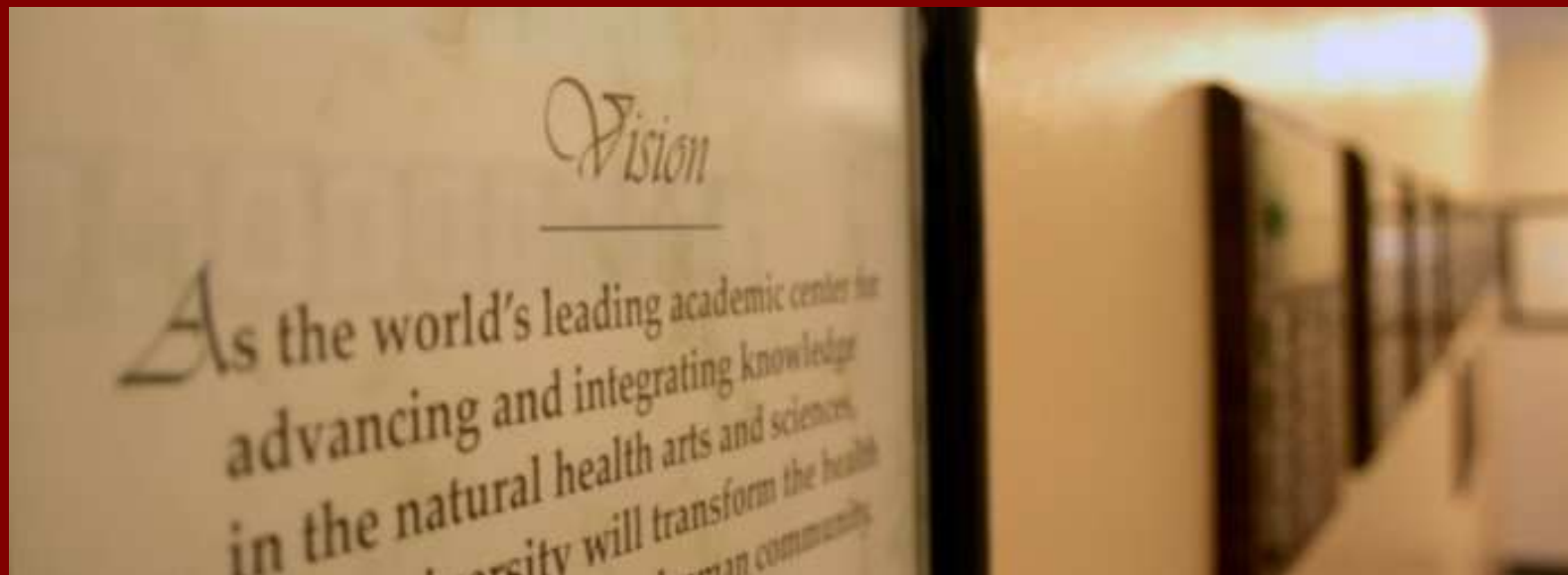




THE MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN A MODERN SOCIETY




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Outline


- Many questions – few answers - keynote
 - A little bit of history
 - A bit of etymology
 - Evolution of missions, functions and purposes
 - Trends, influences and expectations
 - Principle missions
 - Democratic features
- 



Prevalent notion of Mission


University of Calgary Faculty of Medicine **MISSION STATEMENT**

*An innovative medical school committed to
excellence and leadership in education, research
and service to society.*





Purposes of Higher Education

- Preparation for the labour market
 - Personal development
 - Maintenance of an advanced knowledge base
 - Preparation for a life as an active, constructive and critical citizen in a democratic society
 - Maybe not that simple?
- 



Anything New?

“About eighty-five institutions in the Western world established by 1520 still exist in recognizable forms, with similar functions and unbroken histories, including the Catholic church, the Parliaments of the Isle of Man, of Iceland, and of Great Britain, several Swiss cantons, and seventy universities. Kings that rule, feudal lords with vassals, and guilds with monopolies are all gone. These seventy universities, however, are still in the same locations with some of the same buildings, with professors and students doing much the same things, and with governance carried on in much the same ways.”

(Kerr 1963)




What are HEIs about?





Relation to Contemporary Age


- The mission of the university must be determined in each age, responding to the nature and needs of the society which supports the university
 - Changes over time
 - Post-industrial
 - Knowledge-based society
 - Age of democracy
- 



Evolution of Missions


- Greek / Roman tradition: Citizenship
- Medieval times: teaching; professional skills
- Humboldt: Research (sapere aude)
- 20th century: Service to the community and citizenship
- Elite → Mass → Universal education system

An elite system is “concerned primarily with shaping the mind and the character of the ruling class, as it prepares students for broad elite roles in government and the learned professions” (Trow





Predominant Functions I

- Quest for meaning
 - Socrates; Thomas of Aquinas
 - Re-arranging knowledge; new understanding
 - Scholarship
 - Quest for order
 - Cardinal Newman
 - Sustain social development; ethical rules
 - Ex-ducere (teaching and liberal education)
 - Marginalised; credentialism
 - Social ladder
- 



