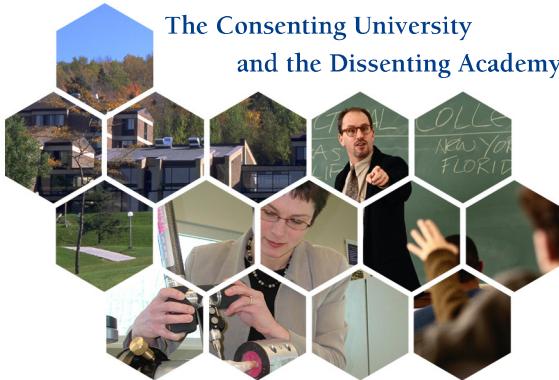


The Consenting University and the Dissenting Academy



Binary Friction

James Downey, former president of the University of Waterloo, the University of New Brunswick and Carleton University, was invited to speak to the membership of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada in April 2003. Dr. Downey was asked to speak to the matter of balance in Canadian universities at the opening of the 21st century. Specifically he was invited to consider whether the education, research and scholarship, and community service missions of the university are in balance. He framed his speech under the title “The Consenting University and the Dissenting Academy: Binary Friction”.

A panel of three university presidents was invited to respond to Dr. Downey’s remarks: Yvon Fontaine, president, Université de Moncton; Heather Munroe-Blum, principal, McGill University; Harvey Weingarten, president, University of Calgary. This booklet contains Dr. Downey’s speech and the three responses to it, published for a broad university and public audience.

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The Consenting University and the Dissenting Academy: Binary Friction

Dr. James Downey
Keynote Speaker

Professor Yvon Fontaine
Dr. Heather Munroe-Blum
Dr. Harvey Weingarten
Respondents

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada

April 9, 2003

There are, it is said, two ways of being lost. One is not to know where you're going; the other is not to know where you are. There is, I would suggest, a third way of being lost . . .

. . . to lose sight of what you are.

- James Downey

There's a story about a tourist in Ireland looking for a certain stately home. By the time he asks help of an elderly farmer he's pretty nearly spent. The farmer takes him to the beginning of a long, winding road where, in the far distance, barely visible, is the home. "My God," says the tourist, "it's still a long road." To which the farmer replies, "Sure then, 'tis a long road, but if 'twere any shorter it wouldn't reach the house, now would it?"

Most academic leaders know the tourist's feeling. The road to the kind of institution you seek to find or to build is a long, hard road, one to which there is no proper end, only spots along the way where you can pause, take stock, check compass, provisions, look back at the road traveled, and now and then perhaps seek a little help. Think of me then as an elderly Irish farmer, which will not tax your imagination very much.

I know from rueful memory how hard it is for presidents to find time for reflection on broader issues. I also know that it is even harder to be anything but defenders of our institutions and the way they operate. It is expected of us. But from time to time we should be disposed to scepticism about the claims we make and the directions we take. I suggest the present may call for our doing so.

The debate on the best balance of interests for universities in the 21st century is well begun in the United States. Several reports and books, including the *Report of the Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University*, have put the issue squarely in play¹. It is not meant as a criticism of anything we have done to date in Canada by way of priority-setting for advocacy purposes to say that I believe there is a need here too for more searching discussion about the aims and purposes of higher education. It is also not meant as a criticism of any other group to say that, if a productive debate is to occur, it will have to be led by presidents, both in their institutions and collectively.

But where to start? What road to take? There are, it is said, two ways of being lost. One is not to know where you're going; the other is not to know where you are. There is, I would suggest, a third way of being lost: to lose sight of *what* you are. Which is where I propose to begin, with a reminder of what makes universities unique among human organizations. For there is no viable theory or practice of academic leadership that is not grounded in the character and culture of the university as an institution.

A university is a trinity -- three simultaneous incarnations in one.

Wherein lies the reason for the extraordinary resilience and endurance of universities? Some of it flows from the exceptional loyalty and competence of the people who are attracted to work in them. Some of it resides in the values and standards, and the hope for human advancement, that universities represent. The rest, and it is no small part, is accounted for, I believe, by the same baroque organizational structure for which universities are often criticized.

In its institutional form, a university is a trinity — three simultaneous incarnations in one. It is **corporation, collegium, and community**. Each contains elements essential to the fulfillment of the university's mission.

Universities are, in the first place, legal corporate entities, creatures of the state and, like other corporations, have the right to appoint officers, own property, make contracts, sue in the courts, and the rest. They are also generally bound by the same laws that apply to all corporations in the conduct of business. Because legal compliance across a range of accountabilities is required of it, the university as corporation cannot afford to operate as a consensual community; it needs administrative levers to act, and its structure provides them. The corporation doesn't have colleagues: it has officers, employees, and clients.

In exchange for compliance, the state confers on the university a considerable measure of institutional autonomy in the conduct of its affairs. Consider, by contrast, the status of schools, community colleges, and hospitals. It is this greater measure of institutional autonomy that ensures what we call, and properly, academic freedom.

Which leads into the second modality of the trinity. The collegium is the complex network of traditions, relations, and structures within the university that empower the faculty to control and conduct the academic affairs of the institution, determining, among other things, who shall be admitted, who shall teach and research, what shall be taught and researched, and what standards shall be set for which rewards.

If the corporation rests on the principle of legal and corporate authority, the collegium rests on the principle of academic authority, on the idea that those who know most about a field should draw the maps for those who wish to explore it.

