



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Growing Esteem

Choices for the University of Melbourne

*A Discussion Paper
that invites involvement
and response*

July 2005

CRESCAM LAUDE

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Growing Esteem: Choices for the University of Melbourne

A discussion paper¹

Postera crescam laude – to grow in the esteem of future generations. The aspiration is stamped on the University crest, a Latin tag beneath a Greek goddess standing amid the Southern Cross. An institution that would bring Western civilisation to the Antipodes, old knowledge for a new world.

A lot has changed since 1853, but not the belief that universities matter. Each generation needs a place to grasp – and transform – its heritage.

In 2005 the University of Melbourne again faces change, and must make decisions about its future. We now look beyond Europe to a broader world. At home, the institution must grapple with an historic shift from public funding to relying on students and benefactors for support. A familiar and stable public higher education sector is being reshaped by the vagaries of markets. Other players are claiming research status once preserved for universities. Potential students have new choices, wider options.

To ensure continued relevance, the University of Melbourne must think through its context and goals, be clear about its intentions. This discussion paper is a contribution to that process. It invites ideas and comments from students, staff and the wider University community. The paper outlines key challenges and opportunities facing the University, and asks how we might respond. It asks what the University already does well and should keep doing, what needs improvement, what to create and perhaps what to relinquish.

I hope the paper encourages broader discussion about how the University can enlarge its contribution to deserve growing esteem. **Your responses are essential.** There are suggested questions at the conclusion of the paper, but feel free to raise more and to comment on any issue raised here. Consultation meetings will be organised across the University. Responses by Friday, 26 August would be appreciated, and can be sent to vc@unimelb.edu.au

The paper starts broad, with snapshots of the University tradition and recent developments in Australia before turning to the path followed by the University of Melbourne. The paper concludes with some detail about challenges and choices now before us.

The results of this consultation process will inform a revised *Melbourne Agenda*, as a new strategic plan for the University, to be considered by Council in the later months of 2005.

Professor Glyn Davis
Vice-Chancellor

Introduction

This discussion paper covers the following:

Snapshots 1, 2 and 3 consider aspects of the university tradition, recent changes in the Australian context, and aspects of the University and the *Melbourne Agenda*.

Pages 3–14

Testing the vision covers the challenges ahead a decade after the formulation of the *Melbourne Agenda*.

Page 15

Snapshots 4, 5 and 6 cover the dilemmas presented by the *Melbourne Agenda*, raises some new issues to consider, then offers a summary outlook and strategic dilemmas, posed as a series of questions.

Pages 16–31

How can you respond?

There will be discussion forums and consultations which staff and students are invited to attend across the University. Further information about this process is available at www.unimelb.edu.au/vc/consultation/announcements.html

We encourage all staff and students to conduct their own discussions and concentrate on the issues most relevant to them.

Colleagues should get together to work out their response and proposals, which need not be confined to the questions raised in this paper. Critical perspectives, creative ideas and robust solutions on these and other University issues are most welcome.

Your responses would be appreciated by Friday, 26 August and can be sent to vc@unimelb.edu.au

SNAPSHOT 1

What is a university for?

Western universities draw on a 900-year-long tradition as institutions of higher learning. Yet they vary widely in the role they perform, sources of income, modes of governance, relations to power and belief, and contribution to societies. There is not one model for a university, but a multitude.

The original *universitas* of the 13th century embodied competing understandings of who would be served by these new institutions. In Bologna, the university was created and governed by a guild of students. In Paris, the university was the property of a guild of masters. Much later, in the United States, universities were created and governed by people who were neither students nor staff, but external trustees. Australia has sought to reconcile these models, with most universities established by governments and governed by councils with a mixed membership of insiders and outsiders.²

Sources of income were diverse, often a combination of patronage, taxes, commercial enterprise and tuition charges. In 15th century Italy, universities became important sources of civic income, both retaining locals and attracting students from neighbouring centres. Many governments used economic analysis to help set funding and policy.³ Some were highly protectionist, banning their citizens from studying abroad in favour of local provision.⁴ Hypothecated taxes on goods and services were a popular source of funding: pepper at Bologna, wine at Rome, meat at Turin, and prostitution at Padua all provided a tax base to support the local university. (Perhaps an Australian government will one day raise the GST rate from 10 to 11 per cent, and persuade the States to spend the extra \$3.5 billion of revenue on their universities!⁵)

The defining aims of the early universities varied, reflecting their different origins. In England, the influence of the Church and the need for learned clergy shaped approaches at Oxford and Cambridge. In Paris, the university took an early interest in the professions. Students enrolled for general undergraduate studies in the faculty of philosophy (later to branch into arts and sciences) followed by specialist courses in theology, law or medicine. Graduates would then go out into the world, certified as having the ability and authority (the *faculty*)⁶ to administer to the spiritual, civic and physical needs of the populace.

Institutional structures and practices developed to handle growth in student numbers and an expanding range of subjects. Universities and colleges built libraries to preserve and manage knowledge. A lack of multiple copies of texts led to reliance on the lecture. Education was multi-modal, a mix of instruction, training, and co-inquiry.⁷ Students travelling to study in Bologna, Paris or Oxford at first stayed at hostels owned or rented by their tutors. Later they would live in colleges, retaining a human scale as the larger institution grew. The idea of *collegiality* came to imply both a sense of community and a basis for character formation, a time and space in which students encountered not just scholarly knowledge but each other.⁸

The interaction between church, state and universities proved always a two-edged sword. Support from a prince or bishop secured vital funding but led to outside intervention in university affairs. In 1210 the Church banned the University of Paris from studying Aristotle's natural philosophy. In England in 1536, an Act of Parliament ensured no student could graduate from Oxford or Cambridge without making an oath to renounce the Bishop of Rome.

University purposes focused first on teaching; research as a central aim came much later. In 1755 Dr Johnson's *Dictionary* defined a university as 'a school where all the arts and faculties are taught'. Only in 1810 did Wilhelm von Humboldt's plan for a new university at Berlin combine education and research, making fundamental inquiry part of the work of a university professor.⁹

This radical innovation found many detractors. It is customary in any survey of university purpose to quote approvingly from John Henry Newman's lectures of 1852, published as *The Idea of a University*. Yet Newman opposed research as a defining aim for a university. His proposal for a new Catholic university at Dublin, informed by his years at Oxford, argued that other institutions are better placed for research. As a rule, he asserted, teachers are too busy to do research, and researchers too preoccupied to teach.¹⁰ What Newman and Humboldt shared was the idea that 'universal' forms of 'truth' and 'knowledge' could be achieved, and that the university played a central role in this. For Newman it functioned as a 'tribunal of truth' where scholars would settle their differences. For Humboldt it was a place where knowledge was a 'problem to be solved'.

The early University of Melbourne, founded in 1853, followed the tradition expressed by Newman. In 1878, Charles Pearson, a member of the Council of the University of Melbourne, asserted that the main function of a university professor was to 'impart, not invent'. Only in the late 1880s, with the appointment of professors in chemistry and biology, did Melbourne acquire staff directly involved in research. And not until the mid 1940s did the University enrol Australia's first doctoral candidate. By then the Humboldt approach of research-led teaching was becoming the orthodoxy across Australia, the United Kingdom and much of the United States.

Humboldt's idea that combining research and teaching in one place would enrich both student learning and discovery is perhaps the strongest influence on contemporary thinking about Australian universities. It is reflected, for example, in Australia's Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Protocols that define what a university must do (although debate about what is essential, and how best to do it, is alive and well).¹¹ Yet while Humboldt supported intellectual freedom as a precondition for advancing knowledge, this did not imply complete institutional autonomy.¹² He believed in a key role for the state in university affairs, with government selecting university teachers.¹³

Public universities in Australia, established by legislation and subject to government regulation, support complete academic freedom, but do not enjoy complete institutional autonomy.¹⁴ Until the recent rise of private international and domestic students, which provided some discretionary income, the teaching and research profiles of Australian universities have been shaped significantly by government funding policies.

If governance, funding, subject matter, research and institutional autonomy have all varied by time and place, so too has the way 'knowledge' is framed. In the medieval university, knowledge had to be reconciled with the 'revealed truth' of religious doctrine. The modern university had to satisfy Enlightenment rules of 'universal reason'. Since the advent of postmodernism, ideas of truth and knowledge, just like tradition and authority, are open to critique, and typically framed in terms of 'radical uncertainty'.¹⁵ As one Australian philosopher ruefully observes, "Truth is now a suspect concept in many academic quarters".¹⁶ While radical uncertainty may not be new – it has a long tradition in philosophy as good old-fashioned scepticism – postmodernism has made it a mainstream element of intellectual discourse.

If the concept of truth has become controversial, less so now is a more recent arrival in the concept of a university – the idea of social and political critique. In 1945 Karl Jaspers argued that academic freedom to teach the truth must extend to all scholars “in defiance of anyone inside or outside the university who wishes to curtail it”.¹⁷ Professors might now see themselves as public intellectuals, willing, even obliged, to “speak truth to power”.¹⁸ In the 1960s the Free Speech Movement, associated with the University of California at Berkeley, pressed the idea of the university as an institutional ‘critic and conscience’ of society.¹⁹ By 1975, the ‘critical evaluation of society’ appeared in Australian government documents as an expected function of a public university.²⁰

This embrace of critique contrasts with the now abandoned concept of character formation, once a mainstay of rhetoric about universities. While President of Princeton, Woodrow Wilson spoke of the great responsibility to shape not just the minds but the moral outlook of students destined to run great enterprises and nations. In postmodern times, when appeals to definitive, authoritative and universal standards of truth, value, taste and judgement are highly contested, such ambitions seem unsupportable. In a mass system, universities no longer aspire to stamp their students in a particular image (although they do claim to instil certain attributes). Instead of shaping the morals of future leaders, the value of critically questioning received wisdom has become a central motif of the undergraduate experience. Beyond their dealings with students, universities also seek to transfer knowledge to wider ‘lay’ communities to support active citizenship in an emerging ‘knowledge society’.²¹

So what is a university for? The answer depends on time and circumstance. Most institutions combine several traditions, often in uneasy tension²² – Newman’s focus on teaching and intellectual formation, Humboldt’s focus on advancing knowledge, the elite technical training of the French *grandes écoles*.²³ The postmodern university plays a mix of roles – education and knowledge transfer, development of new ideas, a place for scholarly work, intellectual training, social critique and community engagement, yet also a social portal for credentials, certification and access to careers.

In Australia universities have evolved, from small, collegiate teaching-only to large, comprehensive, research oriented institutions. Expansion leads to transformation. To early faculties of arts, science and divinity, Australian universities added the learned professions such as medicine, law and engineering during the 19th century. Faculties of agriculture, veterinary science, commerce and dentistry appeared early in the 20th century, and business, nursing and teaching faculties more recently. Almost every addition provoked argument at the time.²⁴ The fight over essence runs deep in academic life and among those whose vision is built on remembrance of their own student days. Yet for over 150 years Australian universities have embraced each new body of knowledge that can be organised, tested and taught. It is the habits of scholarship, not the content of courses, which creates continuity.

Today our University exists for many purposes, a rich blend of proud tradition and pragmatic innovation. We inhabit a place that questions but also conforms, an institution independent of the state yet shaped by government decisions, apparently free to chart our own course, but also navigating tight constraints of funding and regulation. We belong to an academic way of life that has endured for nearly a millennium, yet our institution has never lived this moment before. The choices we make draw on this heritage, but must face the world anew.

SNAPSHOT 2

The changing Australian higher education system

Strategic choices are decisions about context. Given the circumstances in which we find ourselves, how should the University proceed? Higher education in Australia is undergoing a profound change, from an essentially public system characterised by many similar institutions, to a more unstable mix of public and private, large and small, local and international. Snapshot 2 identifies a wide mix of forces for change, all with implications for the University of Melbourne.

