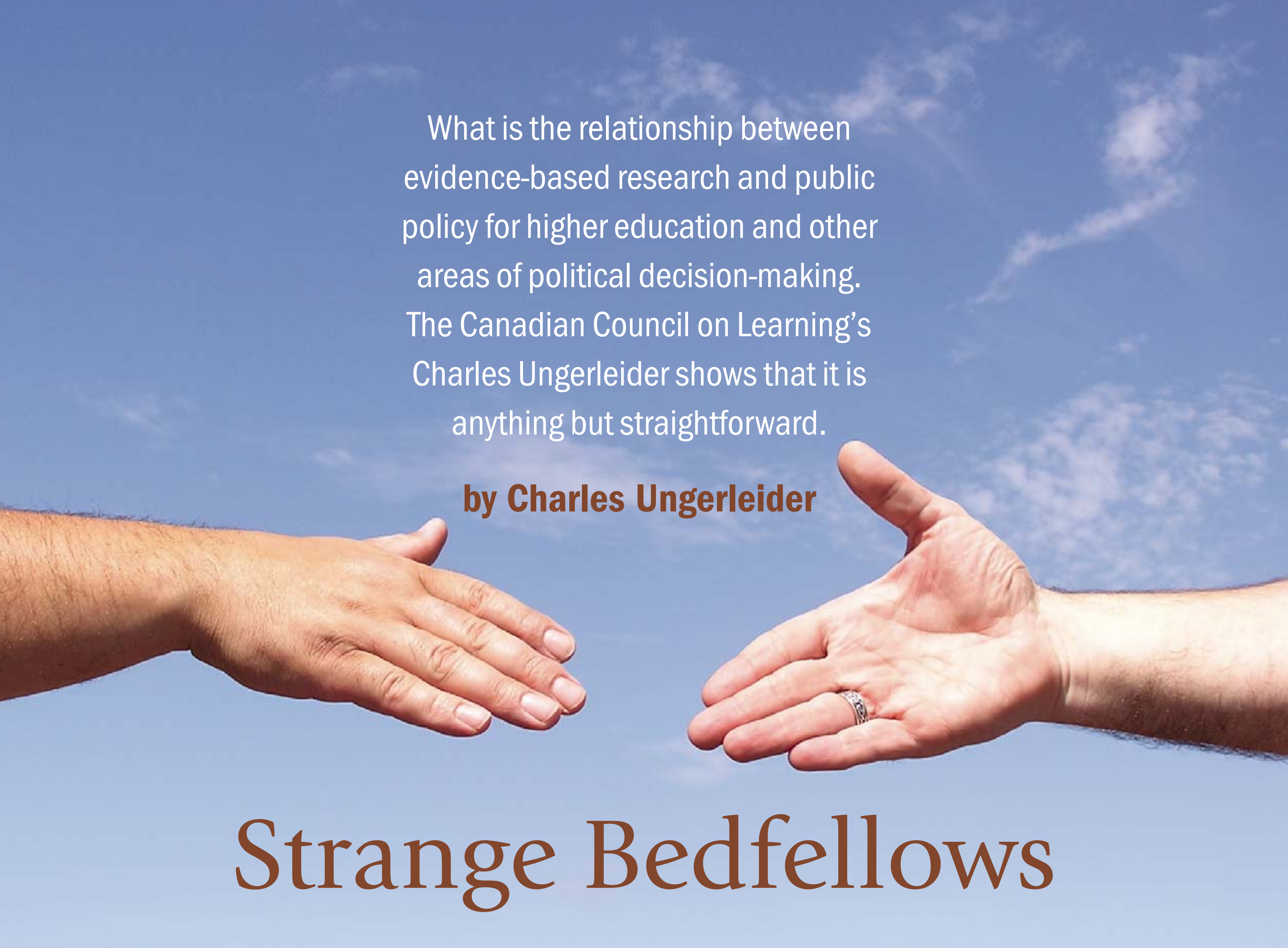
I think there is a good deal of sheer rhetoric and mythology associated with the knowledge economy argument, but it remains the universities' strongest bargaining chip in the marketplace and in politics. Indeed, during a Depression, education's social standing may well grow if it is considered essential to economic recovery.

Whatever their long-term economic value, universities and colleges are of far more immediate importance to local economies than they were in the 1930s. For that reason alone, they are likely to be protected. In Ontario, communities such as Windsor, St. Catharine's, Peterborough, and Thunder Bay, where job losses have been very severe, postsecondary education is an especially vital employer, and, in large centres (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver), the educational institutions provide some economic stability in otherwise wobbly conditions.

Like every other institution, universities will be affected by macro-economic decision-making. During the Depression, it took a number of years for governments to ramp up public spending, and deficit financing was never really adopted until World War II. By contrast, the member countries of the G-20 have already indicated their willingness to prime the economic pump, as indicated by the enormous stimulus packages announced in Europe, China, and the U.S. in November of 2008. In this context, viable, public institutions, like schools, colleges, and universities, which provide employment and contribute to the country's intellectual capital, are likely to be perceived as part of the solution, not the problem.