Completing the trinity is the university as community. Among our manifold social institutions none so approximates a complete community as a university. There is the physical infrastructure of land, buildings, roads, sewers, communication and transportation systems, and cultural and recreational facilities. There is the impressive range of services provided to members — personal, professional, social, recreational, and of course educational. There is the occupational and demographic diversity of the university's citizenry, representing a broad range of interest, competence, and often ethnicity.

The "community" is the least structured, most malleable of the three modalities, less an organizational structure than a culture in which things grow. It accommodates itself, if it is a good culture, to the changing needs of students, faculty, and staff, dissolving social differences into common cause, and grounding in democratic perspective the elitisms inherent in the corporation and the collegium.

I believe that a symbiotic equilibrium among the three forms of university life is essential to the proper functioning of the whole. I further believe that the contemporary university, and especially the so-called research-intensive university, is in need of some readjusting of the balance between the corporation and the collegium, on the one hand, and between the university and the society it serves, on the other.

Let's examine the internal adjustment first, the one between the corporation and the collegium. David Reisman's death last year brought to mind the analysis he made, with Christopher Jencks, in *The Academic Revolution* (1968), of the rise to power of the American professorate. The power it unambiguously acquired was over curriculum, selection of colleagues, the setting of academic standards for admission, promotion, and graduation, and determinative influence over teaching loads and research agendas.

The same might have been observed of the Canadian professorate in the wake of the Duff-Berdahl Report (1966). For a very short while, here as in the U.S., the collegium seemed to gain the upper hand. But then a strange thing happened. The professorate decided that its interests and those of the collegium were different. Faculty unionization was in certain respects an attempt to formalize and guarantee some of the powers of the collegium, but to a far greater extent it was a boost to the university as corporation, for it adopted the language and the conventions commonly used by private and public sector employers, and accepted the conflict-resolution authority and procedures of the state. Senates were made less relevant to the welfare of the faculty and, since largely controlled by faculty, less central to the life of the institution. At the same time, boards of governors discovered their corporate authority reaffirmed. Not in a way they might have chosen, but reaffirmed nonetheless.

A second boost to the corporate character of the university came in the form of growing public regulation as institutions became

larger, more costly, and more important to governmental agenda. This too was a mixed blessing for boards, one they might not have willingly chosen, but it further re-enforced their centrality to the affairs of the institution as they went about the business of ensuring that legislated accountability measures were met and proper risk-assessments were done. All of which necessitated expansion of the corporate bureaucracy at a time when resources for the work of the collegium were being curtailed.

To hear some people talk you'd think corporatization of universities is a product of the past decade. Not so. Even if we stopped tomorrow doing business with business, the balance would still tilt away from the collegium. That said, I would also say that the present situation poses a threat to the powers of both the collegium and the corporation.

When I speak of the corporatization of universities, let me be clear what I do not mean. I am not talking about some fresh

attack on tenure. From time to time one hears a bit of incendiary rhetoric from a business leader about how this hoary old practice is symptomatic of the arthritic response of universities to

To hear some people talk you'd think corporatization of universities is a product of the past decade. Not so.

change, and how it has no place in a world where human rights legislation and contract law provides more than enough protection for faculty to speak their minds. More often, someone claiming to speak for the professorate will attempt to make the case that tenure is under attack from all sides and only eternal vigilance and courageous commitment will ensure its survival. Neither claim seems able to find much traction, and rightly so. Tenure is neither a major impediment to change, nor is it under serious threat.

Nor am I talking about fresh evidence that boards of governors are planning hostile takeovers of the assets of senates. Though

there are occasional rumblings among governors about the need for a little “shock and awe” in dealing with certain collegial conventions, most boards seem content to work with the traditional division of powers and to respect senate’s jurisdiction over matters of academic principle and policy. (Mind you, many board members express frustration at what they see as the sclerotic pace by which the business of the academy is done. Like the one who said to Nan Keohane, president of Duke University, that if he heard the end of the world were at hand, he would move to Duke because everything takes a year longer there.²⁾

Nor, finally, am I talking about faculty losing their influence within the academy, as is sometimes alleged. It is true that some faculty members, whose fields are not so much in demand as formerly, may justly feel that their departments and research programs are no longer able to attract the resources or the respect they once did. On the other hand, some professors have more influence and bargaining power than ever. This may seem to some inequitable, but it does not, I believe, represent a threat to faculty influence.

What then do I mean when I say that we should be concerned about corporatization of our universities?

The perceived centrality of universities to the economy is increasing the range and intensity of business transactions for them to an extent never before experienced. Universities have always jealously guarded, at least in theory and rhetoric, their independence from society, believing as a matter of principle that an essential part of their role is the critical evaluation of society, in the interests of society’s self-renewal. The danger at present is not that someone is conspiring to deprive us of that role, but rather that the warm embrace of economic functionalism is weakening both our capacity and our will to stand apart.

The good news is that universities have of late become more business-like. They have taken corporate governance, risk management, and directorial responsibility seriously, engaging in the same processes of self-assessment that corporations and government departments go through. They have also become less dependent on a single major source of revenue, which in turn has increased the emphasis on corporate management and business and investment opportunities. It makes sense: the more confluent the headwaters of income, the more corporate management has to be involved, upstream and downstream, in the getting of resources and in their allocation.