‘Elite to mass’ – the rise and rise of higher learning

In the early 1950s Australia had just 30,000 university students.²⁵ Like other universities, Melbourne was small, local and easily contained within its historic site at Parkville. As the Australian population grew and the economy diversified, demand for tertiary education grew. There were 300,000 university students across Australia by 1977, 600,000 by 1995, and now more than 930,000.²⁶ Since the 1950s the domestic student population has increased more than 23-fold, the wider population less than three-fold.

As numbers have risen, the mix has changed. The traditional cohort of Australian school-leavers now studies alongside an international student cohort of more than 200,000 students, and an older ‘lifelong learner’ cohort juggling work and family commitments with study.²⁷ By 2003 some 240,000 students were in postgraduate study, more than the 220,000 undergraduates who filled our universities in 1974.²⁸ The trend from ‘elite’ to ‘mass’ extends toward ‘universal’ participation, transforming the scale and social function of higher education.²⁹ In particular, the trend toward part-time postgraduate education, already growing rapidly, will likely accelerate as an undergraduate degree is seen as a good start but insufficient for many professions.

Shifts in the funding mix – the ‘decline and fall’ of government funding

The growth in student numbers has not been matched by growth in public funding. On the contrary, funding per student has fallen steadily over nearly two decades. In one generation, the nation has gone from free tertiary education to among the most highly priced courses found anywhere in the OECD.³⁰ With the advent of HECS, the Australian policy solution to the problem of access for students without means in a mass system has been to replace free provision with cash-flow support during study, and low-risk debt thereafter.

By 2002 Commonwealth funding made up around 40 per cent of total university sector income, down from around 90 per cent in 1981.³¹ Institutions have responded partly by lowering costs through nearly doubling class sizes and rationalising course offerings, partly by ‘commercialising’ education, research and professional advice, partly by raising fee contributions from students and supplementing course quotas with full-fee domestic places and, most significantly, by recruiting full-fee overseas students. The Australian higher education sector has created a \$5 billion export industry³² in less than two decades,

outperforming most OECD countries,³³ and accounting for more than 12 per cent of onshore higher education across all English-speaking countries.³⁴

Success in international markets has allowed successive federal governments to constrain further public spending on the sector. Australia's public universities have enjoyed an early-mover advantage, but it is less clear the system can survive indefinitely on income from exporting higher education. Traditional Australian sector markets such as Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong are building their own campuses and becoming competitors. Universities from the United Kingdom and United States are opening facilities in our region and some, such as the London School of Economics, already target Australian domestic students, advertising courses in Melbourne newspapers.

For critics of the current funding approach, the issue is whether a predominantly commercial approach to higher education is in Australia's long-term interests. A reliance on markets changes institutions, both in what they do and how they do it.³⁵ Markets create new risks and pressures for institutions. Budget uncertainty puts pressure on less popular subject offerings, and creates less security of employment. In response, institutions are replacing traditional 'collegial' modes of governance and academic autonomy with a more 'corporate-managerial' ethos in university decision-making.³⁶

Shifts in the staff mix – from 'scholarly community' to 'community of contributors'

With declining government funding per student, staff numbers have not kept pace with student demand. Despite the huge growth in student numbers, total staff levels across Australia declined from around 83,000 in 1996 to a low of 80,000 in 1998. The number of academic and general staff has begun to climb again, reaching 92,000 in 2004.³⁷ But staff-student ratios have continued to deteriorate. After holding constant at 12:1 for the decade from 1975, the number of students to teaching staff reached 16:1 by 1996 and 21:1 by 2003.³⁸ Two public universities report ratios in 2003–2004 at 33:1 and 35:1.³⁹ With this, the new market orientation and greater complexity in planning and managing, staff report that their time is more fragmented⁴⁰ and work roles are more ambiguous.⁴¹

The average age and seniority profile of full-time academics has risen during the rapid, publicly-funded expansion in the 1960s and 1970s and slowed during the more uneven, private student-funded expansion since the late 1980s. As institutions adjust to budget constraints and program uncertainty, older academics make up a shrinking 'tenured core', while younger scholars comprise an expanding 'tenuous periphery'. Casual staff numbers (academic and non-academic combined) rose almost 270 per cent between 1990 and 2000.⁴²

Since the late 1980s the proportion of non-academics has been stable at around 57 per cent of the workforce, though their roles in universities are becoming more senior and professional.⁴³ The profile of non-academic work has risen as institutions grow more complex, technologies more pervasive, funding sources more diverse, planning and managing more demanding, and external reporting more onerous. In some areas, such as electronic delivery

of course material, teams of academic and non-academic partners are essential. Perhaps our traditional image of a 'community of scholars' is giving way to a more complex image of diverse networks of 'communities of contributors' or 'knowledge professionals'.

Shifts in governance – 'from collegial to managerial'

Successive waves of reform have reshaped government approaches to the sector, and institutional approaches to self-management. The 'Dawkins Revolution' in the late 1980s ended the 'binary' system in which universities were expected to do research while colleges were not. The colleges were introduced in the 1960s to absorb rising demand at a lower unit cost, offering courses in fields such as teaching, technology and business.⁴⁴ In effect, they had a mission of applied education, focused on industry and regional needs. Dawkins amalgamated the former institutes of technology and colleges of advanced education with each other, or with existing universities, so that 63 separate institutions became 36 universities in a 'unified' system.⁴⁵

The main objectives of the Dawkins agenda have been pursued ever since by federal governments. Successive ministers of education have been keen to see universities contribute to national economic development by upgrading the workforce skills base and fuelling innovation. Yet budgets are always tight. So ministers seek to widen access while containing public spending. They have closely regulated the performance of universities while demanding that institutions raise an increasing proportion of the operating budget from non-government sources. As a result, Australia's public universities have never been so closely controlled and never so reliant on private income, while education itself is more expensive for students than at any time since World War II.

To meet Government demands for industry linkage, market and client responsiveness, performance measurement and demonstrable results, universities have replaced older decision-making structures with a more business-like, data-driven approach. Even so, some have struggled to sustain their growth agendas in volatile markets, and manage the high costs and risks of developing essential enterprise information systems. Many have taken on substantial debt to provide much-needed capital. Declining funding has produced 'corporate' universities managing rising levels of risk, with the whole system highly dependent on fragile international student flows. The new emphasis on *managing*, often seen as an ideological shift toward 'managerialism', in fact reflects a new set of challenges for institutions – greater complexity, sharper dilemmas, higher risks, and the need for rapid responses to changing conditions.⁴⁶

Shifts in the course mix – 'from liberal to professional'

The disciplinary profile of Australian universities has been changing for some decades. Enrolments in technically-oriented and industry-related fields, such as business and computing, have expanded more rapidly than the traditional liberal disciplines in the arts and sciences. This reflects growing labour market demand for highly trained knowledge workers, student

perceptions of employment prospects,⁴⁷ and the fields that attract most international students.⁴⁸ In one sense, it was ever thus. The expansion of the medieval universities was largely a response to growing demand for skilled professionals. While Australia's first universities drew on a British 19th century tradition emphasising liberal education, even Newman's *Idea* recognised that students only had time to study a handful of subjects, despite the aspiration to learn 'universal knowledge'.⁴⁹ The rise of mass education for a knowledge economy, coupled with the massive expansion of disciplinary knowledge itself, amplifies the problem of reconciling breadth with depth, intellectual development and practical achievement.

The emerging market model for universities creates a dilemma for Government. When universities must rely on student income, they will focus on areas of strong demand. Non-performing courses and even whole campuses with a liberal arts and science curriculum may come under threat. Governments, however, worry about the electoral effects of course or campus closures. Hence legislation introduced by Education Minister Brendan Nelson provides the Minister with authority to require particular programs and locations to remain open, whatever the prevailing economics. Even without legislation, the administrative fiat of funding agreements can be used to compel an institution to operate in a way that runs counter to its own best judgement. Universities are expected to satisfy both the invisible hand of uncertain markets and the long arm of micro-managing governments.⁵⁰ In the words of one vice-chancellor, it is as though government has simultaneously "floated the dollar and fixed the exchange rate".⁵¹

Knowledge proliferation

The combination of new technologies and knowledge-intensive industries has created a massive proliferation of knowledge. With technology a critical factor in economic performance, research has become more important and less concentrated in the public sector. Universities now account for only about one quarter of total research and development across Australia.⁵² Much fundamental work in science and technology, once the prerogative of the public university sector, is now undertaken in large private companies, hospitals and research institutions, or within universities but under commercial contracts. Transnational companies can rival publicly funded entities in influencing knowledge production and distribution⁵³ in ways that may not make findings available for teaching or public sector research.⁵⁴

This changing pattern of knowledge creation is influencing the style of research favoured by government, with a greater expectation on economic return for public investment.⁵⁵ Industry support is becoming a key test of a research funding proposal. This raises awkward questions about organisation. Traditional department and discipline-based approaches are being supplemented by multi-disciplinary, problem-based approaches, supported by a wider mix of contributors inside and outside institutions, often referred to as 'mode 2' knowledge production.⁵⁶ University operating procedures are not always flexible enough to cope with a network approach to research, while the growing influence of private money requires close ethical consideration. The traditional departmental structures of a university, evolved in earlier times, are challenged by new modes of knowledge production emerging at the boundaries of academia.

Hyper-accessible knowledge

Further off campus, new technology is changing the dynamics of work and culture, and resituating knowledge as a public commodity. Once knowledge was hard to access, and universities served as a kind of gatekeeper. Now, in the Google era, web-based platforms offer the prospect of placing global archives in reach of almost anyone.

The advent of hyper-accessible knowledge affects each element of the university tradition differently. The work of *preserving knowledge* from the ravages of history becomes easier. If the library at Alexandria burned today, this would still be a tragedy, but not a catastrophe. If the archetypal image of a university is a community of scholars clustered around a library, drawing on and adding to a growing archive of codified knowledge, the new technologies extend massively the range of material that can be accessed, copied and stored elsewhere. MIT has contributed to this by placing all its course material online, so creating an information commons. As the migration of texts from books to databases widens access off campus, it opens up new possibilities for on-campus storage and access. This year the University of Texas at Austin will disperse its central print collection to other parts of the campus, to create space for a central complex of 'digital learning laboratories' housing online collections and student facilities, open 24 hours a day.⁵⁷

The task of *generating knowledge* through research and scholarship is also easier, with faster access to new knowledge generated elsewhere, and instant communication with professional peers. The 'invisible college' of disciplinary conversations across institutional and national boundaries is now a scaleable international network, organised around countless nodes, enlivened by continuous interchange. Distributed systems make large-scale datasets, gathered for the purpose of one project in one discipline, available to other projects.⁵⁸

The task of *disseminating knowledge* to students presents new possibilities and new dilemmas. On-campus technology can deepen information flow in lectures and make source materials available to students during class. Off-campus student support can allow virtual groups to confer and collaborate, or enable online viewing of recorded lectures. Online resources and broadband access – now available in wireless mode across the city of Melbourne – can reduce the need for student travel, time spent browsing physical resources, and the pressure on physical campus facilities.⁵⁹

Ideally, the result will be a blended mode of on-campus and online learning, with students shifting seamlessly from one mode to another. Yet for institutions these new technologies cost money, require new skills and consume staff time. Assessing student work may mean checking unfamiliar sources; any class might generate an hour's worth of email. New technology offers the prospect of better education, but not, it seems, of cheaper delivery. Staff and physical infrastructure costs tend to be rearranged but not displaced. One risk is that applications will be selected on economic considerations alone, rather than professional judgement of fitness for purpose.⁶⁰ Another is that younger generations of 'digital natives', habituated to visual stimulus, instant access to material, interactivity and multi-tasking, will find the pedagogical practices of older 'digital immigrants' uninspiring.⁶¹

Most difficult to judge is the long-term effect of the *unregulated dissemination* of knowledge as people web-search their way through oceans of information. As with earlier technologies, such as books and printing presses, the new platforms commodify and democratise knowledge, eroding the monopoly positions of institutional experts as ‘gamekeepers’ of high culture⁶² or ‘policers of the sublime’.⁶³ The proliferation of ideas, techniques, images and ‘reality bites’ encourages a set of relationships, identities, communities and cultures played out in virtual space alongside place-based ones. Sociality, learning and collegiality become multi-modal: the unmediated life is not worth living. How does a campus-based university, with its established patterns of knowledge generation and transfer, fit into this new reality? In a media-saturated age, how does a university help students navigate their way through oceans of information to islands of knowledge, and from there to the getting of wisdom?

