

# President's Newsletter



The first few months of any term are always exciting ones, and there is always much to do. Certainly there is a great deal going on at MacEwan University, as the institution addresses important matters relative to its status as a university. I apologize at the outset, then, for the length of this newsletter, but it has long been my belief that the university community should be aware of major institutional developments.

## AUCC membership

The second visit of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) review team, which first visited MacEwan in November 2010, will take place on November 29. There has been a lot of speculation about the University's application to the AUCC, and I have learned that many faculty and staff are not clear about why this membership is so important to the institution.

The AUCC has been around for a very long time, and was first formed as a mechanism for exchanging ideas among Canadian universities. With a current membership of more than 90 institutions, the AUCC has evolved into an important advocacy group for Canadian universities. In the absence of a federal accreditation body as in the U.S., the AUCC has also become a de facto accreditation body for Canadian universities. Being a member of the AUCC brings an institution instant credibility and recognition, both in Canada and internationally. More than this, membership in the AUCC gives us access to a range of other opportunities, including:

1. It allows our graduates increased access to graduate and professional programs.
2. It provides opportunities to improve our Library collection.
3. It allows us to pursue specific degree opportunities (e.g. Bachelor of Social Work).
4. It assists in getting the institution external accreditation (e.g. Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)).
5. It gets the institution on preferred lists for recruiting international students.
6. It allows MacEwan University to compete in Canada Interuniversity Sport (CIS).
7. It provides the institution with access to the Canadian university community and all the benefits that come from this.

While the reviewers were extremely positive about

the progress that MacEwan had made as a university, they had three reservations which prevented them from making a positive recommendation for AUCC membership. It is important to note that reviewers typically have two options following a review: to recommend that the AUCC member institutions approve or decline an application.

The review team took the approach that MacEwan University was in transition and it wanted to provide an opportunity for further review. The concerns expressed by the reviewers are as follows:

1. Academic governance - there was concern that the University does not have Faculty Councils, which are considered essential for a Canadian university. Academic Governance Council has made considerable progress on this issue, and Faculty Councils will be implemented over the coming year.
2. Academic rank - while academic rank is not a requirement of AUCC membership, the committee was concerned about its potentially divisive influence on the institution. Again, the University has made considerable progress on this matter, with recommendations concerning academic rank coming to the November AGC meeting.
3. Institutional leadership - the University was in the early stages of its presidential search during the first review/visit, and the committee wanted this to be completed so that they were confident adequate leadership was in place.

During the visit, the review team will be meeting with a number of groups. Among the groups with which they wish to meet is faculty, so we have scheduled an open meeting for November 29 at 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. in Room 9-115. I cannot stress enough the importance of AUCC membership, so I urge as many faculty members to attend as possible.

### University operational plan

A critical element for any university is to develop operational plans that provide short and medium term guidance to the institution, and that serve as a context for annual budget deliberations. To this end, we have over the last several months been developing just such a plan. It draws significantly from the University's three-year Comprehensive Institutional Plan (CIP) which is submitted annually to the Alberta government. The CIP reflects the larger directions outlined in MacEwan's Strategic Plan, and it aims to further the institution's agenda as a new university.

The recommendations contained in the operational plan constitute concrete action items. Some of them have already been approved by the Board; others do not require any additional resources. This plan was approved for circulation by the Board at its October 27, 2011 meeting. It will now go to Academic Governance Council for review and advice and then return to the Board for final approval at its December meeting. I have attached the document for those interested in reading it. Anyone who wishes to provide input should speak with a member of the Academic Governance Council.

Closely related to the issue of operational planning is the decision to eliminate the Staff Complement Management Program implemented last year. As is generally known, there was a freeze on new, continuing staff positions and the hiring of continuing staff, except for faculty. It is clear that the previous complement management model created significant challenges and problems in managing the affairs of the University. Accordingly, there will be a new process that allows areas to hire continuing staff in the University. With the removal of this freeze, all continuing positions must receive approval from the President and Vice-Presidents Group prior to recruiting to such positions. This process will ensure that new permanent positions meet the needs of the institution, and are consistent with both the strategic and operational priorities of the University.