The not-so-good news is that there is a danger in all this, a danger well described in a recent essay by Professor Richard Chait of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

The greater the emphasis on corporate, as opposed to collegial, models, and the more resource-dependent the institutions, then the more the weight of governance will shift from faculty and a power of expertise to public agents and the power of the purse. Public agents include boards, legislatures, [state] governors, corporations, [student] customers, and donors. Financial capital will trump, or at least steer, intellectual capital.

What power remains on campus will migrate from the administrative centre to the entrepreneurial periphery, from core operations, like undergraduate education, to research institutes, laboratories, executive education centres, and multidisciplinary programs. . . .

If the essence of shared governance is distributed power, then why all the ferment and frustration now? In a word, it is because less power remains on campus to distribute. The once almost impenetrable membrane between the campus and the larger society has thinned greatly. There has been a seepage as colleges, universities, and, not least,

professors have entered the marketplace; however, far more crucially, the market has unsentimentally and even ruthlessly invaded the campus . . .³

If Professor Chait's rhetoric has more urgency about it than mine, that may be the difference between the U.S. and Canada at present; it may be we are a little behind this particular curve. But there is no doubt we are on the same road and headed in the same direction.

If I'm right that it is the university itself, even as it becomes increasingly corporate in its design and behaviour, that is losing power, there are a couple of areas of collegial life we should be especially careful to protect, because in protecting them we may help to adjust the balance between corporation and collegium and, more consequentially, fulfill the role which has set universities apart and made them essential.

Undergraduate education

Universities are experiencing a quantum increase in student enrolment. The prevailing preoccupation of the next few years will be with how we cope, how we find enough classroom seats and residence beds, how we get all those courses and course sections taught, how we mount more online instruction, how we manage our institutional liquor licenses in the face of all those underage students, and so on. It will be easy to put aside for another few years questions we haven't collectively addressed in a while: questions of *what* and *why* and how *well* we teach. The tendency will be to leave it to professional accrediting agencies to tell us in some cases what we must do, and inertia to do the rest.

It is by our teaching that we will be known and judged by those who matter most, the people whose good will determines whether we prosper or not.

I hope we will feel free not to do that. While we all aspire, to judge by our advertising copy, to be seen as “research universities,” it is by our teaching that we will be known and judged in the end by those who matter most, the people whose good will determines whether we prosper or not. There is a tendency, says Donald Kennedy, former president of Stanford University, “for institutional obligations, including those of teaching and advising students, to fade in the face of research and the external pressures. Yet public expectations of the university about the duty to teach, and teach well, could not be stronger.”

A strange disjunction results: the outside world is told endlessly of the institution’s role in innovation and discovery, and the people, parents, patrons, and interested spectators react with some pride in those achievements. But their real interest is in Kevin and Heather — the son and daughter who aren’t getting the attention they expected. The term “research university,” a consequence of the Endless Frontier’s reengineering, tells the world a lot about our values, and adds immeasurably to the public confusion.⁴

A recent book by two former professors of political science at the University of Alberta, Tom Pocklington and Alan Tupper, *No Place to Learn: Why Universities Aren’t Working*⁵, charges that universities have become largely immune from criticism both from without and within: from without because of the complex structure of their organization and the opaqueness of academic language; from within because of self-serving interests by professors and administrators. Without much confidence that they will succeed, Pocklington and Tupper take a run at fortress academe. They join issue with current priorities and present an alternative view. They criticize “universities’ neglect of undergraduate education,” challenge the emphasis on specialized research, and reject the “common claim that teaching and research harmoniously reinforce each other.”⁶

A book debunking universities appears in Canada about every decade, and is always answered in the same way. It is reviewed in *University Affairs*, then ignored. I hope it will be different with Pocklington and Tupper. What they speak is not the whole truth and nothing but the truth, to be sure, but there is more than enough truth in their book that many fair-minded people would agree with Jeffrey Simpson when he said, “Professors Pocklington and Tupper are definitely on to something, but no student should hold her or his breath waiting for priorities to change soon.”

As universities are drawn ever more intimately and strategically into society’s prosperity agenda, their leaders should not lose sight of the fact that the end of education is more than economic utility. This is not to deny that students need knowledge and skills necessary for employment and to build careers. It is merely to remind us of what we know but too often lose sight of: that the ends of education have as much to do with human dignity and social justice as with economic self-sufficiency and professional advancement.

In the argot of educational reform, there is much discussion of skills, attitudes, knowledge, outcomes, measurement, technology, and occasionally values, but seldom does anyone speak of ideals. Perhaps because we fear that in a pluralistic society and world there is no longer any consensus on what constitutes an educational ideal. And yet without some such shared concept, how will we know what our educational outcomes are ultimately worth or whether we have progressed or regressed in the end?

It’s been more than a decade since we attempted to have a serious and sustained debate in AUCC about undergraduate education, and that one was largely aborted before it got started. There are sound political reasons why we have steered our national advocacy towards research and student support and kept our focus on the federal government’s constitutional and fiscal leverage. There have been large and welcome dividends for us in that strategy. But I wonder if in the process we have not

become a little too economy-centric in our focus, at the expense of some other values and considerations that go to the heart of our enterprise, notably the qualitative aspects of undergraduate education and the role of universities in a civil society, as distinct from in a knowledge economy.