What lies ahead for those who work in universities in a 21st century Depression? Lots of pain and grief, but probably less than for those who work—or who once did—elsewhere. AM

Paul Axelrod is a historian and professor in the Faculty of Education at York University and the author of Making a Middle Class: Student Life in English Canada during the Thirties.



Strange Bedfellows

What is the relationship between evidence-based research and public policy for higher education and other areas of political decision-making. The Canadian Council on Learning's Charles Ungerleider shows that it is anything but straightforward.

by Charles Ungerleider

The call for evidence-informed decisions makes strange bedfellows of researchers and politicians. Researchers and political decision-makers live in different worlds, respond to different norms, and speak different languages.

Appeals for evidence-informed decisions received momentum when, in a *fin de siecle* effort "to get better government—for a better Britain," the Blair government embarked upon efforts to modernize government, calling, among other things, for "better use of evidence and research in policy making and better focus on policies that will deliver long-term goals." These calls for evidence-informed decisions required a bridging of the chasm.

In Britain, these bridges were built and, by 2002, researchers and policy-makers were living beneath the same roof. The Blair cabinet office had become home to a Strategy Unit, designed to provide strategy and policy advice to the Prime Minister by placing "strong emphasis on analytical rigour and an evidence-based approach to developing strategy." What kind of a relationship would politicians and researchers have and, most important, could such a relationship last, given the historically dismissive attitude toward research held by policy makers?

In his seminal and lengthy 1999 volume, *Governing from the Centre: The Concentration of Power in Canadian Politics*, Donald Savoie makes the case that, in the last century, governments in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States "...would move to strengthen their centre to promote greater policy and program coordination, to generate policy advice, and to promote better management practices in government operations." It is revealing that the role of research is of such little consequence in the aforementioned central government processes that it absent from the book's 27 page index that addresses topics from Aboriginal affairs to youth employment.

Ben Levin, a Canada Research Chair at the University of Toronto who served as Deputy Minister in both Ontario and Manitoba, tells a story that reveals the distance between the worlds occupied by politicians and researchers. Levin informed a Minister with whom he worked that a course of

Evidence-based decision-making relies on systematic research that has been replicated over time and in different settings. Eminence-based decision-making relies on expert advice.

action under consideration was supported by research to which the Minister replied, "You know, Ben, I don't believe that research votes in my constituency."

Levin's anecdote makes clear that the primary audience for the decisions made by politicians is the electorate—or, to be specific, the electorate upon which the politician depends for support. On the other hand, the primary audience for the work of researchers is other researchers in their field of study, and secondarily the agencies that fund their research and the institutions that employ them. The wider audience for the work of politicians is the various *publics* (constituents, stakeholders, clients, and/or the media) affected by the decisions that are made.

Sceptics doubt that is it possible to bridge the chasm that divides decision-makers and researchers. Although the worlds in which decision-makers and researchers live are both tightly rational, the evidence and methods that govern the public policy decision-making process are, as Levin's anecdote makes clear, quite different for those governing research.

Although dismissive of research at that moment, the Minister, had he been asked, would have said that he pays attention to evidence. In this case the Minister's reply to Levin points to one source of evidence politicians consult in arriving at a decision. The approval of one's constituency is typically the paramount source of evidence, but it is not the sole source. Others include: media; lobbyists and advocates; personal, anecdotal experience; ideological and values commitments; and expert advice—what is sometimes referred to as *eminence-based* advice.

Stefan Wolter, Director of the Swiss Coordination Centre for Research in Education, a body co-funded by the federal and cantonal levels of government to ensure the harmonization of education research across Switzerland, makes the distinction between evidence-based and eminence-based decision-making. Evidence-based decision-making relies on systematic research that has been replicated over time and in different settings. Eminence-based decision-making relies on expert advice. The challenge of the latter is that it is impossible for the decision-makers to know what part of an expert's advice, if any, was research-based. According to Wolter, eminence-based "knowledge" is personal judgement masquerading as evidence.

Like Wolter, Phil Davies, who who worked in the UK cabinet secretariat as deputy director of the Government Chief Social Researcher's Office in the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit contrasts evidence-informed approaches with opinion-based policy. He notes that "opinion-based policy, which relies heavily on either the selective use of evidence (e.g. on single studies irrespective of quality) or on the untested views of individuals or groups, [is] often inspired by ideological standpoints, prejudices, or speculative conjecture."

Both decision-makers and researchers are risk averse. In fact, managing risk is a key concern among decision-makers because visible decision failures undermine their credibility and legitimacy, threatening the longevity of their authority—especially if they are elected officials. Neither the visibility nor the consequences of risks faced by researchers are as great as those facing decision-makers, especially political decision-makers.

Researchers manage risks—primarily threats to the validity of their research—but they are better able to manage the visibility of such risks since the primary medium for the communication of their research is typically blind, peer-reviewed publications. Consequences are also more manageable for researchers. They are typically offered the opportunity to revise their work before it is disseminated. The primary medium of dissemination is publications of limited circulation. There are professional consequences of poorly conducted investigations for researchers, but they are—given the system of review—less likely to occur and typically less cataclysmic than the public humiliation or loss of position that decision-makers face.