### Re-positioning MacEwan University

At its September 22, 2011 meeting, the Board of Governors approved a strategy for institutional branding. The most immediate impact of this decision is that the University will begin immediately using "MacEwan University" where it previously used "MacEwan." The institution's official name remains Grant MacEwan University. As was communicated in a previous internal announcement, everyone should be using the name MacEwan University in everyday writing, as well as marketing and communications initiatives.

This change is the result, in part, of a recent Leger survey conducted for the University to determine the extent to which the institution's new status had traction with the general public. What the survey revealed was substantial confusion about what the institution is—a university, a college, a university college, a polytechnic. More than this, the fact remains that the institution is a university and should call itself that. The Board was cognizant, as well, of the excellent timing of such a change, as the University is currently celebrating its 40th anniversary.

Work on rebranding will start in the new year with an updated logo, new templates for institutional marketing, new signage on our campuses, and new directional road signage. The rebranding exercise will include broad consultation with the University community. It is our intention to use professional marketing consultants although, at the same time, we aim to keep costs down. The use of external council will allow us to test messages that focus on MacEwan as a university, as an undergraduate university, and as a university that focuses on teaching and learning. Key, as well, will be to position the University as Edmonton's "downtown" university.

### Campus consolidation

As was recently reported in the *Edmonton Journal*, the University is moving ahead with its campus consolidation program, of which the opening of the University Service Centre was the first step. It is the University's intention to sell the South Campus and the Centre for Arts and Communications and to use the proceeds towards the construction of a new facility. It is with this in mind that the Board has authorized the University to move ahead with detailed planning for a new building on the City Centre Campus for the fine and performing arts, with the hope that a new facility will be constructed by the end of 2014. This new building, which will be located adjacent to the Residence, will also contain multipurpose space to accommodate future student growth. As should always be the case, there will be broad consultation with users about the scope and magnitude of the project.

### Enterprise Resource Planning (PeopleSoft)

As I met with various groups and individuals on campus over the last several months, I heard repeated concerns about the new PeopleSoft implementation. I am very aware of the extraordinary things that were asked of IT over the last year, and in every respect IT has met or exceeded expectations. That IT could implement the new system in a year is virtually unheard of. At the same time, this success means that a great deal remains to be done, especially in relation to institutional business practices; in other words, what is the capacity of the system to meet the needs of end users. As well, I am very aware of the need for additional training.

It is in this context that I have decided to further retain IBM professional staff. Beginning this week, IBM will conduct an audit of the new system to determine areas of concern and areas where additional work needs to be completed. There will also be consultations with current users. IBM will then establish a series of priorities that will constitute a work plan for the coming year. We all understand the importance of PeopleSoft for the institution's ongoing operations, and I ask that everyone work with IBM if you happen to be called upon. The Board of Governors is fully engaged with this next stage. Accordingly, final authority for ERP for the foreseeable future stage will rest with the President's Office.

### Faculty Councils

I am exceedingly pleased that Academic Governance Council recently approved the membership and implementation procedures for Faculty Councils. It is critically important that Faculty Councils for all faculties and schools be fully operational by September 2012. As I think most people realize, collegial governance is core to our operations as a University, and it is important that we give this matter particular attention. Some of you will have heard me say that what truly defines a university is not the programs it offers but how it governs itself.

Over the coming months, we shall need to examine our current governance structure to determine how it may be improved, most specifically the ways in which the Academic Governance Council and the Board of Governors interact with one another. We must accept that a bicameral governance structure might seem counterintuitive, but the fact of the matter is that it has been around for a very long time, and has served universities well over the years.

### Other items

I would remind everyone of Convocation on November 14, and would encourage as many as possible to attend. This is an important event for our graduates so it is important that we have a good representation of faculty and staff.

I previously sent a letter concerning the current United Way campaign. I realize that the ability to give varies from person to person, and that we all have our individual charities. Nonetheless I would encourage as many of you as possible to make a contribution. We have a target of \$25,000, up slightly from last year. Participation is also important, so it would be great to improve the number of faculty and staff contributing to the United Way this year, no matter the size of contribution.

With best wishes,



David W. Atkinson