The role of the humanities and social sciences

“On the portals of the humanities,” said Allan Bloom, “is written in many ways and in many tongues, ‘There is no truth — at least here’,”⁷ so irrelevant had modern

academic humanists become to the moral vision Bloom had of the university. Whatever one might think of that characterization, it is true that the perception (and perhaps, even more, the self-perception) of humanists

What is true for communities in general is no less true for universities.

and most social scientists in the contemporary university is that they are no longer vital to the educational or research enterprise. What once was central has become peripheral, useful to adorn more utilitarian educational vocations, but not the heart and soul of anything special.

In her 2002 Killam Lecture⁸ President Martha Piper draws a firm connecting line between a civil society and a prosperous and innovative one. She also makes a plea for strengthening the link between the traditional values of the humane sciences and the education that will prepare people to contribute to such a society. “Why is it [she asks] that the public concerns we hear about daily are largely focused on what I would call civil society issues, but the policies proposed for the creation of a thriving society are often focused on economic goals? Are these two areas — civil society and economic well-being — not related?” President Piper cites recent research to show that the two areas are indeed related and she offers thoughtful suggestions as to how universities might better contribute to the goal of a more prosperous and humane society.

Her proposal for addressing the challenge deserves to be discussed widely. Not because it is the answer, for there is no one answer, but because it is an intelligent place to begin. I would only add here that I believe the need for presidential leadership in triggering and framing the debate about the obligation of universities to a civil society is as great as the opportunity it presents for us to reassert one of the university's tradition roles, that of society's critic, a role which we cannot play well without vigorous and respected humanities and social sciences.

Nor is it just for society we must do this, but for ourselves as well. If the best, most thoughtful and relevant social criticism is being offered by journalists, independent research institutes, and other freelance intellectuals outside the academy, then it is not just Canada that will suffer but the vitality and reputation of our institutions.

The interest President Piper's lecture has aroused speaks to an anxiety that is, I believe, widely felt. There is a growing sense in Canada that our social capital has been depleted, the result in part of severe and often crude economic measures governments and corporations have taken to balance budgets, contain costs, and increase productivity, and in part the result of what seems like a coarsening of business values and culture. Economic disparities have grown, and so too has the sense of disfranchisement many feel. It is easy to be critical of government and business leaders in all this, but it would be better and truer if we all accepted responsibility, starting with ourselves, in universities.

What is true for communities in general is no less true for universities. The social capital represented by associations and networks of civic engagement that Robert Putnam⁹ has written about so persuasively is a precondition for academic development and effective governance. An institution that relies on mutual respect and assistance is simply more effective at achieving its

ends than an oppositional, distrustful community. Social capital on our campuses, no less than in society at large, is built from an investment of time and commitment by individuals — people who first make the effort to understand the issues and then take an active, citizen's role in their resolution.

Many in the academy feel that this capital has been eroded on our campuses in recent years, though they are not agreed on the cause. Some blame it on size, some on the divided loyalties of professors, some on the increased emphasis on individual rights at the expense of collective obligations, and some on chilly climates of one sort or another. Whatever the root cause, it seems clear that mutually-reinforcing corporatism and unionism have waxed while the spirit of community and civic engagement has waned. Waner too has any strong sense that universities have a societal role that transcends the simple formula of teaching, research, and service, or any sense at all that our ideals oblige us to become exemplary societies ourselves.

Which brings us to the part presidents can play.

Telling the story

In *Leading Minds*¹⁰ Howard Gardner, the cognitive scientist best known for his work on multiple-intelligences, examines the lives, styles, and achievements of a number of outstanding modern leaders, and argues that the most effective leaders are those who get others to share goals and meanings by constructing narratives, rather than by making arguments. The narratives that work best are those that tell stories easily understood and remembered. They are stories in which followers can see themselves — about what there is to be feared, struggled against, dreamt about. In other words, they are “stories of identity.”

This would seem to go somewhat against the grain of academic life, where so much is complex and nuanced, where nothing is ever simple. But when I think about the presidents I have most admired over the years and considered most effective, they are all

people who seemed to be able to distil complexities into a clear and simple vision and in a unique, authentic style. In other words, they both told and embodied a narrative that corresponded to the deeper aspirations and potentialities of the institutions they led.

In the fall 2002 issue of *The Presidency*, Professor Robert Birnbaum addresses the question of what stories university presidents should be telling. The challenge, he says, is not to argue a better case but to tell a better story.

Stories compete with stories, some familiar, some new. And there is no shortage of competing narratives about the role of the contemporary university. Some portray an institution standing in very much the same relationship to its users as banks, supermarkets, and utility companies do to theirs, providing convenient, dependable, and quality service. Some tell of an institution that is already past its best-before date, and will largely disappear within the next generation. They are simplistic narratives, but nonetheless effective for that. They may or may not be true, but they resonate widely.

Birnbaum cautions “you cannot dispel a narrative merely by criticizing it or presenting logical arguments against it. A narrative can be displaced only by another narrative that is as easy to understand and tells a better story.”

Where do we get better, more compelling narratives? Birnbaum suggests we start with the past.