Decision-makers will take risks, but they carefully calculate the likelihood of failure. My own experience provides an illustration of risk management from the point of view of researcher and decision-maker. I was an academic seconded to serve as Deputy Minister who had, among other things, responsibility for the implementation of a major technological change. The project faced challenges. For example, the large corporation with which government had contracted had fallen behind in its commitments and had not tackled the most difficult installations.

One of the Ministers to whom I was responsible thought it desirable that some of the work that the large corporation had been commissioned to perform should be redirected to small, inexperienced local suppliers. The action—something permitted under the terms of the government's contract—would build capacity among local suppliers to do such work in the future, a form of local economic development. The Minister in question called a meeting late one afternoon to discuss his idea and to seek advice. I approached the situation from the standpoint that my training as a researcher afforded. Never known for my reticence, when advice was called for I recommended against the direction that the Minister favoured. I reasoned that—given the delays and the difficulty in completing the work faced by a large, experienced corporation and the disparity between it and the small, inexperienced, local suppliers—it was highly likely that government would not be able to meet its commitment to a timely roll-out within budget. The Minister was not persuaded, and decided in favour of his plan to provide the work to the local suppliers and develop the local economies of the communities in which the suppliers were located. As we departed the Minister's office, we were reminded that, despite the change in plans the Minister had made, the timelines and budgetary restrictions were to be met.

As it turned out, the Minister's reasoning was correct. The local suppliers used the government contract to borrow money to buy the material they needed and acquired the expertise to do the work. Because they were more familiar with the local settings in which the work was performed, they were able to complete the work faster than the larger corporation. The project was completed on time and under budget, and the government garnered considerable support, although not enough to secure re-election!

This experience and others like it point to another of the many differences between research and policy-oriented decision-making. After considering the evidence of importance to him, the Minister arrived at a conclusion that he hoped could be achieved easily and would produce wide benefit to the community. Attentive to nuance and circumstance, researchers want to qualify their conclusions.

The Minister was typical of decision-makers; they seek resolution of conflict and elimination of problems as rapidly as might be achieved. Researchers do not. The pace of research is designed to engender thoughtful and careful reflection, while the pace of decision-making is more pressing and resolution-oriented. Decision-makers also seek results, but they are less concerned with specific mechanism so long as the anticipated outcomes can be achieved; they seek answers and impact. Though they, too, may want their immediate investigation to provide a solution to the problem that animated it, in the long run researchers want their work to beget more. If not more problems, certainly more research.

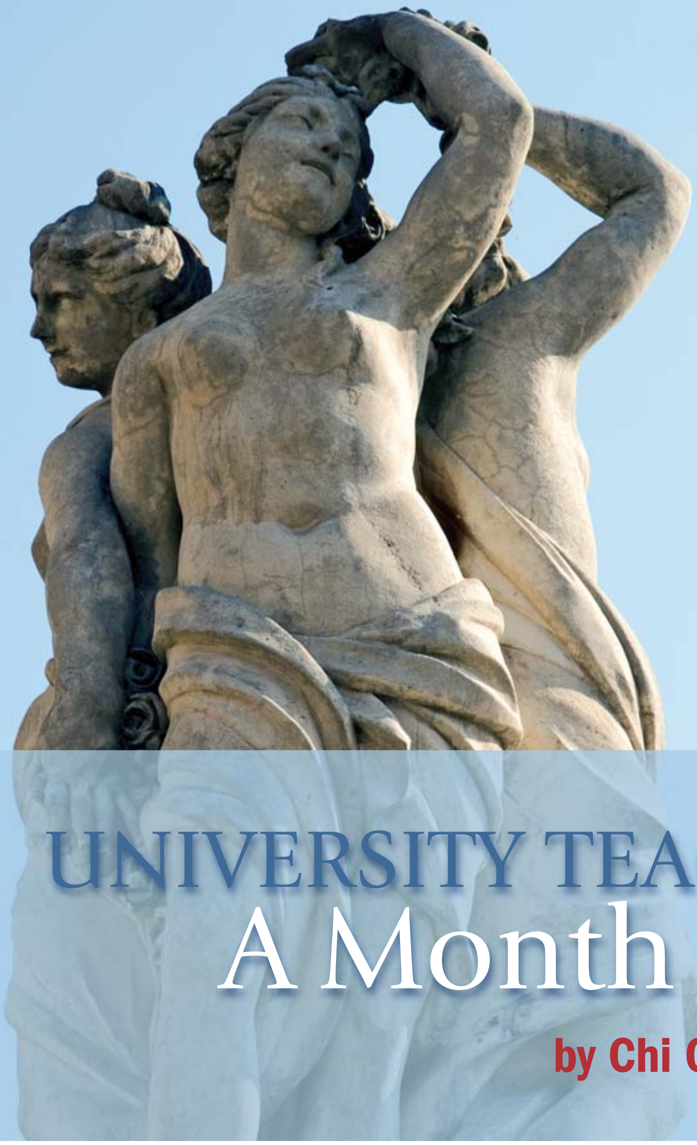
It is not inevitable that research will improve decision-making. Research evidence will not inform decisions if the need for a decision is urgent or if the decision-maker has an established position on the matter. If the matter is one that has attracted significant visibility and is highly divisive, the decision-maker might call for research evidence as a way of deferring decision-making—but the strategy is unlikely to work if the process of gathering such evidence will itself keep the issue's visibility high.