Shifts in institutional orientation – ‘from habitat to access point’

In a world of hyper-accessible knowledge, the privileged place of a university as an exclusive site of advanced learning, knowledge production, citizen formation and cultural reproduction becomes hard to sustain.⁶⁴ Once seen as a *habitat*, the campus becomes an *access point* – one of many – to a host of virtual spaces where knowledge is gathered and shared. Some say the scholarly community has become a corporate pyramid. But as they grow in scale and complexity, university systems and individual institutions begin to resemble network structures with ‘hypertext’ linkages, with every player plugged into a knowledge matrix to which all can contribute, but none control.

When students see universities as just one source of knowledge among many, much changes. Other institutions can compete for student attention. Some will be alternative takes on existing forms – internet universities and private colleges, or consortia of providers allowing students to put together a personalised program of studies drawing on many institutions. When established knowledge workers need new skills, they will expect from universities the same convenience demanded of other information providers – instant access, responsive staff, helpful advice. Not for them the rigidities of learning in semester blocks, of classes held only on a campus, of student services that shut after hours. Academics too may feel tempted to go freelance, teaching into courses across the city and beyond, making themselves available to government and consulting firms, or as private tutors to those with cash but little time.

In such a fragmented world, will it still make sense to talk about universities as learning places, or about academics and students as communities of scholars? Will distinctions between fundamental and applied research, between professional training and liberal education command interest in a world where information is immediate and teachers interchangeable? Once knowledge was scarce and universities could dictate the terms of its communication and credentialing. No longer.

Shifts in sector orientation – ‘from local to global’

We have been talking about the emerging knowledge-based global economy for so long it is easy to forget just what a profound shift is underway. Already the higher education sector experiences more intense competition, rapid knowledge growth, proliferating technology, highly mobile professionals, and online dealings in virtual space, all across national borders. Eventually, the notion of a self-contained Australian higher education system will give way.

In its first stage, globalisation has positioned higher learning as one of the most successful growth industries. Worldwide, around two million students now study abroad, spending around \$US30 billion (A\$40 billion) a year in fees alone.⁶⁵ As an offshore destination for Asian students especially, Australian universities enjoy the advantages of a stable and safe English-speaking destination that is accessible and moderately priced. As a potential market for offshore competitors, Australian institutions remain partly protected. Government support for local students applies only to local providers; government rules for recognition as a university require physical facilities and research programs, so locking out offshore players relying on web-dependent or teaching-only curricula.

Yet these barriers are unlikely to survive. Over time the Australian higher education sector will look less like a state planned, funded and regulated system of domestic provision, and more like a state-supported participant in a loosely-regulated international market. Local institutions will find themselves competing with large, profit-oriented ‘super-system’ providers of higher education.⁶⁶ A truly international system imposes serious strategic dilemmas for Australian universities, their academics and managers. In 2000, Simon Marginson expressed the choices this way:⁶⁷

“For universities, the trend to the global creates the question of what kind of global strategy they should pursue: in onshore international education, in offshore international education, in franchising and twinning relationships with universities in other countries, in staff and student exchange, in research development, in high-cost technological systems, in flexible delivery and virtual courses. These matters invoke large and difficult decisions...For individual academics and for academic units... the questions are equally difficult. Should curriculum and pedagogy be transformed to meet the needs of a more culturally diverse student body and to factor in a greater element of non-local content, cross-national comparison and global systems and consciousness...? Most individual Australian academics, and many Australian faculties, schools and departments, have yet to address these questions, but surely they will need to do so...”

To date, Australian universities have enjoyed *one-way globalisation* – the export of education services without incoming competition. It will not last. To remain viable, Australian universities must keep pace with knowledge growth and technological innovation, invest in high quality infrastructure, offer more flexible modes of study, bridge wider cultural differences, prepare students to live and work in a global environment, and match rivals in the quest for quality, talent and income. This is a formidable list of requirements, but it points to the strategic choices facing the University of Melbourne.

SNAPSHOT 3

The *Melbourne Agenda*

Profile and vision

The University of Melbourne is among the oldest and largest in Australia, with an annual budget of \$1.2 billion. It is a research-intensive, comprehensive institution which, on most measures, is Australia's leading research university. In full-time equivalent terms, the University has over 6200 staff and over 33,000 students. It has a strong postgraduate commitment, and a significant international make-up. About one in four students are in postgraduate studies, and about one in four from outside Australia. About one in 15 live on campus, in residential colleges, echoing the Oxbridge collegiate model that shaped Melbourne's origins. At the other extreme, students have more scope than ever to tap University resources online, without even setting foot on campus.

These bald facts say what the University is, but not what it aspires to become. Melbourne aims to be one of the finest universities in the world – a proud institution of higher learning producing graduates, scholarship and research that matter to the nation and beyond.

A fine university does not happen by chance. It requires great people, clarity of goals and firm plans. These themes are captured in the *Melbourne Agenda* – a 1996 blueprint for this University to ensure its contribution and its place. The *Agenda* argues that the key ingredients of a fine university are quality people, quality research, quality learning, international positioning, service to wider communities, quality management, quality infrastructure, resource quality and a commitment to equity and access. Each goal is set out in the University's *Strategic Plan*, with regular reports on progress.

It is sometimes suggested there is little real difference between serious universities; all aspire to much the same outcomes and so claims about individual virtues are just branding.⁶⁸ In one sense it would not be surprising if Melbourne's goals looked familiar – what university does not strive, through the work of scholars and the education of students, 'to advance knowledge, to promote understanding, and to serve society'? What Western university does not expect its students to 'respect ideas and their free expression, and to rejoice in discovery and in critical thought; to pursue excellence in a spirit of productive cooperation; and to assume responsibility'?⁶⁹

Yet what matters is delivering on the promises we make – doing everything necessary to meet the commitment we give our students, our communities, ourselves. The substance matters, not the pitch. In this, Melbourne runs its own race – it asks to be judged against its aspirations, whether or not these are more widely shared. The *Melbourne Agenda* is not a differentiation strategy for market positioning. It is a boldly stated set of beliefs about what a great university could be.

So what is the vision? The University of Melbourne intends to be 'research-led' with an uncompromising respect for knowledge, a 'learning institution' where scholars and researchers are also teachers, a 'liberal institution' where truth may be pursued and debate is embraced, an 'independent institution' with a self-regulating collegial community, an 'international university' strongly connected with its peers around the globe and a 'Melbourne institution' committed to the people of Melbourne and Victoria.

The University carries through its history a sense of civic location and Western intellectual

heritage. The *Melbourne Agenda* looks forward to contributing, intellectually and culturally, to the Asian region. To realise this vision it sets out five objectives:

- Establishing Melbourne's reputation as an international research university by identifying and supporting fields of research where the University can sustain research activity and output of genuinely international significance and where outstanding researchers and research teams would be consistently valued, rewarded and assisted.
- Strengthening the University as an academic institution by providing scholars, teachers and researchers with world-class teaching and research infrastructure, with internationally competitive rewards and with workloads consistent with international scholarly norms.
- Enhancing its amenity as a campus-based institution with students and staff enjoying access to the most advanced online educational technologies, pedagogies and learning environments.
- Promoting systematic internationalisation through enduring partnerships and effective networks with kindred universities around the world; international cooperation and collaboration in research, teaching and scholarship; engagement in global e-education and related enterprises; internationally based quality assurance and bench-marking; and the development of international student constituencies and alumni networks.
- Building on and extending the University's resource base to effectively double it relative to the scale of activity, by pioneering new ways of financing research, teaching and scholarship.

Testing the vision

Our vision

To make Melbourne one of the finest universities in the world.

The University is approaching the half-way point in its 20-year journey toward recognition within the first rank of the world's great institutions of higher learning. Though the world of academia encounters forces for change on every front, Melbourne strives still to be a world-renowned centre of research and scholarship, learning and teaching, intellectual creativity, academic freedom and humane values – a fine university, a part of Melbourne, and a place of 'growing esteem' in the wider world. Recently it has enjoyed some validation of the strategy, with two international surveys rating Melbourne highly, though in each case less highly than the Australian National University (ANU).⁷⁰

The challenge now is to test the vision nearly a decade after its formulation. In light of the trends outlined in Snapshot 2, several observations can be made at the outset.

- The University's self-image remains that of a campus-based community of scholars: more globally-connected, more technology-supported and more creatively-financed, but otherwise cast in a familiar mould. What remains to be seen is whether the archetype is still viable and relevant, or whether it is being radically reconfigured.
- The advent of hyper-accessible knowledge, rising competition, and increasing internationalism presents challenges for how we frame and support the Melbourne Experience as a distinctive blend of multi-modal experiences.
- In a national system where most universities perform very similar functions and live under similar funding arrangements, it is hard for any one institution to create a distinctive identity – one that reflects the attributes it aspires to be known and respected for, and judged against.
- While Melbourne has been part of the sector-wide growth story, the *Melbourne Agenda* did not explicitly set out to be a growth strategy. Lifting revenue through fee-based enrolments was seen as a short-to-medium-term measure, one that could not continue indefinitely.⁷¹ In the absence of funding indexation for Australian universities, this path has enabled the University to build up resources, programs and staff levels. Yet with one in three students now paying full fees, and a student body now over 42,000 all told, the University may be approaching the physical limits of this approach for a campus-based university. As facilities and staff ratios are stretched to capacity, it is harder to ensure the quality of the student experience.

So, can the *Melbourne Agenda* still guide decisions on everything from teaching methods to campus design? What remains valid, what needs updating and what is missing?

The snapshots that follow set out progress to date and open up larger questions for the University, to prompt further consideration.

- Snapshot 4 sets out some of the strategic and operational dilemmas presented by the *Melbourne Agenda*, under each of the five key goals – research performance, attracting scholars, the Melbourne Experience for students, internationalisation, and building the resource base to support all this activity.
- Snapshot 5 then asks, 'What is missing from this picture?' and offers some new themes, many implicit in the *Melbourne Agenda*, that need exploring.
- Snapshot 6 then poses questions under both old and new themes.

SNAPSHOT 4

Dilemmas presented by the *Melbourne Agenda*

1. Research performance

The first goal presented in the *Melbourne Agenda* aims to ensure the University's international reputation in research. Two strategies support this: identifying fields in which the University can produce sustained research of international significance; and valuing and supporting outstanding researchers and research teams.

Research performance features strongly in the methodology of international surveys of universities, and on such measures the University of Melbourne scores strongly. In 2004, the University was ranked 22nd internationally by a *Times Higher Education Supplement* survey (with the ANU ranking 16th); 82nd on international research performance by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education (with the ANU 53rd). Locally, the University ranked first for research income, research publications, and research doctorate and masters completions.

When analysis 'drills down' into the University, the results become more mixed. Certainly on a 'per academic staff member' basis Melbourne ranks first on research doctorate and research masters completions and second on research income. But on the same basis, Melbourne ranks fourth on research doctorate and research masters enrolments, and sixth on publications. Even on these indicators the strength in some faculties tends to mask indifferent research performance in others.

There is no doubt research is central to Melbourne's identity and aspirations. Culture and performance appraisal requirements make research a responsibility for every academic. It is not so surprising that there are few concrete signs of the selective concentration implied by the *Melbourne Agenda*. Instead, research efforts are spread widely and supported opportunistically – winning a federation fellowship or centre for excellence remains the best way to secure further research facilities. Each year, individual researchers and their teams apply for grants. Over time, the successful applications shape the research profile of the University. In sum, the University supports outstanding research teams as promised, but is guided by the 'market' in research funding rather than by declaring its own research priorities.