Our narratives once told of education for democracy, for social justice, for the whole person, for the perpetuation of civilization. That is what people came to believe colleges and

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universities did . . . Our narratives now increasingly talk about being the engines of the economy. We are, of course, but I don't believe that a utilitarian narrative alone excites the imagination of the public, or commits faculty, staff, or administrators to their institution and its success, or connects the university to our deepest human needs.¹¹

And it is the connection between the university and our deepest human needs that requires fresh affirmation and articulation at the moment. However university leaders choose to tell their stories, I believe the moral should be this: The primary mission of the university is not to train but to educate, not to do research or transfer technology, not to prepare students for jobs but to make them more discerning people, capable of seeing through the political and commercial hucksterisms of their times, of establishing their own

values and finding their own meaning in life, of constructing and expressing their own compelling narratives. Through teaching and research the university must cultivate a spirit of intellectual dissent. Not for its own sake, but in the interests of a free, tolerant, enlightened, and improving society.

Please don't misunderstand. I do not hold that there is a moral crisis in our universities or in Canadian society; nor do I say that we must repent of or relinquish the gains we have made in recent years in applied research and the expansion of professional programs. But I do sense that we are in danger of being drawn too deeply into the economic functionalism of the age, of becoming too much the handmaiden of society, not enough its honest critic.

In sum: Universities have as crucial a role to play in the building of a just society as in a knowledge economy, and there are two aspects of the role that currently need our attention. One is the

quality and character of undergraduate teaching and learning, for it is there the broader and deeper values of life are shaped, and the platform of knowledge and skills for effective citizenship is built. The other aspect that needs emphasis is the currently muted role of the university as social critic, a role we have looked to the humanities and social sciences for leadership in the past. A university should be a place engaged with the problems of society, a place of social criticism, a place of intellectual foment and excitement. It is not reasonable to think that such a culture will be engendered by our professional schools and programs, preoccupied as they are with meeting the standards of their professions. This has traditionally been the special mandate of the humanities and social sciences, and if they are no longer up to the challenge, then we must find other ways to achieve our end, for too much depends on our doing so.

In all this, it should go without saying, academic, and particularly executive, leadership is pivotal. It is tempting to believe that the forces that shape our institutions' lie beyond our control. That ameliorates responsibility, but it also distorts reality and shortchanges the potential of the offices we hold. In his much-discussed book, *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities*¹², Burton R. Clark considers business models as templates for the entrepreneurial university, and rejects them. He then opts for a "counternarrative" that stresses a collegial form of entrepreneurial activity that is more flexible, and thereby better suited, to the open-ended challenges that lie ahead. "The best way to predict the future is to make it yourself." A university, Clark reminds us, is not driven by globalization, or by demographic trends, or by economic forces, or by government policy. It is driven by the response it makes to the problems and challenges of the society around it, response rooted in institutional traditions, in institutional self-interests, in the competence and will of its faculty, and, above all, in the wisdom and courage of its leaders.

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Respondents



Yvon Fontaine

Jim Downey's presentation was intellectually challenging and well researched. Knowing Dr. Downey's capacity to analyze in depth any issue that he discusses, I knew that it would be a challenge to add in any significant way to the ideas he decided to put forward.

Yet I will comment on three elements of Dr. Downey's presentation. First, I would like to make a few observations on what he calls an imbalance of traditional powers in academia. Dr. Downey argues that the pendulum has swung more towards academic corporatization, at the expense of collegial governance. Without disagreeing with this observation, I would note that universities have an extraordinary capacity to adapt to change without losing the essence of what makes them different from other institutions, including their mode of governance.

In fact, as Dr. Downey rightly reminds us, universities — with regard to much of their mode of operation — are institutions which can be traced back to the Middle Ages, and have resisted all kinds of pressures that have otherwise deeply modified our societies. There may be a power shift from the collegial model to a more corporate model, but it seems to me that the return to an equilibrium is only a matter of time.

How does the situation currently stand? Has there actually been a transfer of the traditional power of the collegium towards corporatism? Are we witnessing the emergence of universities with broader missions that need new centres of power as a complement to the power of the collegium? The collegium has always had the academic authority, including in particular, peer review, academic hiring and curriculum — that is, every aspect relevant to academic quality.

Several recent developments have changed or broadened the traditional mission of universities, particularly Canada's innovation agenda and the role of technology transfer. The expectation

imposed by our society (i.e. governments and companies) to produce research with a potential for immediate or short-term application and economic relevance has made our institutions accountable not only to their internal community but also to stakeholders. While it is true that private corporations and governments have made massive investments to build the research capacity of our institutions, it is also true that they have demanded to be heard, and universities have had to adapt their organizational culture to share decision-making with the institutions and corporations that provide support.

So the governance structure of the traditional mission of academia has not changed, but an additional power has been superimposed to include the governance of new elements of our universities' mission.

The second element of Dr. Downey's presentation that I would like to comment on is his views on the future of universities. In his presentation, he argues that universities seem to be increasingly concerned with their contribution to economic development, rather than the development of our society. It is true that during the last decade, a large part of the effort and action of universities has pushed them further away from their traditional mission, to focus on innovation and universities' contribution to economic development.

Universities have an extraordinary capacity to adapt to change without losing the essence of what makes them different from other institutions.

It is essential to re-focus the role of the university, or the institution itself will disappear. In this respect, the teaching role of universities, and more specifically the education of undergraduate students, is essential. The central role of academia and the expectations of society will ensure that a new balance emerges between the pursuit of the innovation agenda and the training of tomorrow's citizens. In fact, the results of earlier studies confirm that these two elements — innovation and access to university teaching — must find a way to co-exist in the university.