The payoffs for decision-makers are the benefits or improvements brought about by the decisions made. These include problem reduction or managing the conflicts or the visibility of the conflicts that the allocation of scarce values engenders. The payoffs for researchers include the recognition that their work receives from their peers and the translation of peer approval into support for further research, tenure and promotion.

Politicians walk a fine line between seeking recognition for good work and avoiding visibility for making decisions that will be contentious. Researchers, on the other hand, seek visibility for themselves and for their research—albeit among audiences where their visibility is more easily controlled. Notwithstanding the substantive contribution that research makes to the creation of new knowledge, research, like politics, is also a form of self-promotion.

While a marriage of research and decision-making is unlikely, long-term liaisons are more frequent than one-night stands. Decision-makers—especially those occupying public office—are increasingly attentive to what the research has to say, using research evidence—along with a variety of other forms of evidence—to inform the decisions they make. Unless we are prepared to substitute a technocracy for a democracy, we should not demand that public policy decisions be determined by research evidence alone. AM

Charles Ungerleider is on leave from the University of British Columbia where he is a professor of the sociology of education to work as Director of Research and Knowledge Mobilization with the Canadian Council on Learning. An earlier version of this article was presented to 2008 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Vancouver, British Columbia.



Take some time to enjoy an international posting, advises Chi Carmody, as he recalls conversing with colleagues about the French way of academic life—under majestic fig trees in the ancient city of Montpellier.

UNIVERSITY TEACHING ABROAD: A Month in France

by Chi Carmody

At the beginning of May 2000, I found myself teaching at Université Montpellier 1 in the south of France, a few kilometres from the Mediterranean. It was at the end of a busy first year of teaching law in Canada, and I was excited by the prospect of going to Europe.

Montpellier had beckoned invitingly through the preceding winter. It is the home of an ancient university, founded in the 1200s. I had visions of Roman ruins and Gothic battlements, strong coffee and croissants, great wine and tremendous sunshine—and on the whole I wasn't disappointed.

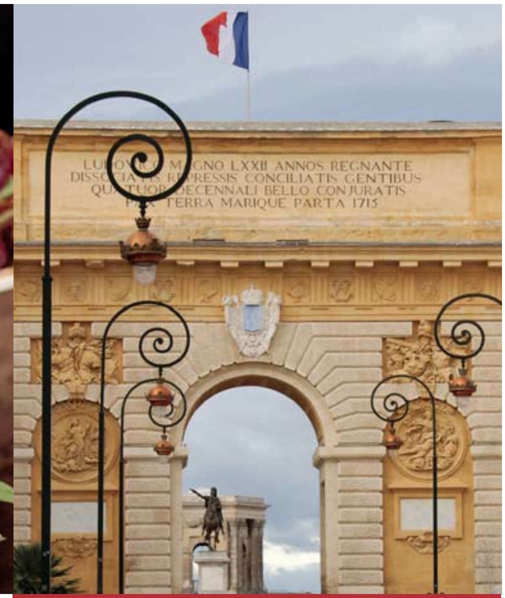
The afternoon I got to Montpellier my host—a professor at Montpellier 1—was late. It was an introduction to the way things are often done in the south, or *"le Midi"*, as the French call it. There, time is a relative concept. Things just happen.

My host eventually arrived and took me to the apartment that had been rented for me on the outskirts of the city and next to an orange grove bordered by tall cypress trees. Later that night we had dinner at his house *en famille.* There was sausage, a salad with capers, leg of lamb, green beans, a flan, and artisanal cheese—and, yes, plenty of red wine. We talked for several hours.

After a day of rest I was in a classroom at the faculty of law in front of 30 students. The original invitation indicated I could teach anything I wanted and that I could give half the month-long course in English and the remainder—please—*en français.* These minimal requirements were useful, but since I'd spent time as a student in France and later worked in Switzerland, I suspected that teaching conditions might be very different from the way they were in Canada.

My areas of interest are public international law, international trade and international business transactions, so my idea was to offer a course on "the contribution of the Americas to international law." The subject was tremendously idealistic (I can still hear the "trumpets blaring") but I wanted to do something different, something that would give French students exposure to subject matter they might not normally encounter. Consequently, before I left home I hired a French exchange student from Laval University to do some research. A month or two later he came back with many useful articles in French on my subject.

Once in Montpellier 1 quickly discovered that few of the students had any real ability in English, so I was thankful I'd



Montpellier itself is amazingly diverse, with its medieval Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Cathar, and Occitan past.

planned ahead. Nevertheless, that still left me the task of preparing lectures on a new subject in a foreign language, something I did every afternoon after class, as the wet spring ripened into a warm, bright Mediterranean summer.

There were other challenges, too. The law library was located at another campus, which meant no new class materials. Computers were a rarity: I handwrote my lectures. The university's information technology infrastructure was creaky, but I found an internet café. Later in my stay, I had a library assistant verify my translations and even undertook preparing a multiple-choice exam in French. The key was being flexible.