To a large extent, the realities of shifting funding priorities by government and private organisations make all universities responsive to signals from outside. But is the serendipity of grant applications, and a 'kilometres wide, millimetres deep' approach to sharing internal funding, the best way to make significant research contributions? Or should the University take bolder steps, as the *Melbourne Agenda* implies, to build a distinctive set of research capabilities to create a distinctive profile?

Further, since research is central to the University's mission, how should this flow through to the choice of student profile? Specifically, postgraduate students comprise only a quarter of the student body, and a majority of these are coursework masters or diploma students. A research-intensive university might aspire to a higher percentage of research graduate students, with the development of doctoral programs that combine traditional independent research with graded coursework along the lines found in some American institutions.

While there are significant funding and regulatory hurdles to growing the graduate research student cohort, the concept deserves closer debate. Like all strategic choices it imposes a serious cost – research concentration and a shift to more graduate programs would make

it difficult to sustain the present comprehensive range of undergraduate teaching. The most successful research-intensive universities tend to a targeted profile, with a consequent narrowing of undergraduate offerings. A greater emphasis on research would have implications for curricula, funding incentives and staff profile.

A separate research dilemma revolves around commercialisation. For academics, research is a virtue in itself, to be judged on its intellectual contribution. For governments, typically, it has more pragmatic purposes. Recent policy decisions highlight the greater attention given to commercial outcomes for research. Private investment is taken as evidence that a research project can 'add value' to external communities. It seems probable government will continue this trend, making access to basic research funding contingent on performance in knowledge transfer. Despite some individual successes, the University of Melbourne has yet to produce sustained commercial outcomes that match its depth of public investment in research.

2. Attracting the best scholars, teachers and researchers

The *Melbourne Agenda* aims to make the University a desirable destination for outstanding scholars. Two strategies are presented to support this goal: providing world-standard facilities for teaching and research, and ensuring world-standard rewards and conditions.

At present the quality of the University's facilities varies widely. Many of the buildings are attractive, functional, and pleasant to use, with plenty of space and up-to-date facilities. Some recent additions, such as the Law School Building, are as good as any such facilities anywhere in the world. But sadly others are crowded, dilapidated, unattractive and in need of renovation. Despite a massive capital program since 1997, there is some way to go in producing a campus that reflects the aspirations of the University of Melbourne.

A similar story can be told about rewards and conditions. Academic salaries at the University of Melbourne are in line with, but no better than, other leading Australian universities. Indeed, cost-of-living pressure in Sydney has forced salaries even higher in that city (while raising doubts about the capacity of some institutions to meet their long-run salary bills). Non-academic salaries at the Melbourne are competitive within the sector, but it remains hard to recruit at senior levels when universities compete with other industries for similar expertise.

At the same time, career prospects, conditions and expectations at the University are mixed. In 2003, 21 per cent of Level A academics left the University, with less than one per cent of staff turnover triggered by the expiry of a contract. While the University offers competitive salaries, it also relies on a small army of casual employees – approximately 10,000 in 2004 – to undertake everything from teaching to exam invigilation. The University lacks a policy fixing limits to casual employment, currently running at about 20 per cent within the academic workforce. This reflects the financial reality that as academic salaries increase, faculties find it more cost-effective to rely on casual contracts. This pattern is exacerbated by the short time frame of most research grants, which limit the scope to fund permanent appointments.

In recent years the University has been exploring ways to provide more certainty for casual and research-only staff – both on equity grounds and to prepare for the looming shortage

of academic staff as the boomer generation approaches retirement. Options include placing a ceiling on casual academic employment, as often happens in the United States. To do so, though, would require more explicit probation periods and clearer signals about whether an individual is on 'tenure track'.⁷²

For those who find a place in the system, the issue of teaching loads is a growing concern. By raising money through fee-paying students the University has stemmed the rise in student-staff ratios, averaging less than 18:1 compared with a sector average of 21:1⁷³. Sustaining even these high ratios is a challenge across the sector. Academic and general staff rightly expect to be paid commensurate with their skills and contribution. Yet universities face declining public funding per student, and have limited capacity to absorb fee-paying students.

This is no counsel of despair. The University of Melbourne employs some of the best academic and general staff in the world. Vacancies are keenly contested. Employment conditions support good scholarship and seek to reward outstanding performance. The challenge is to build on these foundations, while ensuring a harmonious, stimulating, collegial culture on campus.

3. The Melbourne Experience

The *Melbourne Agenda* sets as its third goal the creation of a rich, distinctive, campus-based experience for students. The strategy assumes that changing teaching technologies will supplement, rather than supplant, the human connections and learning experiences gained from interaction among students and staff, and that the university experience is in part a physical and aesthetic one, grounded in a sense of place.

These are defensible suppositions. It is likely students will draw on broadband online learning materials to deepen their education rather than replace face-to-face encounters with an impersonal keyboard and screen. Certainly changing life patterns mean many more Melbourne students juggle study with part-time work. But they will still spend time on campus if it is an intellectually and socially stimulating place. The challenge is to make student life on campus central to the Melbourne Experience.

A good place to start has been by understanding student preferences. Recent years have seen a significant expansion of student responses to particular courses and to the overall quality of the university experience. Melbourne students are now surveyed regularly about the quality of teaching (improving, but still below the national average), the quality of their course experience at undergraduate and graduate levels (both improving) and graduate employment rates and salaries (above the national average). Faculties supplement this information with focus groups to gain more qualitative student feedback and so improve teaching quality.

Such data demonstrate starkly the challenge facing the University. Students enjoy their time with Melbourne, but identify little that is distinctive about the Melbourne Experience compared with other leading Australian universities. Though the University of Melbourne attracts an overwhelming majority of the strongest performing school graduates, interstate students move to Melbourne only in modest numbers, and usually only to take up scholarships designed to be more generous than those offered elsewhere in Australia.

On the other hand, the University has been highly successful in attracting international

students. Many identify the international academic standing of the University of Melbourne and the attractive campus as important in their decisions. International students make up 24 per cent of the University's student body, and are projected to reach 28 per cent by 2007. Some 78 per cent of international students are from Asia, making up over 40 per cent of the student cohort in three of the University's 11 faculties.⁷⁴ Overall satisfaction with the quality of teaching is high but data also indicates many international students do not feel well integrated and do not develop a strong sense of community, or have rich encounters with Australian students and Australian culture.

Bringing local and international students onto campus, and ensuring the experience is educationally fulfilling and culturally memorable – these are the core challenges. These needs must influence academic planning and architectural design alike, creating opportunities for students to work together and more closely with staff, with learning spaces set up to support new generations of 'digital natives'.

Alongside these traditional concerns is a need for contemporary information and communication systems. Much has been achieved, but the University of Melbourne still lacks an advanced student enrolment system, full wireless access or a single learning management platform. Fortunately considerable progress has been made on installing Blackboard, the University's new technology platform for teaching and learning. Blackboard puts course schedules and materials online, supports group emails and chat rooms for each course or tutorial group, and also enables online interchange between students and academics.

If the Melbourne Experience is to attract the best and brightest students, it must find a unique way of combining research orientation, internationalism and new technology in a stimulating setting. This can be achieved, but it remains an aspiration rather than a reality for many who choose to study at the University of Melbourne.

4. Internationalisation

The fourth goal set out in the *Melbourne Agenda* promotes 'internationalising' the University. This strategy combines several strands: developing partnerships and networks with kindred universities overseas; collaborating with international partners in research, teaching and scholarship; engaging in global e-education and related enterprises; adopting international standards via quality assurance and benchmarking; and developing international student constituencies and alumni networks.

Much progress can be reported against this goal. Through the Universitas 21 network, the University aims to support 2000 undergraduate student interchanges by 2006, to extend the cross-cultural experience of both local and overseas students. The idea of an international experience as a familiar part of study at the University of Melbourne is an attractive and plausible aspiration. It is made possible by mutual recognition of courses across the Universitas 21 network and more flexibility around course programming.

As part of internationalisation the University decided to inscribe 'Asia literacy' across undergraduate curricula, to reflect Australia's location in East Asia alongside its Western cultural heritage. This makes good sense since China, India and Indonesia in particular are countries of critical strategic and economic importance to Australia. There has been

a steady increase in the number of students taking courses with Asian content, and improved coordination of links to Asian scholarship among University of Melbourne academics.

The most visible presence of internationalisation, though, remains the quarter of the student population drawn from outside Australia. On current projections this will rise over time until around one third of University of Melbourne students are drawn from off shore.

Does this significant international presence change what happens inside the institution? Perhaps. Yet the University of Melbourne has been reluctant to embrace instruction and examination in languages other than English or to schedule courses against the pattern of the northern hemisphere. The academic and general staff profile does not reflect the diversity of the student body, and substantive collaborative teaching across international boundaries remains uncommon, though there are promising signs. In short, the University of Melbourne has made a strong start on its goal of internationalisation, but has yet to deliver the richness of intellectual and cultural exchange at the heart of the commitment. Much has been achieved, but more remains for action.

5. Resources

The final goal articulated in the *Melbourne Agenda* focuses on gaining the resources needed to support research, attract scholars, build the Melbourne Experience and pursue internationalisation.

When Commonwealth Government funding to the sector was reduced in 1996, the University chose not to cut back on staff and programs. Instead it sought to build other streams of income. The *Melbourne Agenda* sets out to generate non-government income at a pace and on a scale that doubles the 'unit of resource index' by 2020. The index – the ratio of total University income to total student enrolments in any given year, expressed as '\$ per full-time equivalent student' – is a measure of the institution's capacity to invest resources in staff, facilities, programs and services for all purposes.

In the late 1990s the index dropped slightly below 1996 levels, before rising 18 per cent overall by 2002, with an ambitious target of at least a further 20 per cent between 2003 and 2007.⁷⁵ Recent figures suggest the University is unlikely to meet this goal. Between 1996 and 2004 it has risen almost 26 per cent overall in 1996 dollars, a significant gain.⁷⁶ However the University is now 40 per cent closer to the year 2020. In 2003 the University's unit of resource matched or exceeded all Group of Eight institutions except the Australian National University, which had a unit of resource more than 70 per cent higher than Melbourne, thanks to special Commonwealth funding.⁷⁷

Gains to date have been achieved principally by increasing the proportion of fee-based enrolments. In 2004 international students made up nearly 24 per cent of the student body, up from around seven per cent in 1996. Full-fee domestic students, the largest group being postgraduates, made up 12 per cent of the student body in 2004. Total student numbers have grown by 25 per cent since 1996. At the same time, academic staff numbers have risen by 28 per cent and total staff numbers by 29 per cent.⁷⁸ Fee income from all students, including those from overseas and in postgraduate studies, grew from around \$30 million in 1996 to more than \$200 million in 2004⁷⁹ with current targets of more than \$240 million for 2006 and around \$270m for 2007.⁸⁰

Recruiting new fee-paying students while continuing to teach a full load of Commonwealth supported students locks the organisation into an apparently endless growth trajectory. Commonwealth outlays for each HECS-eligible student are falling in real terms, and the Minister has recently ruled out any further increases in HECS payments.⁸¹ To make up the gap, the University must secure an ever-growing number of fee-paying students. If no other source of income emerges, it is possible the University of Melbourne will become by necessity a vast institution, comparable perhaps to the nearly 70,000 students studying at the University of Toronto.

The growth in student numbers already puts pressure on campus facilities, teaching staff and support services. Success comes at a cost, as growth tests the physical limits of campus facilities and makes students just one among a vast crowd competing for limited library space and time with academic staff. Ideally, the University would teach fewer students funded at a better rate to support optimal staff:student ratios and facilities.