Finally, Dr. Downey asks what the president's role should be in the evolution of his/her institution. What are the attributes of a leader or the leadership attributes of a president of a university who wants to influence? What's the next step? To me, it seems there are fundamental qualities that are necessary if we want to exercise the leadership role that we need to provide. One is certain: you first have to be able to listen and to gather the facts. After you listen, you need to work relentlessly in order to build a case. We need to have a story to tell, as Dr. Downey said. Indeed, we have some very good stories, but we need to understand the real issues, the concerns of both the internal and external communities of our universities. After we take stock of these, we can be convincing as leaders. Thereafter, it is much easier to exercise the influence expected of us. My own experience is that we usually start by doing just that. After a few years, we tend to forget that we need to be "out there" and listen, listen closely to the concerns of both our internal and external communities. If we don't build the case, it's hard to convince others of the real challenges our universities face.

Heather Munroe-Blum

Our colleague, Jim Downey, who gave a brilliant overview this morning, has challenged and provoked us deliberately. His was an elegant, gracious, and generous presentation by a master of story, one that makes me optimistic about the state of the university and the future for it.

The question that Jim Downey raised this morning really derives from our consideration of the very heart of the purpose and business of a university. He reminds us persuasively both of the importance of reflecting on these conditions, and of the need for a collective advocacy effort to confirm and communicate effectively our core mission as universities.

Like any leader of a large organization today, university heads are very pressed for time to think. One question is “Are we more pressed than others in this regard?” I think not, but we do face a special challenge to mobilize the very unique assets that are the core elements of our sector — reflection, analysis, questioning and the generation of ideas for the broader good. I support Jim’s assessment that the university environment in Canada, and I believe in each of the jurisdictions of Canada, has improved in recent years, and that there has been a stronger investment, particularly, I would say, in research, but also on the education side.

Jim’s analysis of the structure of the university as a trinity of corporation, collegium, and community reflects a sophisticated appreciation of the university, both in mission and in practice. But I would argue that form follows function, and the durability of universities over the past 500 years lies, not solely in the organization, but centrally in the value of their purpose. I think the focus, then, of our discussions lies in the broader historical perspective. I say this knowing a lot about Jim Downey’s intellectual pursuits and coming from mine as an epidemiologist, so I’m at some disadvantage. If we reflect on the place of the

universities in the western societies of 500 years ago, we may want to know more about their context, how many there were, who they served, how they were funded, who constituted their community.

My contention would be that universities, now in a much wider context of postsecondary education, have survived and grown enormously in number, size, scale, and in the reach and the communities that they serve only partly for the reasons that Jim outlines. The loyalty and competence of the people they attract, the values and standards and the dream of advancement they represent, and perhaps also their baroque organizational structure are all factors, to be sure. But, importantly, I think they've also survived and, indeed, thrived, because of public support for their contribution to the society of which they are a part, contributions both intellectual and pragmatic, both scientific and artistic.

I contend that universities are now and always have been worldly institutions attracting scholars from other cities or countries, and deserve our protection from the powerful of the day, from the sponsors of the day — whether princes or popes or ministers

and prime ministers. Like other institutions of long-standing, I think we survive by preserving the best of the traditional values of the university and also by looking for ways to represent the present needs and opportunities of our society and those of the future. My view is that, as an institution, the university is an active and influential leader in society, but a leader whose responsibility is to

encourage, support and protect the independence and freedom of the individuals who comprise the immediate university family, and, as well, to interact with partners, with other elements of society. The university here acts both as a bridge and a buffer.

We survive by preserving the best of the traditional values of the university and also by looking for ways to represent the present needs and opportunities of our society and those of the future.

While Dr. Downey rightly warns us against the danger of corporatism and economic functionalism, I would argue that universities through the ages have crafted the partnerships appropriate to their time and circumstances, as is the case today. Each of the three elements of the university trinity that Dr. Downey describes so well contributes to the whole. We must be vigilant in guarding our institutions against the possibility that financial capital will trump, but we must also be foresighted and creative in insuring adequate opportunities as well as resources. I would also say that many of the partnerships we pursue with the private sector, with governments and with other universities are driven first and foremost by the intellectual interests of our community, and not by the resources that they engender; that you can get both in one is an advantage.

The democratization of higher education has brought tremendous benefits for the broader community. This is seen throughout the country and in the purposeful diversification of the network of Quebec universities in which each institution has a distinctive mission related to the community it serves — in some instances local and regional, and in others, like McGill University the Université de Montréal and Université Laval, national and international. For example, at l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, with its strategic focus on the region of the Saguenay, its president, Michel Belley, is working in partnership with regional government, industry and community organizations to create economic and social clusters of expertise in fields of importance to the life of the region, such as forestry, aluminium and related mining and industrial areas, as well as education. This brings benefit to the larger community in the form of both ideas and people attracted to the region by the opportunities for research and teaching that such centres offer. It is, I think, a great demonstration of the fact that universities can both represent the great traditions of the past and be a viable institution serving society in a contemporary way, that we serve so many more in society today than we have historically.

I also want to speak briefly to the role of universities at the undergraduate level. One of the great joys I've already experienced as a university principal is that, while there may be tough things that we deal with every day, unlike working in the private sector and perhaps even in elements of government, in every day and every moment of leading a university, you know there are wonderful things happening that involve and benefit many, many people. There are so many extraordinarily good things that go on in a university in the classroom, in the library, in the laboratories; it is this that makes us so optimistic in our jobs. It is also a reflection of the good of the university.