At the same time, I realized that there was this rich human landscape around me. My students were diverse, as was the old city of Montpellier. The European Union's Erasmus and Aristotle programs encourage a high degree of educational mobility, and the result is a very varied student body. I had students from all over France but also from the "DOM-TOM" (France's overseas territories) as well as Germany, Poland, Morocco, Senegal, Ecuador, Argentina, and Vietnam.

Law in France is often taught with greater attention devoted to its philosophical, historical and contextual underpinnings than in Canada, and this promotes course offerings that come at the subject from a more specialized and structured angle. There were courses in the law syllabus at Montpellier 1 that might look a little peculiar if offered by a Canadian law faculty—The History of Political Ideas, The History of Public Institutions, Social Science Methods, etc. The other big difference was the attention devoted to European Union law, which is a body of law that in many instances has direct effect in France. Therefore, it is very much *the law of France.* Not only is this different from our experience of NAFTA, which does not have direct effect in Canadian law, but it also gives European students an experience with transnational integration and unification—indeed, with a common European identity that has no real equivalent in North America. In class, this experience certainly added to our discussions about what international law is—and could be.

My contact with the local faculty other than my host was limited, but they were always polite. Sometimes we went for long lunches under the shade of giant fig trees where, over fresh bread, buckets of mussels and white wine, we talked about French law and the realities of the academic hierarchy. In France, academics in law, political science, and economics progress through the *agrégation* system, which means they must pass a series of central state-sponsored competitions *(concours)* to secure a chair. Three outcomes are possible. You secure a desirable chair, where you remain; you secure a chair in the hopes of securing a more desirable chair later on; or you fail to secure a chair and have to wait for the next competition. These conversations were fascinating—as the French academic system is, again, unlike anything we have in Canada—and made clear that so much of French academic life, like so much of life in France generally, is still centered on Paris.

What I've talked about so far concerns work. There was a world beyond, however, and that, too, was different in ways

I could have hardly imagined. Montpellier itself is amazingly diverse, with its medieval Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Cathar, and Occitan past. It has been added to more recently by arrivals from the Maghreb and other African countries. The encounter among cultures has not always a peaceful, but it made me think about how people have lived and worked together there for centuries.

Looking back, the time I spent in Montpellier seems like a dream, but there was much to be conscious of, so I have a few pointers that may be useful for any academic contemplating teaching abroad.

First, be prepared. Good teaching presents many challenges, and those challenges are often magnified in a new locale, especially where student expectations, language, and life are different. You want to enjoy the experience, so try to think ahead. In addition, pick something to teach that you know well and feel comfortable with. This will allow you to remain open to all that the experience has to offer.

Second, it's important to clarify teaching obligations. In Montpellier my teaching and course materials weren't much of a problem, but that's because I planned it that way. Notwithstanding the availability of the internet today, teaching abroad takes you away from the milieu you're most familiar with, along with its books, photocopying, supplies, research, and administrative support. Consequently, you need to be ready to work without them. And hard though it may be to imagine, there are locations where internet infrastructure and student interconnectivity remain primitive. A Belgian friend went to give a summer course at a university in Rwanda and told me that his students there didn't even have paper or pens. So be ready—and be ready to be flexible, with back-ups and alternatives.

Third, don't underestimate the time it takes to get unplugged at home and re-plugged in a new location. Finding computer access, phones, grocery stores, a laundry, and other necessities can take a while. If you're accompanied by family, schools and daycare may be issues. Weeks, even months, can be lost making the transition from one place to another.

Fourth, find out about pay. Many teaching opportunities abroad require you to front considerable money in terms of plane tickets, rent, and the like *before* you actually get paid. For some people this may require some form of bridge financing like a loan. When it comes time to actually getting paid, there are also frequent hitches. Many institutions of higher education require that you open a bank account for direct deposit, something which is hard for a temporary visitor to do. In France, it took an entire morning to set up a bank account. My host came to the bank with me and insisted on seeing the manager, who personally completed the paperwork in front of us. Without that intervention, setting up the account never would have happened. Ultimately, the pay was great once it was received—a few days before my departure.

Fifth, opportunities to teach abroad are increasingly common. For those who are either pre-tenure or who are tenured but lead busy lives teaching, publishing, and attending conferences, however, these opportunities can be rare. So take some time to enjoy. AM

Chi Carmody is an associate professor and Canadian director of the Canada-United States Law Institute in the faculty of law at the University of Western Ontario.

What Are Universities For

by David Inman

After a long career in academia, Professor Emeritus David Inman reflects on the purpose of the university and the essential qualities that should define it.

In 1852, John Henry Newman, in one of his discourses on "The Idea of a University", said "a University is, according to the usual designation, an Alma Mater, knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill". Thirty years later, Thomas Henry Huxley said "The medieval university looked backwards; it professed to be a storehouse of old knowledge...The modern university looks forward, and is a factory of new knowledge."