In making strategic choices about an ideal size, the University faces policy restrictions imposed by Canberra. Commonwealth legislation imposes a limit of 35 per cent of domestic fee-paying students on any undergraduate course, but no limit on international students.

Three broad options are immediately visible. Some Australian universities have responded by expanding their international student cohort so rapidly that it now comprises more than half their student body. Such an option is open to Melbourne but, physical limits aside, would challenge the mission of the institution to contribute to the people and development of Victoria.

An alternative approach would be to reduce the number of Commonwealth supported students. The University of Melbourne has done so in a modest way in recent years, and appears unlikely to receive any new Commonwealth-funded places in the foreseeable future. Any growth will therefore occur in the fee-paying domain. At undergraduate level, however, the 35 per cent limit on domestic fee-paying students imposed by Canberra comes into play. Reducing the number of Commonwealth supported students would ultimately diminish the number of domestic fee-paying students Melbourne could accept.

More radically, a third strategy would be to change the balance between undergraduate and postgraduate students. This would involve concentrating HECS places in general science, arts and commerce degrees, while making professional qualifications available only at graduate level, and only to fee-paying students. In this Melbourne would break fundamentally from Australian tradition and expectations of a 'comprehensive' university, surrendering undergraduate teaching across many disciplines to other institutions.

The resource strategy spelt out in the *Melbourne Agenda* is thus caught in a narrow range of choices – forced into endless growth by inadequate Commonwealth funding for Australian students, directed by policy toward international rather than domestic recruitment, and required to retain a large HECS-student intake to meet legislated ratios for fee-paying domestic students.

The other major source of income for the University of Melbourne is research. This money, of course, cannot be diverted into teaching. Indeed, many argue the reverse happens. Because research grants do not include money for infrastructure (unlike, say, the situation in the United States), support for teaching also underpins research effort by providing buildings and staff.

The University of Melbourne has been very successful in attracting research funding, taking first place in most national measures of research income and spending. The University's research income from government grants rose from about \$97 million in 1997 to \$199 million in 2003.⁸² Overall annual spending on research has now topped \$400 million.

Other possible streams of income include philanthropic support and commercialisation of intellectual property. Both are small but growing, and can be boosted through greater investment in people and systems. Yet neither is likely, in the short to medium term, to change fundamentally the funding equation.

There are also opportunities to improve resources through better use of existing infrastructure. Faculties such as Economics and Commerce, and Law in particular, have reworked course delivery by introducing a third term, so introducing year-round teaching. This increases student numbers and income without incurring a proportional increase in facilities costs, though careful management is required to protect research performance.

SNAPSHOT 5

What's missing from this picture?

The *Melbourne Agenda* has implications that go beyond stated goals and outcomes. This snapshot picks up a number of issues not explicitly discussed in the original document, but important to its realisation.

1. Intellectual leadership

The vision set out in the *Melbourne Agenda* suggests the University not simply advance and disseminate knowledge, but serve society by offering informed critique and expert guidance on matters of public concern. Such community outreach invites scholars to help authorities and communities clarify, adapt to, or influence a host of social, economic and environmental problems amid the tide of world events.

The University has no explicit strategy to support this role. It recognises that 'public intellectuals' are often based in universities, reflecting the 'critic and conscience' role that universities claim to play. Yet institutions are usually passive hosts for this function, relying on the initiative of individual scholars to speak their minds in public. In general, the University does not aim to tackle in a sustained way a specific set of problems, and work through them publicly.

This lack of a collective intellectual agenda may reflect the reality that the 'public intellectual' role is a contested and often uncomfortable one.⁸³ Recognised public intellectuals are often represented by their ideological opponents as 'cultural elites', out of touch with the wider populace, living in ivory towers with *lattes* on tap. Some intellectuals reinforce this notion by insisting that Australian culture – or at least the media – is inherently anti-intellectual, with no grasp of the good, the true or the significant.

It may also reflect the fact that scholarly discourse, unlike print journalism, radio, TV or the Internet, is addressed to an audience of scholarly peers rather than to wider but less expert audiences. Scholarly discourse is cumulative – it assumes an audience with sufficient background to place arguments and evidence in context. Yet in a mass culture, the role of public intellectual is hard to play without recourse to the mass media, where the nuances valued by scholars get lost in translation. Access to media space relies on meeting restrictive formats, endless repetition of the basics, a willingness to work through the filter of journalists, and rapid responses as events unfold.

The situation may also reflect the scarcity of time for teaching and research, given that public outreach does not count highly in measures of academic performance. Yet the public intellectual role is important if universities are to extend the reach of ideas and knowledge in the public domain. As a leading university, Melbourne should be more actively engaged in this kind of work, visibly contributing to the 'marketplace of ideas' through academic publications and media placement. By 'going public' we serve our duty to inform, open our work to wider critique, and energise the 'elective affinities' that draw scholarly communities together.

2. Sustainability

A second subtext of the *Melbourne Agenda* is growth and its limitations, or institutional *sustainability*. At present the University has no articulated view on the optimum size and mix of its student body, the best profile of its programs, the footprint it should occupy, or the question of existing and future campuses outside the Parkville cluster. Yet answers to these questions affect everything else: research capacity, infrastructural needs, course range and delivery, and international strategy. Many departments are pursuing growth strategies, but in isolation from an overall strategic equation, potentially leading to physical constraints in accommodating student numbers. The reliance on growth reflects a mixed performance elsewhere. The University made windfall gains with the sale of Melbourne IT, but did not gain hoped-for income streams from Melbourne University Private. Universitas 21 Global still has potential, but has not met its earlier plans. Had these alternative income streams appeared on cue, there would now be less reliance on fee income.

Nor does the University have a settled view of the best mix of modes to support student learning. In a campus-based university, both the student mix and style of pedagogy have implications for physical infrastructure and facilities, for the staff profile and skills mix, and for revenue available to invest further in staff and facilities.

In existing buildings the University has a backlog of maintenance work amounting to some \$250 million. The original campus at Parkville has limited scope to accommodate more academic capacity, at least without demolishing and replacing existing buildings. The University Square precinct has seen significant development, with the next large project being the new Economics and Commerce Building on a similar scale to the Law Building. Sadly this will not free up space on the main campus, since projected student growth will fill both existing and new buildings. The University Square precinct offers other sites for new buildings, but the University lacks capital for significant further building.

Beyond the sheer volume of students, there is the issue of how student facilities are configured on a more extensive campus. Library facilities, for example, are a key resource for the University, but physical limits at the Baillieu already mean much of the collection must be held off campus. Use of the Baillieu is also marked by heavy traffic since the building was designed with about 15,000 students in mind, not 42,000.

3. Commercialisation

A third subtext of the *Melbourne Agenda* is *commercialisation*. The theme is present everywhere. Because direct public funding now accounts for only a small part of University income, programs cannot be sustained without income from private sources. Yet the term 'commercialisation' does not appear in any of the five goals of the *Melbourne Agenda*, or in the nine themes of the *Strategic Plan* and *Operational Plan*.

Part of the problem is that 'commercialisation' has multiple meanings – from attracting private investment in research programs to recruiting full-fee students, providing consulting services for fees, to licensing intellectual property, to setting up private companies to develop

and market new technologies. Some commentators use the term even more extensively to encompass selling public assets, introducing ‘corporate’ structures or adopting ‘private sector’ management practices.⁸⁴

In Australia the ‘public good’ dimension of academic work is often associated with public funding, while private investment from the commercial world is seen as geared to profit alone, rather than the sustainable provision of goods or services to a wider public.⁸⁵ Yet, where governments act as clients for research projects, this form of ‘commercialisation’ taps public sources of money. In the literature on commercialising university research, generating profit is typically not the driving motivation. Rather, commercialisation is embraced as a vehicle for *knowledge transfer*, putting new knowledge, especially new technology, to good social and economic use.⁸⁶ It provides a way to engage with the ‘real’ world, generate additional rewards for academics and support research outside the framework of existing funding bodies. Even for mature university players such as MIT, the value of commercialisation is not income but the research-related activity it can support. Just as the mass media offers vehicles for extending knowledge to wider audiences, so markets can offer a means of disseminating technologies to a wider spectrum of beneficiaries.

The University of Melbourne can point to a number of individual successes in commercialising and sharing intellectual property developed by academics. But its mechanisms for encouraging commercialisation – the policies, advice, incentive structures and sources of finance – have not been clear enough for departments and staff to link their expertise readily into a commercialisation framework.⁸⁷ After much experimentation a new model has emerged to meet these needs, but the responsible unit, Melbourne Ventures, remains small and modestly funded.

Currently the University spends far less on commercialisation than other leading Australian research-intensive universities. The University spent about \$1.6 million in 2004, compared with a recommended minimum level of \$5 million, according to a recent report.⁸⁸ Since commercial performance will in future influence access to public research dollars, it will be important for the University to work harder in this arena. Equally important is the search for private sources of investment in research, with or without the prospect of leveraging public funds.

4. Organising and managing

As a large, complicated, diverse institution, doing many different things on many different fronts, the University must be able to act collectively, effectively, responsibly, and efficiently. Due to its devolved internal structure, the University has strong faculties where most of the resources and decisions are concentrated. Rather like its built environment, its structure as an organisation resembles the Arts Centre tower, more network than hierarchy. A consequence is that the University lacks strong central roles to coordinate priorities that cut across faculty boundaries. Within the faculties there is also enormous diversity – 1200 courses, 8000 subjects, and students from 150 countries.

As part of the *Melbourne Agenda*, the University has developed new structures and networks at the boundaries of the older faculty-based institution (such as Melbourne Ventures and the Bio21 Institute) and in cross-university functions (such as the School of Graduate Studies and AsiaLink). These have been established to support the future development of the University,

enable collaboration with other institutions and commercial partners, and reach into wider communities and markets. All draw from other parts of the University to fulfil their roles, and all create complexity and role ambiguity for individuals. This complexity tends to disperse individual efforts and complicate planning and coordination. As the Faculty of Economics and Commerce put it recently:

“There is a lack of integration in the University planning process with too many plans and insufficient linkages between them... (and) a disconnection between the accountability structures for faculties and that of central units that support the strategic priorities of the faculties...”

By accretion, the University has created a ‘networked’ structure in which few elements can exercise much leverage over other elements. From a central perspective this makes it harder to direct strategy except via targets and incentives. The upside is that locally it is possible for units to respond more readily to market opportunities and intellectual developments in the field. For the University to ‘speak with one voice’ or to act in concert, the discipline required in a network configuration is for more of the players to be able to work across boundaries, tolerate differences of priority, and bridge competing discourses of value and purpose. Some organisational theorists refer to this as a ‘hypertext’ mode of organisation, where all the players must be able to jump between contexts and translate problems and initiatives from one work culture to another, in order to tap each other’s expertise and resources readily.⁸⁹

Coordination, of course, is always praised as a universal good, the answer to any problem.⁹⁰ Who can be against stronger, simpler central coordination processes and greater capacity among the many players to work collaboratively across organisational boundaries?

Yet delivering these, without adding hugely to administrative costs, is the challenge. The character of the University of Melbourne is bound up in its structures and processes. The key role of faculties in a devolved structure carries advantages and overheads. Any other arrangement will offer a different pattern of costs and benefits, but not necessarily a better overall outcome. Since structure follows strategy, and strategy follows vision and purpose, we must first consider what the University wants to do, then review our structures and protocols for consistency.

SNAPSHOT 6

Summary outlook and strategic dilemmas

For the University of Melbourne, the big picture is complicated and multidimensional – a Rubik’s Cube of constraints and possibilities. None of the strategic choices is simple. Every choice the University makes will be contestable, open to legitimate concerns, and likely involve trade-offs between benefits on one front, collateral effects on another. The risk is that uncertainty and lack of consensus will lead us to make no choices at all.

