

President's Newsletter



I wish to begin by extending my very best wishes for 2012. I hope that everyone enjoyed a much-deserved, restful and enjoyable holiday break with family and friends. There is no question that 2011 was an eventful year for MacEwan University, and I am certain 2012 will bring new opportunities and possibilities for the institution.

Vice-President (Academic) and Provost

I announced earlier this month that Dr. Janet Paterson-Weir has indicated her wish to retire during 2012. Losing a vice-president is a major event for a university, given the critical importance of the position in the academic operations of the institution. While we are obviously sorry to be losing Janet, we recognize her wish to retire and pursue something new. We have not yet established a definite date for her departure but Janet and I will be working during the coming months to effect a smooth transition. We will be moving forward expeditiously with the process to find a successor. I have made additional comments about the process below.

While we will have many opportunities to recognize her over the coming months, I would like to thank Janet for her contributions to the university over the last 10 years. She will be greatly missed.

Organizational Priorities

I have attached the final [Organizational Priorities document](#) approved by the Board of Governors at its December meeting. The document has changed in some measure from what was previously circulated. Most notably, a set of deliverables and the name of the most senior person responsible has been attached to each priority. I am generally pleased with how the process of creating the document unfolded, allowing as it did for substantial consultation - with the President's Group, the Academic Governance Council, the Strategic and Resource Planning Advisory Committee, and, of course, the Board of Governors. These priorities are intended to map out specific actions for the next 12 to 18 months, and they will be used to provide context for 2012/13 budget allocations.

While every one of these priorities is important, there are several on which I wish especially to comment. The first pertains to Continuing Education, which incorporates areas as diverse as open studies,

distance education, ESL, academic upgrading, professional and executive training and community programming. Continuing Education has long been important in defining MacEwan University's role as a community-based institution, although in recent years enrolment in continuing education offerings has softened. There are many possible reasons for this, not the least of which is the focus the university has placed on degree development. If we are serious about positioning ourselves as an urban, "downtown" university, then continuing education must be given a special place in the institution's offerings. I consider this an area of prime importance for the university.

Over the coming months we will be examining how best to structure Continuing Education in the best interests of the university and our students. There are a number of important factors in any restructuring initiative. These include

1. The faculties' and schools' central role in planning and offering programs.
2. The overarching intention to coordinate Continuing Education with what the institution is currently doing.
3. Our large number of Open Studies students who have no academic home, a situation which should not be allowed to continue if we wish to convert them into degree students.
4. Changing demographics and enrolment behaviours. We talk a great deal about the need for alternative models of delivery to accommodate these shifts, when, in fact, universities are generally reticent to change how they do things. In particular, we need to expand online program delivery and increase summer offerings in response to student interest in attending university year-round.
5. The need to be flexible and timely in serving our community.

Of equal importance is the matter of enrolment management. At present, the institution does not have any kind of comprehensive strategy for attracting and keeping students. Recruitment is largely decentralized to the faculties, and while there is obviously a role for faculty-specific recruitment, there is the obvious question of effectiveness and efficiency. Retention is an element that universities often talk about but often erroneously assume to be taking place. The need for adequate investment in student advising, both at a faculty level and institutionally, is a given. MacEwan University is an institution that prides itself on being student focused, and we simply must make retention an institutional priority. Finally, the new PeopleSoft system demands a fully integrated model for enrolment planning. This alone suggests the need for appropriate leadership along with necessary structures and processes in the university.

It is also important that we continue with planning for new programs in the future, that we continue to develop our shared governance (bicameral) model, and that we continue with our institutional commitment to sustainability. If we are serious about building on the legacy of our namesake, issues of sustainability must be a prominent part of everything we do. One of my personal ambitions is to continue working on our single sustainable campus model, in particular the development of a new facility for the fine and performing arts, the fundraising campaign associated with it, and the sale of two of our campuses.

Searches

There are several HR issues about which I wish to advise everyone. I know the ongoing search for an Executive Director of Human Resources has been frustrating, and that the lack of senior HR leadership is of considerable concern. I have recently been in touch with Odgers Berndston, the firm that is conducting this search, and we are endeavouring to make an appointment by the middle of March.

With the imminent departure of Alan Heyhurst, we will also be searching for a new Executive Director of Finance. In the meantime, Charles MacDonald has been appointed Acting Executive Director of Finance and Terry Harris has been appointed Acting Executive Director of Human Resources, both until June 30, 2012. Samantha Kernahan has left the institution to pursue other opportunities, and we will be searching for a new General Counsel. This position will be slightly

restructured, reporting to the President and responsible for institutional policy development, especially in the case of the Board.

We have already sent out a request for proposals for potential search firms for these positions, and anticipate having a successful firm(s) chosen by the end of January. This also includes a search firm to assist with finding a new Vice-President (Academic). Finally, the search for a Chief Librarian is moving forward. The search committee has developed criteria for the position and is working with Geldart and Associates, a national firm specializing in post-secondary recruitment.

PeopleSoft

To repeat what I have said before, the one thing consistently brought to my attention during the last six months is the ongoing challenges of PeopleSoft. Hindsight is always perfect, although we must recognize that institutional expectations concerning the speed of PeopleSoft implementation were probably unrealistic, notwithstanding the outstanding work and commitment of IT and those of our colleagues who took on extra work in trying to get different parts of the system up and running. What the university asked was simply not doable. We must recognize, too, that the implementation of a "vanilla" system, which was definitely the right thing to do, demands a significant adjustment in our business practices, something which has not occurred and which is the responsibility of our various business units. And finally, the university must provide additional training for everyone.