I believe Newman's criteria to be as valid today as they were when he voiced them. That they no longer appear to be so is not because the reason for a university's existence has changed; it is because our society has found it expedient to pervert its purpose to a degree which has come close to destroying its true function. The ideal of a bounteous mother, for which Newman fought with such luminous hope and fervour, has been forgotten in the shift from a place of enlightenment toward a corporate enterprise.

Huxley's answer to the question was, and still is, equally correct. The medieval university looked unswervingly toward the past. Its arrogance, although almost entirely unproductive, had something of the same hypnotic and unassailable quality as a noble ruin. Its arrogant certainty that there was no need to clutter up the academic storehouse by looking into the future, or even the present, for further knowledge was both unprofitable and unpardonable. But when Huxley urged universities to look forward he meant away into the far distance, to the horizon and beyond; not a few months ahead to the next disclosure of government under-funding, or to the time when a research grant expires. His currency was knowledge, not cash-in-hand. The tunnel-visioned universities of today have certainly fulfilled, nominally, one of Huxley's ideals. They have become factories; but not, unhappily, in the sense that he hoped for. In doing so, they have also realized Newman's worst fears by becoming foundries, mints and treadmills for both their students and their faculty.

I believe universities exist for the pursuit of knowledge and understanding; nothing more and certainly nothing less. Every human activity that takes place in a university, from the most erudite and esoteric research to the emptying of dustbins, should be performed with the pursuit of knowledge and understanding as its ultimate aim. Six words may seem sparse for a comprehensive statement about an area of endeavour I believe to be of critical importance to my species. I maintain, however, that they encompass everything for which universities exist.

Since all three words are fickle beasts I should, perhaps, explain exactly what I mean by "pursuit", "knowledge" and "understanding".

Knowledge, a chameleon among words, is nevertheless one of my favorites. This may be why I become incensed when it is used as a synonym for "information" or "memorization of facts and figures"; an error that occurs often in reference to the processes of teaching and learning. Knowledge belongs uniquely to the person who possesses it. We can give each other information, facts, figures, references and other forms of sensory inflow that do not, necessarily, demand thought on the part of the recipient. If we are very skilled and articulate, we may even be able to give each other concepts, which are one step up from facts but still transferable without obligatory cerebration. Knowledge, however, can be neither shared nor given, because it is the singular product of a unique mind. If we allow them to, our minds can start working on a hotchpotch of received data and transform it into knowledge, which is then ours alone. That our minds are capable of performing this magic is a priceless gift which must be taken advantage of if our existence is to have meaning.

A related error is the all too common confusion of understanding with memorization. The memorization of information is essentially ephemeral and of little value except as a means of passing conventional examinations. Understanding, like knowledge, involves the mind of the individual; true understanding, therefore, is also unique to

that individual. It is worth recalling that Goethe said "What a man doesn't understand, he doesn't have."

Without the human mind there can be no knowledge and no understanding. A computer, however voraciously it receives, processes and transmits factual information, cannot yet—nor will it ever, in my view—know or understand.

The proper function of a university is to recognize and promote the unique value of the human mind by providing a sanctuary in which these priceless processes are recognized, valued and encouraged. This sounds like a hollow echo of Newman's "knowing her children, one by one" and brings me to what I mean when I use the word pursuit.

I can see no reason to doubt that the human animal is born with an inquisitive mind, by which I mean a mind that thirsts for knowledge and understanding. Any parent who has lovingly observed the behaviour of a baby, however young, must know that this is so. In normal circumstances, a baby is not forced to learn nor told what must be learned nor is the baby's retention of what has been learned tested in a formal, intensely competitive and essentially punitive manner. That comes later, when the mind of the child becomes imprisoned by formal education.

Why, then, does a baby not only learn but do so at a phenomenal speed? I believe the answer is because the human mind wants, and needs, to know and understand. Rather than struggling, under duress, to achieve these aims passively and unwillingly, the mind of a young child is free to pursue them without restraint. That is what I mean by "pursuit"; an activity engendered, eagerly, from within, rather than one imposed, oppressively, from without.

In a baby's inquisitive mind, information is actively pursued, processed, assimilated and understood. As a result, the store of true knowledge in that mind increases prodigiously without any force, constraint or punishment being applied. Indeed, constant positive evaluation is likely to be given, in the form of encouraging coos, grunts, squeals and body language. Furthermore, the entire process takes place in an atmosphere of total honesty and absence of competition, which leads to absolute trust. In these conditions, the human mind is able to indulge in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding rather than having the building bricks, on which these are based, forced unwillingly upon it. This, surely, is how true learning should happen.

All too soon, however, the dread process of obligatory, didactic, punitive ingestion of information, which we call formal education, begins. The result is that an inquisitive mind is forcibly and inexorably converted into an acquisitive mind; acquisitive, that is, of unrelated facts, not of knowledge.

Let us consider the time-honoured procedures whereby this bending of minds is brought about.

Each mind is given an identifying number and set down, with many others; all facing, lets us say, due north. The actual number of minds so arranged is determined solely by economic expediency. Then an authority-figure mind, facing due south, delivers information and the north-facing minds diligently write it down or, if the mastermind has already done so, copy it. The north-facing minds are not asked whether they want, or need, to receive this information. They are not told the relevance of it. Nor is it suggested to them that there may be any question of its veracity. Whether or not the information is either accurate or relevant to their present understanding or future knowledge is, in any case, of no importance because of the nature of the next stage in this educational charade.