Research performance

1. In what areas of research should the University concentrate its efforts – and invest resources – to make a significant international contribution? What are the difficult trade-offs that the University should contemplate? What kinds of trade-offs must it take care to avoid? Who should decide, and how should they decide?
2. What international problem configurations and sources of research investment should the University seek out?
3. What areas of research offer the best scope to boost the University’s commercialisation efforts?
4. What are the main policies, support mechanisms and resources needed for the University to improve in this area, to ensure that it attracts both private and public funding for its research programs?
5. If research contribution is the main basis for the University’s international profile, should the University’s postgraduate cohort change to include more research students and less coursework students? Overall, what is the optimum profile for the University’s academic programs in teaching and research?
6. Are there discipline areas where it makes more sense for all academic staff to combine undergraduate teaching and research roles, and others where it makes more operational sense to separate them? If so, how should this be reflected in program design, and staffing policies?

Attracting scholars

7. To attract and retain outstanding scholars on staff, which aspects of the University’s teaching, learning and research facilities are most critical? Which of the current facilities are most in need of improvement?
8. What are the most critical rewards and employment conditions for academic staff? Where should the University position itself on salaries and conditions? Are salary levels the determining factor, or should the University give more emphasis to other factors that contribute to the Melbourne Experience for staff? What attracts scholars to the University currently, and what keeps them here?
9. Over the next decade, many senior staff will begin to retire across the sector, and many institutions will seek to replace them, for the most part by seeking to attract staff from other institutions. What should the University’s strategy be to attract and retain good staff? What seniority and age profile, and what rate of academic staff turnover, should the University aim for?

10. What mix of local and overseas scholars should the University aim to recruit to reflect its international dimension? What intellectual agendas and problem configurations should it highlight to attract leading international scholars?
11. To free up time for academic staff, what average student to staff ratios should the University aim for, institution-wide and by faculty, to be competitive in Australian terms, and in touch with international standards?
12. To free up time, should the University have more local links with other Victorian universities to outsource or co-deliver undergraduate programs or course options where student numbers are low?
13. To free up time, should the University exchange course content (online materials, recorded lectures etc.) more widely with other Australian universities and Universitas 21 partners?
14. Are there too many postgraduate coursework programs, with too few students, occupying too much staff time? Are there too many undergraduate course options, with too few students, occupying too much staff time? If a subject or course is 'non-core' for the discipline, attracting too few students, or available elsewhere in Victoria or online, should it be dropped?

The Melbourne Experience

15. To attract the best and brightest students, which of the current student services and facilities most need improvement?
16. Is there anything about the Melbourne Experience that would lead Australian students from other states to prefer this University to a leading institution in their home state? Apart from scholarships, what would it take to make the University a preferred institution for talented interstate students?
17. What should the Melbourne Experience mean for international students? What could the University change to ensure better integration, and enrich the social and cultural dimension of the Melbourne Experience for all groups? For example, should group-based learning be designed to ensure that students study in cross-cultural groups?
18. What is the role of the residential colleges in the Melbourne Experience? How does this mode of live-in study, experienced by a small but significant part of the student body, combine with other modes that day students and part-time students engage in?
19. From a quality of teaching perspective, what ratios of teaching staff to students should the University be aiming for in each faculty? What modes of pedagogy are implied by the target ratios? What technologies are implied by the modes of pedagogy? What kinds of knowledge should every graduate be aware of and competent to engage with, that most scholars working in that field would be capable of teaching, given suitable courseware? How can the undergraduate experience offer greater exposure to the research culture?
20. Should every student own a laptop with wireless capability (as has become the norm in Law) to provide anytime, anywhere-access to Blackboard for online interchange, course notes and resources? Should all courses have a significant component of their academic content online? How actively is Blackboard, the University's new technology platform for teaching and learning, being taken up across the disciplines? Where it is not, are there good reasons not to take it up?

21. If course content and reference material become hyper-accessible, and online interchanges among students and staff become the norm, does face-to-face teaching practice migrate from lecture mode to (say) seminar mode? If so, do large lecture theatres need to be replaced or supplemented by other kinds of learning spaces?
22. What should the University do to improve its results in surveys of teaching? How heavily should the University rely on survey data, whether sector-wide or institution-wide, to measure and improve teaching and learning? If there are more effective student feedback methods in use (e.g. focus groups), should these be formally recognised, supported and published as better indicators? Should the University conduct surveys less often?
23. To what extent are the lists of graduate attributes made explicit to commencing students as the guiding purposes of a program? To what extent are programs explicitly designed to instil or develop these attributes?

Internationalisation

24. Does the University need a clearer mandate for Asia literacy? To what extent is it feasible to include 'Asia literacy' across all the disciplines? What mechanisms are needed to make this happen where it is feasible?
25. Should all domestic students have direct experience of a different cultural setting at some point in their course of study, and write a reflective study of it?
26. Should the target for study abroad or student interchange be lifted, so that by say 2015, most domestic undergraduates spend at least a semester abroad?
27. Should the University lift its target for international enrolments to say 50 per cent of the student body? If it did, what effects would this have on the Melbourne Experience?
28. What kind of international recruitment coordination mechanisms should the University have in place? Should the University concentrate its efforts in two or three big markets (say, China, India, Indonesia)? Or alternatively, should it seek to spread its bets across a broader range of source countries?
29. How well is the Universitas 21 Global strategy working? What potential exists for these courses to be made available for existing Melbourne students? What potential exists for existing Melbourne courses to become available on the U21Global platform?

Resources, sustainability, commercialisation

30. From a resource perspective, what is the optimum size and profile for the student body? What should the balance of Commonwealth supported and full-fee domestic students be? What should the balance of domestic and international students be? What should the balance of undergraduate and postgraduate programs be?
31. Should the University use its market position to maximise the proportion of fee paying domestic undergraduates (within the regulated level of 35 per cent of domestic enrolments)? Should the University lift its full-fee international student levels to say 40 or even 50 per cent of the total student cohort?

32. From a resource perspective, what average academic to non-academic staff ratios should the University aim for, institution-wide and by faculty, to balance 'overhead work' with 'front line work'?
33. How would these kinds of moves affect the Melbourne Experience? Should the University consider greater use of online and distance learning, particularly with offshore students, for a substantial part of their degree to alleviate pressure on campus facilities?
34. How comfortable is the University community with the influx of full-fee students, either domestic or international? Has the University satisfactorily reconciled its commitment to principles of access, and the resource imperatives that lead it to rely on large numbers of full-fee students?
35. If the University chose to minimise future growth in staff and students, what alternative revenue strategies should it then pursue? Alternatively, what kinds of cost-cutting measures are worth considering?
36. Should the University aim to make its existing physical infrastructure work harder, for example by introducing three term, all-year-round teaching across the disciplines, in all those faculties that have not yet taken this up, but where it would be feasible?
37. What should the next iteration of the Master Plan for the campus look like? How will the current growth trend be accommodated? At what point should the University stabilise student numbers and focus on upgrading facilities rather than expanding usable space?
38. Should the balance of University investment in texts, journals and related literature migrate away from physical library resources toward online resources? Should further development of library facilities seek to extend current facilities (such as the Baillieu), or should library resources migrate increasingly to precinct hubs as the campus expands towards the city?
39. Of all the available concepts of 'commercialisation', which should we accept and promote as worth pursuing in a public university? How can the University clarify where commercialisation supports its academic mission, and what the main risks are? How can it ensure that commercialisation efforts do not conflict with academic values?
40. Is the University at risk of losing government funding for research if the policy focus shifts to greater commercial linkage? Or are there areas that would gain from this?
41. Does the University need a clearer mandate for commercialisation, and should it be given a priority similar to (say) internationalisation?
42. Do the University's commercialisation vehicles such as Melbourne Ventures and the Melbourne Research Innovation Office have clear, widely understood roles?
43. Are there research outcomes, for example in medicine, where the University has a social obligation to develop and transfer the knowledge or technology, whether or not it generates a profit? What can the University do to provide a more visible path from knowledge creation to commercial realisation and market dissemination in the public interest?
44. How well has the University fared with its attempts so far to establish commercial ventures designed to produce profits that would flow back in to the public University? What potential risks or benefits do these ventures now have, and how well do they fit with the University's vision, values and strategic directions?

Intellectual leadership

45. What kind of intellectual agenda should the University seek to set as an institution? What should our hit list of problem configurations be? What structures should the University use to combine different disciplinary perspectives on these problems? What strategies should the University use to highlight, inform and clarify these issues in the public domain and the various media spaces?
46. Is there research and scholarly expertise within the University that does not flow readily into the public domain? Is the University well-equipped to identify and tap expertise to respond to community demands and world events? How can the University help to equip and position staff to play a more active public intellectual role?

Organising and managing

47. What are the most critical areas of development where the University needs a stronger central role in coordinating policy and strategy?
48. In a highly networked community of contributors, what formal mechanisms and informal norms should the University adopt to help people to collaborate across these complex structures more effectively? What kinds of collegial and decision-making protocols are needed to work effectively in a 'hypertext' organisation?
49. Recognising that the University relies heavily on the expertise and professionalism of its non-academic staff, what kinds of conditions are needed to attract and value them? Is there scope for a more encompassing collegiality in the way our scholars and non-academics work with each other?
50. How can the University mobilise change, beyond the current mechanism of putting goals and targets in its plans?
51. Does the University try to do too much on too many fronts? Does it have too many plans, and too many priorities? Should it adopt the practice of not adding new plans and projects without at the same time deciding what to remove from existing agendas? Does it need to rationalise the number of things it is doing at present?

Afterword

In short, we have a very long list of questions, exhausting perhaps, but by no means exhaustive!

As part of this consultation, staff and students are encouraged to attend the discussion forums, conduct their own discussions, and pick and choose the issues most relevant to them.

Colleagues should get their heads together and work up their responses and proposals. These need not be confined to the questions raised in this paper. Critical perspectives on other University issues are welcome, creative ideas and robust solutions too.

Even in the face of difficult choices, a university should be a place where every voice may be heard.

Notes

- ¹ This draft discussion paper was jointly prepared by Geoff Sharrock and Glyn Davis. It has benefited from interviews with many senior members of the University, and from comments and contributions from Michael Beaton-Wells, Andrew Norton, Neville Buch, Richard James, David Penington, Maureen O’Keefe and Silvia Dropulich.
- ² The late Davis McCaughey (1988) observed: “We in the Australian Universities have inherited a valuable mixed form of government, Councils neither wholly consisting of academic staff (as in some ancient Universities), nor of outside trustees (as in some American institutions). This is a notable extension of the collegial principle whereby decisions are reached by discussion, and policies formulated by persuasion...”
- ³ According to Paul Grendler (2002), in 1429 the commune at Florence calculated that 250 Florintines spent 5000 florins abroad each year. The authorities decided to increase funding for the university, and ban citizens from studying abroad. (This reference and related details courtesy of Gavin Moodie).
- ⁴ See Paul Grendler (2002).
- ⁵ Michaela Kronemann (2005) notes that total GST revenue is estimated to be \$35.2 billion in 2004-05, and forecast to grow at about \$2 billion per year for the next three years.
- ⁶ Kevin Hart (1988) explicates as follows: “The word ‘faculty’...stems from the Latin *facultas* (meaning power, ability, property)...when we talk of a university faculty, we draw on the second branch, a kind of ability, yet...this sense is not absolutely separated from the other branches. On the one side, we have faculties which are innate, natural or internal; on the other side, faculties which empower, licence or permit...”
- ⁷ Davis McCaughey (1988) put it this way: “In scholastic education the teacher as it were stands in front of the class and informs them...In the relation between apprentice and master...the student and his or her master stand side by side; and gradually the apprentice shares in the skill of the master craftsman. In the third mode, the Socratic, the teacher and the taught stand on the same level, for the Socratic questioning assumes that there are things which we do not know, master or pupil. They stand together before the unknown...”
- ⁸ Gerhard Caspar (1995) observes that: “To some extent, since their origins, universities have been places where one meets utter strangers in terms of social or ethnic background... Contemporary universities are characterized by a remarkable extent of peaceful interaction across multiple social boundaries...few, if any, institutions...are...more successful than universities at encouraging their members to cross bridges...the residential version of the American college may have no equal in challenging the familiar; in challenging prejudices, and values; in creating uncertainties; in bringing about new ways of relating to one another...”
- ⁹ According to Kevin Hart (1988): “If we look at the German university in 1750 we find few professors engaged in publishing research reports or speculative essays...A century later, in 1850, we are in a different world entirely; all professors, if they were in any sense respected or successful, had to be engaged in research...with the rise of Berlin, the university becomes a place of both teaching and research...academic life was restructured: no longer simply a training academy for the professions, the university became professional in itself...”