IBM will be returning to assist in addressing these challenges. Effective January 9, Gary Hunter, who has been with us before, will be on campus to begin the process of coordinating all activities relating to PeopleSoft; he will be replaced in due course by Alex Nechiff, who is currently a project executive with IBM. This position will report directly to the President.

In addition, we will establish a small committee of managers representing the major areas relevant to PeopleSoft (Finance, Human Resources, Student Information Systems, IT, etc.) to assist with determining the priorities that will be addressed in the coming months. Initially, at least, I will chair this committee. I fully accept that this is an unusual role for the President. However, given the importance of PeopleSoft implementation, the Board has specifically mandated me to bring this project to a satisfactory conclusion.

Institutional Reviews

I want to thank everyone who participated in the recent AUCC review. The response from everyone—the Academic Governance Council, the Board of Governors, the MacEwan Faculty Association, the university's senior administration, the Students' Association, and faculty—was especially impressive, and was noted by the review team. The review went very well, and I am optimistic about a positive outcome.

While the AUCC review has been completed, our work is not done. During the coming year, the university will be subject to a comprehensive institutional review by the Campus Alberta Quality Council, which is “an arm's-length quality assurance agency that makes recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology on applications from post-secondary institutions seeking to offer new degree programs in Alberta.” The Council also “conducts periodic evaluations of approved degree programs to ensure that quality standards continue to be met.”

MacEwan University will be the first post-secondary institution to undergo a comprehensive review. There is no dismissing that the review requires an enormous amount of work at all levels of the institution. Dr. Susan May will be coordinating the review, which entails the preparation of a comprehensive self study. As well, the university will use the services of Dr. Judith Hughes as an outside consultant. As part of the self study, Dr. Hughes will interview a number of people from across the university, and I ask that, should you be contacted, you assist Dr. Hughes with her task.

Capital Development

At its December meeting, the Board of Governors approved an allocation of \$5 million for the design and planning phase for the new facility for the fine and performing arts. While this funding will initially come from institutional reserves, the intention is, ultimately, to charge it against the total project costs. An RFP for a design team has been issued, and we expect to make a decision over the next several weeks. As well, a consultation process has been established to secure input on the design of the new building. In the meantime, we will be moving ahead with limited renovations to the Centre for the Arts and Communications to accommodate growth in the new Jazz and Contemporary Popular Music degree program.

Awards

Each year the university makes a number of awards that recognize outstanding contributions to the institution. Obviously it is important that we recognize those of our colleagues who enjoy special success or make a special effort on behalf of the university. I am encouraging everyone to consider submitting a nomination for a deserving candidate. The following constitutes the list of awards for this year:

- You Make the Difference Award
- Award for Innovation
- Distinguished Teaching Award
- Emeritus Award
- MacEwan Medallion
- Outstanding Service Award
- Outstanding Team Award

Nominations should be sent by e-mail to employeerecognition@macewan.ca or to the attention of Karen Freiman in Human Resources (University Service Centre, Room, 10-600). The deadline for receiving all nominations is Friday, January 20, 2012. For more information, please contact Karen Freiman at 5433.

United Way

The institution should take considerable satisfaction from MacEwan University's United Way campaign this year. Our campaign goal was \$25,000 and we raised \$41,896; this compares to last year where we had a target of \$20,000 and raised \$21,979. It constitutes a 91% increase in funds raised and a 118% increase in numbers of individual donors. Thanks to all of you – we are looking forward to an even more successful campaign next year! A special thanks to Traci Toshack, Rebecca Chelmyck, Tony Norrad, Shelagh Kubish and Michelle Stevenson, who constituted an informal steering committee for the United Way this year.

Marketing Strategy

As I mentioned in a previous newsletter, the Board of Governors has determined that henceforth the institution should be referred to as "MacEwan University" rather than by the single designator "MacEwan." Related to this, we are in the process of securing an external advertising and marketing firm to assist us in positioning ourselves locally, provincially and nationally. Key to our messaging will be identifying MacEwan University as an undergraduate institution committed to providing students with an outstanding learning experience.

As well, there is considerable interest in MacEwan University being identified as "Edmonton's downtown university." This, of course, demands that we define what we mean by "downtown" university: certainly the definition goes well beyond our physical location. In order to ensure the success of the process, there will be broad consultation with the university community.

In addition to identifying ourselves as "MacEwan University" we will also be going through a process to change our logo. The new logo will incorporate the word "university" to clearly identify our place within the post-secondary world. This process will also involve broad consultation with our university community and will be completed later this year.

Communication

While I hope this newsletter is providing some useful information concerning developments at MacEwan University, I do know that it is one-way communication. I would like therefore to have a series of town hall meetings over the next few months, probably a couple at City Centre Campus and one on each of our other campuses. The intention will be for me to hear from you. Members of the university community should have an opportunity to tell me what is going well, what needs work, and what we might usefully stop doing.

Thank you

I want to extend my personal appreciation to the university community for an outstanding Presidential Installation. This was a very special event for my wife and me, especially as our extended family was able to attend. The evening convocation was also outstanding. I know it was extra work this year, as we tried to bring both events more in line with the traditions and standards expected of a university convocation.

Best wishes

Allow me once more to extend best wishes to everyone for 2012. I trust it will bring everything you wish both professionally and personally. It has become a cliché to say we have a lot for which to be thankful. But in every cliché lies a truth, and certainly at MacEwan University there is a great deal for which we should be grateful.