Periodically, the minds are reassembled, in conditions of high stress, and required to regurgitate suitable boluses of the information they have struggled to memorize. The questions which trigger this regurgitation have been set by the authority-mind which originally fed them the information. Hence, the only necessity for them to be regarded as good little minds is that their regurgitated information be identical with that which was fed to them originally. It does not have to be correct, up-to-date or of any obvious relevance. The ability of any one of the captive minds to play this "receive, record, memorize, regurgitate" game better than the others, determines its future, both in education and in life. None of the

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minds involved in these procedures are called upon to do that for which they are uniquely competent; namely, to think.

It is commonly believed that a radical change will prevail in the methodology of learning on the other side of the ditch that separates secondary from post-secondary education. In that rich earth, it is assumed, the seeds of knowledge will at last be planted and cherished; then, unhindered and abundant, intellectual blossoming will occur.

This was not what I found to be the case when, in my mid-twenties, I finally entered university. The Groves of Academe proved, intellectually, to be part wilderness and part boot camp.

There were, however, small patches of true learning to be found in this intellectual tundra. These usually resulted from the heroic efforts of maverick academics, deeply distrusted by their colleagues, who realized that information only becomes knowledge when minds are allowed, perhaps even encouraged, to think instead of merely storing.

I vividly recall one person who offered a ray of hope that, having discovered this tunnel at the end of the light, I might yet find a light at the end of the tunnel. He was a professor of botany. I remember the first lecture of his which I, together with a gaggle of other earnest first-year students, attended. We all sat motionless, in the customary serried ranks with pens poised, heads bowed and minds closed, ready to record every word for future memorization and regurgitation.

After entering the lecture room and assessing the scene, this remarkable man sighed deeply and audibly. Then he said something shockingly unexpected. More than fifty years later, I still remember, almost word-for-word, what it was:

> "Please put away your pens. There are no rules of attendance at my lectures; come if you want to, stay away if you don't. My only stipulation is that you do not write down anything I say. I want to see your faces, not the tops of your heads. That is the only way in which I can tell whether you are thinking and understanding. Then it is possible that you may acquire some knowledge. It is not my intention to give you factual information—you don't really need it, anyway, and you can find it in various textbooks if you feel you must have it. I propose to tell you some of my ideas about botany. I am obliged to set examination questions, and you to answer them. My questions will be designed to test your ability to think conceptually about botany, not your ability to remember unrelated facts about it. If at any time, you do not understand what I am saying, say so. If you will do that, we may all benefit!"

This was a man, fighting a big battle in a small army half a century ago, who unquestionably understood exactly what universities are for. Have things improved since then? Sadly, I fear they have not; but, so long as there are a few academics left with the courage and clear-sightedness of that stalwart botanist, all may not be entirely lost.

My opinion of what universities ought to be for is reflected in a little poem by Christopher Logue:

> "Come to the edge"
> "It's too high"
> "Come to the edge"
> "We'll fall"
> "Come to the edge"
> So they came
> And we pushed them
> And they flew

John Henry Newman, however, deserves to have the last word. "Knowledge", he said, "is capable of being its own end". And, of course, he was right. AM

David Inman, a Professor Emeritus of McMaster University, came from the United Kingdom to Canada in 1970. His prime reason for doing so was the innovative Problem-Based Learning approach to teaching and learning in the McMaster University Medical School.

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Please send your contributions to either *Mark Rosenfeld, Editor* mrosenfeld@ocufa.on.ca or *Wendy Cuthbertson, Associate Editor* wcuthbertson@ocufa.on.ca

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Humour Matters

Steve Penfold

Inconvenient Truths

IT TURNS OUT TO BE surprisingly easy to make an argument against the obvious. I oppose marketing the university as though it were like toothpaste. It seems exactly the opposite of what I spend my time doing, teaching students that life is complex and hard, to reduce to a few simple slogans. But here come the marketing gurus, with their positioning statements, brand characteristics, target audiences, and downloadable logos. I find this stuff so painful, they might as well be poking me in the eye with a chopstick.

The problem is that only a fool would argue that we don't need the help. How else to explain the bulletin board opposite my office, a cacophonous mess of nonsensical messages and misguided slogans? My recent favourite is a colourful sign for an "interdisciplinary conference" titled "Clinical Debates in Evidence-Based Medicine", surely one of the strangest designations in advertising history. Is there some alternative I should know about? Has my doctor been winging it all these years, relying on her natural wit to dismiss that growing patch of green skin on my forehead?

But I digress. It's not that evidence-based medicine doesn't make sense. So much of life just doesn't lend itself to scientific study, so I imagine there are all sorts of effective medical procedures that grew out of experience. I mean, how do you gather evidence on choking? If a paramedic offers you a place in a double-blind study of the Heimlich manoeuvre, just make sure you don't end up in the placebo group.