¹⁰ John Henry Newman (1852) put it this way: “There are other institutions far more suited to act as instruments of stimulating philosophical inquiry, and extending the boundaries of our knowledge, than a University. Such, for instance, are the literary and scientific Academies, which are so celebrated in Italy and France, and which have frequently been connected with Universities... The nature of the case and the history of philosophy combine to recommend to us this division of intellectual labour between Academies and Universities. To discover and to teach are distinct functions; they are also distinct gifts, and are not commonly found united in the same person. He, too, who spends his day in dispensing his existing knowledge to all comers is unlikely to have either leisure or energy to acquire new...The greatest thinkers have been too intent on their subject to admit of interruption; they have been men of absent minds and idiosyncratic habits, and have, more or less, shunned the lecture room and the public school...”

¹¹ Gabrielle Baldwin (2005) argues that the nexus can't be taken for granted – with some studies suggesting an inverse relationship – but that there are many ways to design research cultures into curricula and learning activities.

The recent DEST Issues Paper, ‘Building University Diversity’ (2005, p. 1) notes that “Higher education systems in other countries accommodate a broader range of types of institutions than are seen in Australia. In other systems, universities are not necessarily required to have a comprehensive teaching and research profile in all disciplines...”

The ANU's Malcolm Gillies (2005) is sceptical about the idea: “Despite widespread testimony to that indissoluble nexus and the mutually enriching roles of research and education, we are close to clueless in accounting for the effect of research on education...”

¹² Bernd Huppauf (1988) argues that: “The constitution of the modern university rests on a unique and fragile balance of conflicting interests and dynamics which are partially reconciled by their integration into a structure in its own right, outside the economic and political sphere. This position as an enclave in capitalist society made it possible for the university to be a part of, and at the same clearly distinct from, the social and economic structure of society...The autonomy of the modern university was never an absolute one, but determined by a delicate ambivalence based on careful balancing of dependence on, and a simultaneous critical distance from, society...”

¹³ Wilhelm von Humboldt's submission to the King of Prussia (1809) put it this way: “The appointment of university professors must be exclusively reserved to the state, and it is surely not good to permit the various faculties more influence in this matter than an understanding and fairminded administrative body will do of its own accord...the disagreements among professors on their specialties can, even unintentionally and without ill will, distort completely their point of view as to what is good for the whole. Further, the quality of the Universities is closely related to the immediate public interest of the government. The choice of members of an Academy, however, must be left to themselves, subject only to confirmation by the King...For the Academy is an association in which the principle of internal unity is far more important. Also its purely scientific or artistic purposes are less closely connected with any interests of the state...”

- ¹⁴ Minister Nelson has decided to redefine the independence of universities, reserving for the Minister the right not just to decide which courses will be funded, and requiring his permission before some courses are discontinued, but for the first time also personally vetoing public funding for some research projects selected by the ARC after peer assessment.
- ¹⁵ Ronald Barnett (2004) puts it this way: “Questions of the kind now being identified are characteristically open-textured questions that yield, in a global and pluralist world, interpretations that are not just different but incompatible; and there is no straightforward way of resolving those differences...the emergence of supercomplexity...is in part due to the university fulfilling its modern mission. That we have both multiple and competing interpretations of the world before us and that we have a sense that interpretations of the world are now infinite: all this, in part, is down to the Western university fulfilling the brief...of critical enlightenment...”
- ¹⁶ The line comes from Rai Gaita (2000).
- ¹⁷ Karl Jaspers (1945) put it this way: “The university is a community of scholars and students engaged in the task of seeking truth. It is a body which administers its own affairs regardless of whether it derives its means from endowments, ancient property rights or the state; or whether its original public sanction comes from papal bulls, imperial charters or the acts of provinces or states. In every case its independent existence reflects the express wish or continuing toleration on the part of the founder. Like the church it derives its autonomy – respected even by the state – from an imperishable idea of supranational, world-wide character: academic freedom. This is what the university demands and what it is granted. Academic freedom is a privilege which entails the obligation to teach truth, in defiance of anyone outside or inside the university who wishes to curtail it...”
- ¹⁸ The phrase comes from Edward Said (1994).
- ¹⁹ David Kirp (2003: 219) recalls that: “It was in the fall of 1964 on Berkeley’s Sproul Plaza that Mario Savio, the leader of the Free Speech Movement, famously railed against the university for ‘serving’ the needs of American industry’ and operating ‘as a factory that turns out a product needed by industry; rather than serving as the conscience and critic of society’...”
- ²⁰ In 1975, Australia’s Universities Commission (quoted in Peter Karmel’s essay, ‘Funding Universities’ 2000) outlined the role of the university as follows: “The purposes for which universities are founded and for which society continues to maintain them include the preservation, transmission and extension of knowledge, the training of highly skilled manpower and the critical evaluation of the society in which we live...”
- ²¹ Gerard Delanty (2004) argues that: “The university cannot enlighten society as the Humboldtian and Kantian model of the university assumed, nor can it reflect the power and prestige of the nation-state and the aspirations of the professions, but it can provide the structures of public debate between expert and lay cultures...rather than speak of the demise of the university as a result of the postmodern scenarios of fragmentation of knowledge, retreat of the state, and the embracing of market values, the university must find ways to expand reflexively the discursive capacity of society and by doing so to enhance citizenship in the knowledge society...”

- ²² Stanley Katz (2005), commenting on a recent move to reform the core curriculum at Harvard, asks “whether research universities can purport to offer undergraduates a liberal education” and illustrates “how contested the meaning of liberal education is in research universities. Should the core curriculum offer common knowledge? Or a way of learning? Should it require set courses, or provide student choice? Focus on big questions, or on specialized exploration in a variety of disciplines?... (however) the elements of the definition that have been at the heart of the most important ambitions of liberal education for the last century are likely to remain – empowering students, liberating their minds, preparing them for citizenship. In short, a process rather than a substantive orientation...”
- ²³ In the recent review of university governance (DET 2002, p. 13) Gavin Moodie writes: “Modern universities are ...descendants of the archetypal universities of the Middle Ages. Gellert...posits three dominant models...of modern European universities over the last two centuries: the German or research university, established with the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810 by Wilhelm von Humboldt...the British model of character formation or liberal education ...expounded in Cardinal Newman’s *The idea of a university*; and the French or professional training model of the *grandes ecoles*...”
- ²⁴ Don Aitkin (1996) argues that critics of courses in the newer professions, such as nursing, accounting, or tourism, are part of a conservative tradition of scholarly resistance to the introduction of any new field, including those now well accepted in universities. He cites environmental science, sociology, political science and education as examples.
- ²⁵ See DETYA 2000: *Higher Education Students Times Series Tables 2000: Selected Higher Education Statistics*.
- ²⁶ See DEST 2003: *Students 2003: Selected Higher Education Statistics*.
- ²⁷ According to David Curtis in (2000): “Much of the projected increase in (Australian) participation in higher education will be associated with increases among lifelong learners. These people have been a growing proportion of higher education enrolments, and they have some unique characteristics compared with recent school leavers. Many are in full-time employment and have family responsibilities. These learners must fit their study around those commitments and meeting the needs of this growing proportion of learners represents a challenge for established universities...there is limited capacity or willingness to extend current arrangements, and therefore opportunities for new providers will arise...”
- ²⁸ See DETYA 2000: *Higher Education Students Time Series Tables*.
- ²⁹ Martin Trow (2005), quoting Brennan (2004), summarising Trow (1973) categorises these as: “(1) elite – shaping the mind and character of a ruling class; preparation for elite roles; (2) mass – transmission of skills and preparation for a broader range of technical and economic elite roles; and (3) universal – adaptation of the ‘whole population’ to rapid social and technological change...”
- ³⁰ The US-Canadian Education Policy Institute, in its report on ‘Global Higher Education Rankings: Affordability and Accessibility in Comparative Perspective’ (2005) ranked Australia 12th of 16 countries in higher education *affordability*, just ahead of the US,

UK, NZ and Japan rankings, and just behind Canada. The same study ranked Australia 6th of 13 countries in *accessibility*, just below Canada, the US and the UK. Affordability reflects the student's cost of study (fees, living expenses, etc.) relative to national income. Accessibility reflects the extent of participation and the social composition of participants. Only Finland and the Netherlands ranked high on both measures. Sweden, Belgium, Ireland, Austria, Germany, France and Italy were ranked as more *affordable* than Australia, but less *accessible*.

- ³¹ See AVCC 2003: *University funding and expenditure*.
- ³² See Glyn Davis (2004).
- ³³ In a recent study of the international standing of Australian universities, Ross Williams and Nina Van Dyke observe that: "Australia has the highest percentage of foreign tertiary students of any OECD country; in absolute terms it is the fourth-largest provider of tertiary education to foreign students behind the USA, United Kingdom and Germany..."
- ³⁴ See media release from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 6 May 2005: 'Education exports lead services trade growth'.
- ³⁵ David Kirp (2003: 7) argues that the marketing of higher education can be for better or for worse: "market forces lead some schools to forget that they are not simply businesses while turning others into stronger, better places..."
- ³⁶ For example, Simon Marginson and Mark Considine (2000: 5) argue that: "In the Enterprise University, the economic and academic dimensions are both subordinated to something else. Money is a key objective, but it is also the means to a more fundamental mission: to advance the prestige and competitiveness of the university as an end in itself... academic identities...are subordinated to the mission, marketing and strategic development of the institution and its leaders..."
- ³⁷ See DEST 2004: *Staff 2004: Selected Higher Education Statistics*, Table 1: FTE for Full-time, Fractional Full-time and Estimated Casual Staff by Work Contract.
- ³⁸ Various sources document the rise of student-staff ratios since the late 1980s. The figure of 21:1 comes from the AVCC, *Student-Staff Ratios 1990-2003, Student to Teacher Ratio 2003 and Historical Data*, 12 July 2004.
- ³⁹ Source: AVCC data, June 2005.
- ⁴⁰ See Craig McInnis (1998a and 1998b).
- ⁴¹ See Richard Winter and James Sarros (2002).
- ⁴² Megan Kimber (2003) notes that nationally, casual staff numbers more than doubled between 1990 and 2000, from less than 4700 to more than 12600 (almost 270 per cent), more than 57 per cent of them academics (more than 7200), mostly as teaching-only staff.
- ⁴³ See Judy Szekeres (2003).
- ⁴⁴ See Coaldrake and Stedman (1998: 14).
- ⁴⁵ See V. Lynn Meek (2000).