Do we do everything we can do at the undergraduate level? Have we lost sight of the importance of education as well as research and scholarship? I think there's clearly room for a better balance

of these. We have the opportunity to recruit the next generation of professors. This is not an opportunity that comes every 20 years, but more like every 60 or 70 years. We've never had the opportunity in the modern era to renew the professorate that we've got right now, and we should be looking at multilingualism, bilingualism; we should be looking at commitment and excellence in research and scholarship;

In every day and every moment of leading a university, you know there are wonderful things happening that involve and benefit many, many people.

but also we should surely be looking at deep commitment and talent in teaching, and the capacity to go beyond where we are currently as a sector in bringing the benefits and the richness of our research and scholarship to the students who learn in our institutions.

Jim Downey invokes the dangers of corporatism in the seductive terms of a warming embrace. If the keys to seduction are persistence, imagination and originality, I suggest that we use the same tactics to present and to advance the case for universities. A compelling narrative is a crucial component but, as important as the

language, is the action of leadership. The proof is in the pudding: we can't be mindless about anything we do; we must choose all of our partners carefully. The goal when choosing our partners — whether from the private sector, other universities, governments or individuals — is to find that arena of common cause that is driven by the academic mission of our institutions.

What should the university leader do? We'll continue to do what we've always done, deal with complexity, use judgment, and preserve the fundamental values of the importance of knowledge, ideas, and talent.

In conclusion, I want to thank Jim Downey. Your paper served very well in stimulating us to thought and calling us to action.

Harvey Weingarten

In his presentation, Jim Downey has charged us to think about the questions: where are we as universities, what are we, and where are we going? The question I would ask is who is the “we”? I suggest that the “we” has to go beyond the people at AUCC and include more than just the people we typically consult about the future of Canada’s public universities. Since we are publicly funded institutions, for me, the “we” includes the general public and the communities we serve.

So, I would reframe Jim’s questions to ask “what does our public, our society, want us to be and where does it want us to go?”

Canadian universities exist in a social contract with the public: our public includes students, communities and governments. Underlying Jim’s reflections about universities, in my opinion, is a questioning of the very nature of the social contract Canadian universities have with the Canadian public. I’m not a great historian of universities but I suspect the social contract that we have now was shaped after World War II. University scientists made a significant contribution to the success of allied forces in the Second World War and, motivated by this recognition, Vannevar Bush, Franklin Roosevelt’s science policy advisor, cut a deal with the U.S. government: governments would invest in universities and in their research and otherwise leave the institutions alone. The expected outcome of this investment was an expected and inevitable public good, just as had been the case in WWII. That analysis, accepted by the American government, led to the creation of granting agencies such as the National Science Foundation and, in general, defined the policy framework for the relationship between the government and the public and their universities.

I suggest that, today, there are holes, or at least cracks, in that social contract. Governments are less inclined to invest in universities. This is not a Canadian phenomenon; the reduced

investment in public universities is a North American phenomenon. Governments are also far less inclined to leave universities alone. Governments increasingly intervene in public universities. There are more and more demands for accountability. I also think that the view that public good will simply and inevitably result from unfettered investment in university research is an idea that is less accepted by the public. Rather, the public is much more inclined to hold universities accountable and to probe the linkage between public investment in universities and the public good that results.

A university credential is increasingly an entry level requirement for many jobs.

I suggest that the series of ads put out by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada is one manifestation of the changing contract between government funding and university-based research. The ads promote the importance of NSERC-funded research and typically show the pictures of the researchers and describe the scientific problem on which they work. The rest of the ad talks about the application of the research even though NSERC, appropriately, is the council funding basic, curiosity-driven research.

All of this has been coupled with a significant demographic shift in who attends university. We have moved from a small percentage of high school graduates attending university to the point, where now 40 percent or more of high school graduates proceed to postsecondary education. A university credential is increasingly an entry level requirement for many jobs.

You can also see shifts in the social contract between universities and government in some recent AUCC actions. We, as universities through our national association, give government a promissory note by which, in exchange for their investment in us though research funding, we will provide some tangible, measurable deliverables such as a doubling of graduate student numbers and a tripling of the commercialization of our research.

University presidents, in my view, need to be more active in promoting curriculum reform in our institutions.

If you accept the proposition that we are experiencing a shift in the social contract between universities and the public, there are three implications, at least in my view, for universities and the work of university presidents.

First, universities and university presidents need to be critically immersed in community engagement. In the old social contract, it didn't matter if we lived in splendid isolation. That's not the case anymore. In fact, the case we make repeatedly for increased government funding of universities requires, in my view, the

preliminary step of convincing the public to join with us in petitioning provincial governments for additional university support. As an example: during a symposium at the University of Calgary in November 2002 former premiers Frank McKenna, Bob Rae and Peter Lougheed talked about

the role of public universities and their expected contribution to Canadian society. These ex-premiers gave remarkably supportive and eloquent statements about the importance of universities. In the Q&A period, someone asked: "I just want to be sure that I have this right. I heard you say that you support universities. But, am I also right in remembering that all three of your governments cut funding to universities?" The answer was "yes". And, why had they done that? Because in the absence of public support and given the many demands on the public purse that's what premiers and governments do. And so, a critical task for universities and their presidents is to promote increased community and public awareness of the handsome societal benefits of investments in Canada's universities. This is the necessary precursor of additional government investment.