No, it's all a question of marketing. If a whole conference of scholars—*interdisciplinary*, at that—couldn't think of a term that didn't imply my doctor stirs toenail clippings into vats of boiling garlic, then it's about time to open the door to some advertising expertise.

Listen, I'm not blaming them—it's not like I could do much better. I couldn't come up with a direct statement on an intellectual subject to save my life. The conclusion to almost all my lectures is, "The situation was very complex." At demonstrations, people yell "Tory! Tory! Tory!" and I shout back, "They have consistently adopted policies that are likely to shift the burden of recession onto the pocketbooks of the poor, who tend to spend more of their net income on locally-produced goods, which has a multiplier effect of greater proportion than tax breaks for the upper income brackets." (Usually, by time I finish, the demonstration has packed up). When my six-year-old has a tantrum, I generally tell her that her grievance "is an expression of a particular social *conjuncture*." Heck, I can't even remember the exact words of standard proverbs, so I constantly confuse my family with this less-than-sage advice: "If you can't stand the kitchen, get out of the kitchen."

Well, these inconvenient truths make it somewhat difficult to marshal an evidence-based argument against marketing. But if my doctor taught me anything, it's this: when all the evidence points in the wrong direction, you're best to fall back on experience. Consider this: when I was 10, we invited my cousin Hollis to stay the weekend, and he still hadn't left when I graduated from university. Sure, branding gurus could come up with something better than "evidence-based medicine," but once we start downloading their logos, they'll just never go away. Inviting input from marketers is the advertising equivalent of telling a sidewalk preacher that you've been thinking a lot about spirituality lately.

So forget the evidence, it's a slippery slope. Pretty soon, these marketers will be sending us chain letters and forcing us to rap to our classes. It's like I tell my six year old, "if you give 'em an inch, they'll take an inch."

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Editorial Matters

Mark Rosenfeld

Marketing Academia

DO UNIVERSITIES NEED TO MARKET themselves? The question has become rhetorical. Universities market themselves extensively and show no sign of pulling back.

In this issue's lead articles, Ken Steele and David Scott explain that universities engage in marketing for a variety of reasons: to raise public recognition and bolster an institution's reputation, to attract prospective students, and to establish an institution as worthy of public and private sector support.

But *how* universities market themselves has become a concern. Scott's article focuses on the questionable marketing use of the rankings found in surveys such as *Maclean's* and the *Times Higher Education Supplement*. Steele writes that negative advertising, such as Lakehead University's "Yale Shmale" campaign and Algoma University's more recent "Colossal U" ads , "run[s] the risk of backfiring and damaging institutional reputations in the long run."

As a marketing practitioner, however, Steele argues that when done properly and ethically, marketing is both important and valuable, since it can elevate the perceived worth of a university among potential students, faculty, alumni, and the public. One can sell the institution without selling out the academy. Whether that is the case is subject to much debate.

The issue of institutional marketing also raises some larger—and broader—questions. Does marketing one institution also serve to market higher education in general?

As part of a marketing campaign, for example, a university might emphasize its research accomplishments, its award-winning faculty, its high-profile commentators, and its links to business and government. On the competitive terrain of university marketing, institutional promotion comes first. Universities have been less effective in promoting higher education. Periodically, university umbrella organizations launch advertising awareness initiatives to promote the general value of universities to the public and to government. A few years ago, for example, the Council of Ontario Universities ran a media campaign asking viewers to imagine a world without the inventions which are the result of university research, such as breakthroughs in medicine, communications, and physics. And institutions do practise subtle forms of marketing higher education (and themselves) through community outreach programmes such as public lectures, podcasts, and organized cultural events. But, in general, it has been left to others, such as faculty and student organizations with much fewer resources, to champion the value of higher education.

This is also true when it comes to speaking candidly about the impact of underfunding on higher education. Institutional promotion seemingly precludes a willingness to speak frankly about the damage of insufficient resources. No university wants to draw attention to crowded classrooms, obsolete equipment, or deteriorating libraries and other facilities on campus. The damage of inadequate investment is periodically highlighted at the system level by university umbrella organizations only to be diminished by the boosterism of institutional marketing campaigns. Again, it is left student and faculty organizations to voice real concerns about deteriorating quality.

What impact has this had on public perceptions of higher education? In the public mind the view is that universities are places where students can get an education leading to well-paying employment. This view is understandable, given public anxiety about the labour market, the economy, and the successful employment rates of university graduates.

More distant and abstract for the public is the notion of universities as critical to fostering a "knowledge economy" and all that entails. But an enduring public commitment to higher education depends on fostering awareness of the importance of universities not only to the economy but also to everyday existence. What universities do has an impact on virtually every aspect of our lives—our health, the way we communicate, how we organize our cities and towns, our culture, the environment, our understanding of the past and present.

Essentially, nurturing that type of public commitment involves defining higher education as a public good that creates pervasive and enduring public benefits. In a climate that emphasizes only the private benefits and private returns of higher education, the public benefits of higher education can get lost. Emphasizing the private benefits of university may enhance the persuasiveness of institutional marketing but can also diminish the value the public places on the public benefits of higher education.

Fostering a strong perception of universities as a public good is in the long-term interest of public higher education—and it is marketing the academy at its best.

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