- ⁴⁶ V. Lynn Meek (2000) summarises the combined effects on institutions this way: "In Australia as elsewhere, the last decade has ushered in a new phase in higher education planning and policy development, one characterised by: reductions in public expenditure; increased emphasis on efficiency of resource utilisation; increased emphasis on performance measurement, particularly in terms of outcomes; increased emphasis on demonstrable contribution to the economy of the nation; and the strengthening of institutional management and the policy and planning role of individual institutions... The push to diversify the funding base has been one of the primary factors making university management more difficult and complex...considerable pressure has been placed on universities to strengthen management, and to become more entrepreneurial and corporate-like. The large universities...rival in size and complexity many private corporations. Institutions must now respond quickly and decisively in order to take advantage of market opportunities..."
- ⁴⁷ Andrew Norton (2002:13) observes that: "In the early 1970s getting a job after university, whatever degree you had, was not difficult. Underemployment...was around 2.5per cent in 1974 for the people who finished their degrees in 1973. By the 1980s going to university...no longer insured against short-term unemployment...during the early 1990s graduate underemployment reached nearly 30%...with rates in some areas of the humanities and sciences exceeding 30% up until the late 1990s..."
- ⁴⁸ Simon Marginson (2002) observes that: "Almost two-thirds of all fee-paying international students are enrolled in business and computing. Among domestic students, business and law have grown faster than other disciplines, especially at postgraduate level..."
- ⁴⁹ Newman (1852) put it this way: "It is a great point then to enlarge the range of studies which a University professes, even for the sake of the students; and, though they cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation...Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects...He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests...as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called 'Liberal'..."
- ⁵⁰ A recent newspaper editorial puts it this way: "Dr Nelson...has criticised universities for abandoning what he calls core subjects, such as pure sciences and humanities, in favour of populist ones – he cites aromatherapy and golf course management. But a university which lives solely by the market will be shaped, and in the end defined, by that market. In the scramble for survival there can be no core subjects, no tradition, no guarantees of continuity..." ('The hard life of the mind' in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May 2005).
- ⁵¹ See Margaret Gardner (2005), Vice-Chancellor's Inaugural Lecture, RMIT.

- ⁵² See Allen Consulting Group (2004): "The importance of the universities in the research system has been increasing, not only in Australia, but also in most OECD countries...The first reason is the emergence of major new areas of research in terms of the life sciences and nanotechnology which are increasingly fields where the research leaders are to be found in universities...The second reason is the increasing importance of multidisciplinary research in high-impact areas such as the interface between information technology and the biosciences. This development makes it increasingly difficult for corporate research laboratories to marshal all the disciplines they need to stay at the cutting edge...As a consequence companies are tending to outsource research to the universities..."
- ⁵³ Burton Clark (1997) argues that: "No university, and no national system of universities, can control knowledge growth...the knowledge produced and circulated in universities is now greatly extended by the growing array of knowledge producers located in other sectors of society...internationally, no one controls the production, reformulation and distribution of knowledge..."
- ⁵⁴ Derek Bok (2003: 64-65) observes in the US context that: "Firms that offer research support naturally want to keep commercially valuable results from falling into a competitor's hands....company officials regularly insist that information concerning the work they support be kept in confidence while the research is going on and for a long enough time thereafter to allow them to decide whether to file for a patent...Although most observers believe that one or two months after completion of the research will give companies enough time to decide whether to seek a patent, 58 per cent of corporate sponsors in one large study admitted to insisting regularly on delays of more than six months..."
- ⁵⁵ Slaughter and Leslie (1997: 61) put it this way: "(in the US, UK and Australia) Academic R & D policies...became science and technology policies...For the most part, technoscience fields gained funds while fields that were not close to the market...lost funds. Positions for faculty, places for students and research money turned technoscience fields into growth areas in tertiary education..."
- ⁵⁶ Michael Gibbons (1997) describes the emergence of 'mode 2' knowledge production as follows: "In mode 1 problems are set and solved in a context governed by the, largely academic, interests of a specific community. By contrast, mode 2 knowledge is worked out in a context of application...it includes a wider, more temporary and heterogeneous set of practitioners, collaborating on a problem defined in a specific and localised context...in mode 1...problems are defined largely in terms of criteria which reflect the intellectual interests and preoccupations of the discipline and its gatekeepers. In mode 2... the context of application... incorporates a diverse range of intellectual interests as well as other social, economic or political ones... research in many important areas is cutting loose from the disciplinary structures... research centers, institutes and 'think tanks' are multiplying at the periphery of universities...some of the best academics have tunneled out of their institutions and have joined problem configurations of various kinds..."
- ⁵⁷ Reported by Ralph Blumenthal, 'Computers close chapter of the campus library', *Australian Financial Review*, 6 June 2005, p.34.
- ⁵⁸ See Linda O'Brien and Stephen Young (2005).

- ⁵⁹ A study of first-year undergraduate experience by Kerri-Lee Krause, Robyn Hartley, Richard James and Craig McInnis (January 2005: iv-v) found that full-time students were spending more time in paid employment and less time on campus, but typically were more satisfied with their university experience as a whole than first-year students 10 years ago. The Report also found that the majority of (first year) students in 2004 accessed online course resources, used email to contact peers and lecturers and used computer software designed for their course; however the proportion of students using online discussion opportunities remained in the minority.
- ⁶⁰ See John Bowden and Ference Marton (1998: 136-141).
- ⁶¹ Jaishree Odin (2004: 153-154) states the case this way: "Studies have shown that extensive exposure to television and videogames changes how the brain receives and processes information. Marc Prensky... calls today's generation of students 'digital natives' in that their formative years are permeated with technical artefacts, such as videogames, cell phones, and computers, which have an impact on their thinking patterns and how they process information. The digital natives, Prensky notes, are taught by faculty who are 'digital immigrants' as they have learned to adapt to the digital world, some better than others. The problem in the classroom arises when digital immigrants, using their predigital language as well as teaching methods, teach the digital natives who work best in a visually stimulating environment that allows multitasking. Sitting in a classroom listening to the professor on the podium is not very appealing to the new generation of students..."
- ⁶² Zygmunt Bauman (1992: 101) argues that: "The mass culture debate has been the lament of expropriated gamekeepers...it was the intellectuals who impressed upon the once incredulous population the need for education and the value of information...The market will...achieve what the intellectual educators struggled to attain in vain: it will turn the consumption of information into a pleasurable, entertaining pastime...intellectuals tend to articulate their own societal situation and the problems it creates as a situation of the society at large, and its systemic or social problems..."
- ⁶³ See James Twitchell, (2004: 117-8).
- ⁶⁴ Many commentators draw attention to aspects of this. See for example Samuel Weber (1999) and the essays by Simon Cooper, John Hinkson and Geoff Sharpe (2002: 233-267).
- ⁶⁵ See *The Economist*, February 26 – March 4, 2005, pp. 63-65.
- ⁶⁶ According to Gus Guthrie et al. (2004: 48), "Although the for-profit sector (of higher education) is large, diverse and growing in the USA, it is possible to identify a band of the largest companies, 'super-system' corporations, that include about a dozen listed on NASDAQ, and about a further 20 that could contemplate such a listing. Their recent growth has been phenomenal. One of the largest is the Apollo Group, owner of the University of Phoenix, which has a student enrolment of over 200,000, an annual turnover of US\$2 billion, and with annual revenue increases of around 35 per cent (but 80 per cent for its online operations). The listed super-system corporations currently run over 400 degree programs, from Associate degrees to Doctorates, and on average operate in around 20-30 States, as well as increasingly overseas (China, India)..."

- ⁶⁷ See Simon Marginson (2000: 23-35).
- ⁶⁸ See in particular James B. Twitchell (2004).
- ⁶⁹ Both quotes are from the mission statement of Harvard College.
- ⁷⁰ In 2004, Melbourne was ranked 22nd internationally by a *Times Higher Education Supplement* survey (with the ANU ranking 16th); 82nd on international research performance by the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Institute of Higher Education (with the ANU 53rd). In a study of the international standing of Australian universities by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research Melbourne was ranked equal 1st with the ANU.
- ⁷¹ See the University's *Strategic Plan Perspective 2003*, pp 19-25, and the *University's Annual Budget 2004*, p. 6: "Over the immediate planning period, the University's revenue strategies will necessarily be focused on student fee revenue...In the medium term, educational service contracts, research consultancies and royalty streams flowing from the commercialisation of research are likely to play more significant roles in the diversification of the University's revenue base. Revenue from a global e-education initiative recently launched by Universitas 21 Global offers the prospect of a substantial alternative revenue stream in the longer term..."
- ⁷² Don Aitkin (2005) remarks that: "Some universities in North America advertise a clutch of jobs at base level and let it be known that one of the applicants, but only one, will be slotted into a tenured position at the end..."
- ⁷³ See AVCC, *Student-Staff Ratios 1990-2003, Student to Teacher Ratio 2003 and historical data*, 12 July 2004.
- ⁷⁴ Source: AsiaLink, February 2005 (internal University document).
- ⁷⁵ See *Strategic Plan Perspective 2003*, p. 25.
- ⁷⁶ See *Annual Report 2004*, p. 59.
- ⁷⁷ Source: internal University analysis of Go8 data.
- ⁷⁸ *University Statistics Book*, 2004.
- ⁷⁹ See *Annual Report 2004*, p. 58.
- ⁸⁰ These are revised targets set in June 2005.
- ⁸¹ 'Nelson rejects uni bid to lift HECS fees' reported in the *Age*, 13 June 2005, p. 1.
- ⁸² See *Annual Report 2004*, p. 18.
- ⁸³ For example, David Carter (2004: 28) argues that: "the cultural decline thesis through which public intellectuals have so often defined themselves is largely defensive, reasserting a 'modernist' sense of intellectual authority in the face of major structural changes in print culture, in the academy, and in the media. These changes have multiplied the audiences and the number of types of media for intellectual work as well as for popular culture, producing an unnerving (and energising) transference of values and practices from one realm to the other and in both directions..."

⁸⁴ In the US context, Derek Bok (2003: 3) observes that: “Some writers speak expansively of *commercialization* to include a wide range of behaviours and trends, notably (1) the influence of economic forces on universities (e.g. the growth of computer science majors and departments); (2) the influence of the surrounding corporate culture (e.g. the increased use on campuses of terms such as *CEO*, *bottom line*, or *brand name*); (3) the influence of student career interests on the curriculum (e.g. more vocational courses); (4) efforts to economize in university expenditures (hiring more adjunct teachers) or to use administrative methods adapted from business; or (5) attempts to quantify matters within the university that are not truly quantifiable...Often, words such as *commercialization*, *corporatization*, or *commodification* are employed for rhetorical purposes to capitalize on the widespread distrust of business and business methods in academic circles...”

In the Australian context, a recent report by the Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET 2002: 53) noted widespread concern about ‘commercial values’ in university decision-making. This was variously referred to in submissions to the review as: “competition, commercialisation, corporatisation, entrepreneurialism, marketisation, privatisation, and even managerialism. Several submissions invited the review to deprecate these developments, and some submissions at least implied that universities’ commercial activities should be restricted to pressuring Governments to restore previous levels of public funding...”

⁸⁵ Derek Bok (2003: 18ff) argues that universities need to avoid biases either for or against corporations and market-based solutions. Instead a nuanced, case-by-case approach to assessing the risks and benefits of commercialisation is needed to guard against conflicts of interest and the potential erosion of academic standards and values.

⁸⁶ According to Louis Berneman (cited in DEST 2002: 47): “There are five reasons why universities engage in technology transfer: to facilitate the commercialisation of research for the public good; to promote economic growth; to forge closer ties to industry; to reward, retain and recruit faculty and students; and to generate income. All universities do it for the same five reasons; the mix is just different. And if you focus on the first four, you will get the fifth. If you focus on the fifth, you are likely to get nothing...”

⁸⁷ See Bruce Bayley and Lillian Kassorias (2005).

⁸⁸ See Allen Consulting Group (2004), ‘Building Effective Systems for the Commercialisation of University Research’.

⁸⁹ See Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995).

⁹⁰ Aaron Wildavsky (1973), quoted in Bridgman and Davis (2003), observes that: “Coordination is one of the golden words of our time. I cannot offhand think of any way in which the word is used that implies disapproval. Policies should be coordinated; they should not run every which-way. No one wishes their children to be described as uncoordinated. Many of the world’s ills are attributed to lack of coordination in government ... Policies should be mutually supportive rather than contradictory. People should not work at cross purposes. The participants in any particular activity should contribute to a common purpose at the right time and in the right amount to achieve coordination. A should facilitate B in order to achieve C...”

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