Second, and in this I am in complete agreement with Jim, is that the changing social contact places increasing focus on the undergraduate curriculum and student experience. Student surveys and public opinion show considerable convergence

on concerns about the undergraduate experience. We have some significant analyses and recommendations about what a progressive undergraduate education should look like, the U.S. Boyer Commission Report being a particularly compelling example. It is understood that we need to address some deficiencies in the typical undergraduate education. For example, during the O.J. Simpson trial, there were many students who could speak at great length and depth about the ethical, ethnic and racial issues involved in that trial. But far fewer students understood the science of DNA fingerprinting, a critical piece of the evidence in the trial. If we're going to have citizens who can make informed societal decisions, we need, among other things, to improve the overall science literacy and numeracy of our graduates. (One of the most sobering presentations I've heard recently was by a Supreme Court judge who, in a candid moment, admitted that he and his colleagues were having difficulty appreciating the evidence in some cases because it was science-based and they lacked some of the background to understand some of the issues.)

I'm not here to advocate for a particular perspective or form of undergraduate education. That is a matter of debate. My central point is this: David Cameron, in a recent article, said that university reform was too important to leave to university administrators. I suggest that the nature and quality of the undergraduate experience is too important to leave to vice-presidents academic. University presidents, in my view, need to be more active in promoting curriculum reform in our institutions.

Third, we have a very good public university system in Canada. But whenever I hear that opinion expressed I am reminded of the book, *Good to Great* by Jim Collins in which he compares the attributes of great companies to good ones. As Collins says: "Good is the enemy of great". As we engage the public and talk about the role of universities, we must remember that the Canadian public merits not a good, but a great, university system.

University presidents must promote the view that, in higher education, and for the future of the country, good isn't good enough. In the public debate and community engagement about universities, I encourage us never to compromise on the issue of quality, even when it may mean limiting access to our institutions.

As we have done with health care, I suggest the need for a national public conversation and analysis of the state of Canada's universities and the contribution the public expects of them. This discussion must include consideration of the responsibilities and obligations of Canada's universities, and the interaction between them and the public. We don't have many good mechanisms for this type of conversation in this country. But, a fundamental point of agreement I share with Jim Downey is our collective responsibility to promote exactly that discussion.

Resources

1. Boyer, Ernest L. *Reinventing undergraduate education: a blueprint for America's research universities*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1997.
2. Cameron, David M. "The challenge of change: Canadian universities in the 21st century". *Canadian public administration* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2002) : 145-174.
3. Collins, Jim. *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap . . . and other's don't*. HarperBusiness, 2001.

Biographical notes

James Downey

James Downey is professor of English and director of the Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education at the University of Waterloo. Dr. Downey is past president of the University of Waterloo (1993-99) and former president of the University of New Brunswick (1980-90) and Carleton University (pro-tem 1979). At various times he has been: special advisor to the premier of New Brunswick; co-chair of the New Brunswick Commission on Excellence in Education; chair of the Council of Ontario Universities; chair of the Association of Commonwealth Universities; and chair of the joint Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada-Canadian Council of Professional Engineers Panel on Software Engineering. He recently co-edited a collection of essays by leading Canadian researchers, published in the fall of 2002 by Key Porter Books, entitled *Innovation : essays by leading Canadian researchers*. Dr. Downey has led AUCC's Seminar for New Presidents since its inception in 1999.

Yvon Fontaine

Yvon Fontaine has served as president of the Université de Moncton since July 1, 2000. Formerly vice-president academic at Moncton, Prof. Fontaine has also served as a professor of law and director of Moncton's international cooperation and exchange office. Prof. Fontaine has extensive experience in both university management and the private sector. From 1984 to 1992, he was associate dean and dean of law, instrumental in the development of various aspects of the law school at Moncton. In the private sector, his appointments have included senior executive positions at Assumption Life. Prof. Fontaine is a former chairperson of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes du Canada and has often served as expert advisor in the areas of language rights and constitutional law for provincial and federal governments.

Heather Munroe-Blum

Heather Munroe-Blum was appointed principal and vice-chancellor of McGill University in January 2003. She is also a professor in the department of epidemiology and biostatistics at McGill's faculty of medicine. Dr. Munroe-Blum has previously served at the University of Toronto as professor and as vice-president for research and international relations from 1994 to 2002. Before becoming vice-president at U of T, she was dean of social work. Dr. Munroe-Blum specializes in psychiatric epidemiology and has led large-scale epidemiological investigations of the distribution, prevention, course and treatment of major psychiatric disorders, influencing the development of effective mental health policies and practices. She is active in the development of effective public policy in support of science, research and higher education, and is frequently called on to act as a consultant to governments and other bodies, in Canada and abroad.

Harvey P. Weingarten

Harvey Weingarten has been president and vice-chancellor of the University of Calgary since September 2001. Dr. Weingarten came to the University of Calgary from McMaster University, where he served as provost and vice-president academic from 1996 to 2001. He joined McMaster in 1979 as a member of the faculty, and went on to become chair of the department of psychology in 1989 and dean of McMaster's faculty of science in 1995. A distinguished scholar and researcher in the fields of psychology and medicine, Dr. Weingarten's research topics include psychological and biological controls of eating and eating disorders. His leadership includes service on the boards of the Canadian Centre for Creative Technology (Shad Valley), the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, and Calgary Technologies Inc. For 2002-03, Dr. Weingarten was named honorary president of the Canadian Psychological Association.



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