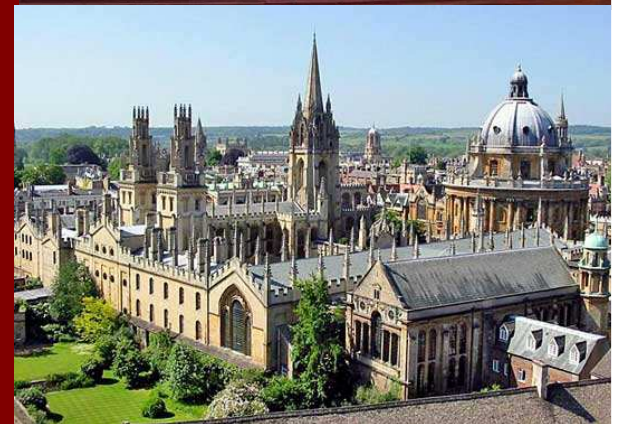
Predominant Functions II

- Quest for welfare
 - Better products; better services
 - Utilitarian
 - Nowadays predominant
- Quest for truth
 - Humboldt
 - Exploration of the unknown
 - Combination of teaching and research



Diversity of Missions

- Different types and profiles of HEIs
- Research universities
- Fully fledged universities
- Specialised universities
- Polytechnics
- Institutes
- Predominantly undergraduate teaching






What Determines the Mission of an HEI?

- Tradition
- Temporary context
- Policy environment
- Level of responsiveness
 - Ivory tower?






Governance

- Inseparable link between mission and governance (who decides, who determines?)
 - Universitas magistrorum et scholarium
 - Modernisation
 - More managerial, less democratic
 - Autonomy and accountability through external influence
 - How to live by example?
 - General institutional culture
 - Need to find the right balance
- 



What Happens at an HEI?

- What do academic staff spend their time with?
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - Service to the community
 - Administration
 - Reforms implementation (technical)
 - How do you ensure not to lose sight?
- 



Drivers and Influences of Strategies

- Changes in society (mass education)
 - Economic concerns
 - Academic drift / vocational drift
 - Global trends
 - Competition
 - Funding
 - Rankings
 - Quality Assurance
 - ICT
- 

What for?





What for?

The answer to the question: “what kind of education do we need?” lies in the answer to another question: “What kind of society do we want”?

Eugenio Tironi: El sueño chileno

What sort of citizen do we want?





What does Society Need?

“The most predictable feature of modern society is its unpredictability. We no longer believe that tomorrow will look much like today. Universities must find ways to sustain the most cherished aspects of their core values, while discovering new ways to respond vigorously to the opportunities of a rapidly changing world. This is the principal challenge to higher education as we enter a new century.”

(Duderstadt 2000)




What does a Knowledge Based Society Require?

- Contest knowledge / strive for truth
- Most effectively advance knowledge
- Seldom long-term vision
 - Authorities
 - Business / Labour market
 - Academics
 - Tuning Project
- Who do HEIs belong to?






Trends

- More specialised knowledge
 - Interdisciplinarity
 - Segmentation issues
 - Globalisation
 - Autonomy
 - Broad policy direction
 - Micromanagement
 - Academic freedom?
 - Control of creation of ideas subverts democracy
- 



Responsiveness

- Universities need to become more responsive to the needs of society!
 - Are they institutionally able?
 - Autonomy
 - Do they have sufficient insight?
 - Where do they get the insight from?
 - Do the individuals have adequate capacity?
 - Managerial competences
 - Long-term vision
- 


What is Expected of HEIs?

- Contribution to shaping of national identity
 - Changed the face of universities fundamentally
 - Globalisation vs internationalisation
- Provision of competent work-force
- New ideas / products
- Competition / cooperation
- More with less





Principle Missions

- Teaching
 - Research
 - Service to community
- 

Teaching

- Methods of teaching, learning and assessment have a strong influence
 - Lectures vs tutorials
 - Student centred learning vs ex-cathedra teaching
- Fachidioten
- Consultants



Research


- Tension between basic / fundamental and applied research
- Fast pace
- Publish or perish
- Competition between disciplines

**All truths are easy to understand once they are discovered;
the point is to discover them.**

Galileo Galilei




Service to the Community

- Newer concept
 - HEI define their community
 - Needs assessment
 - Service; Academic citizenship; Engagement; Public intellectuals; Knowledge exchange; Third stream/leg; Collaboration with business & the community; Enterprise; Consultancy; Scholarship of application...
- 




Democracy

- Massification = democratisation?
 - Forms of citizenship
 - Civil citizenship (18th century; courts)
 - Political citizenship (19th century; parliaments)
 - Social citizenship (20th century; educational system and social services)
 - Equality of opportunity
 - Education as prerequisite to take part
 - Gateway to professions
 - Choices require assessment of complex questions
 - Engagement in public debates
- 




Interdependence with other levels of education

- Higher education builds up from lower levels of education
 - Cannot make up for everything that was not done before
 - Some things are better done at an early stage
 - Teacher training
 - Educational research
- 



What is a Good University?

- Excellence?
 - World-class?
 - Added value to society and individuals
 - Enhancement oriented
 - Conscience and critic of society
- 




Conclusions I

- Sometimes it can be good that HEIs are slow moving creatures
 - Fashion vs sustainability
- Social contract evolves over time
- Universitas: ad unum vertere





Conclusions II

- Preparation for the labour market - welfare
 - Personal development - meaning
 - Maintenance of an advanced knowledge base - truth
 - Preparation for a life as an active, constructive and critical citizen in a democratic society - order
- 



Thank you very much for listening if you
have been!

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