highly personal one. Human beings are complex creatures, and their dreams and aspirations, their talents and experiences, and their particular life circumstances are peculiar to themselves. A successful choice of university would take into account the particular needs of an individual, in a way that is seldom, if ever, reflected in rankings.

For example, in Saskatchewan our demographic projections show that in a few years, our student body will be increasingly Aboriginal. We have already seen a marked growth in the number of students of First Nations descent enrolled at our institution. To better serve these students, we have implemented a number of initiatives including an elders' program, an Aboriginal Students Centre, and an Aboriginal caucus to advise the president. Every autumn the University holds a pow-wow in the centre of campus, as part of our Welcome Week activities. We have formed a partnership with our local Tribal Council to offer Super Saturdays, where Aboriginal children visit campus to take part in engaging educational activities, as well as summer science camps for Aboriginal teens. The purpose of both of these initiatives is to foster a positive attitude toward education in Aboriginal youth.

The University of Saskatchewan's commitment to meeting the needs of Aboriginal peoples is illustrated by this goal's inclusion in our academic strategic plan. However, ranking exercises do not take such mandates into account. Only two Maclean's criteria come close to encouraging diversity in the student body: the percentage of out-of-province first year students, and the number of international graduate students (where the University of Saskatchewan ranks first in its class). Neither of these criteria has any bearing on the number of Aboriginal students attending university.

In the mid-1990s, Canadian provincial governments became interested in developing performance indicators for publicly funded sectors like higher education. While Maclean's rankings are criticized for focusing too narrowly on input measures (such as size of operating grant per full-time-equivalent student), a provincial government's focus on output measures (such as graduate employability) may fail to take into account the critical influence of inputs on outcome. In jurisdictions where provincial funding is tied to outputs, a self-fulfilling cycle of mediocrity can inadvertently be established.

The solution to this dilemma for higher education is to embrace the accountability challenge. Each institution must determine its desired position in terms of programs, student body and research, and develop the performance indicators or measurements that will help it to achieve that position. Clear communication about these indicators and progress toward them will then provide prospective students with valuable information upon which to base their decisions.

Many universities produce fact books that contain a plethora of information: enrollment data, faculty and staff profiles, revenue and expenditure figures, and so on. Very few of these explain why this particular set of data is important to the institution's strategic plan. Nor, I suspect, do many institutions refer to this data in their planning and decision making processes.

Fostering a strategic planning approach in a highly decentralized environment can be a challenge for universities. Different schools within a single university made aspire to very different market positions. Similarly, the may of a large provincial university to offer a broad array of programs to as many students as possible, may mean that the institution's market niche is based on something other than distinctive programs. In such a case, competitive advantage may come through an enhanced student experience.

The ability to develop meaningful performance indicators relies first upon the existence of a dynamic strategic planning and management process. Benchmarked performance measures could then be developed which are relevant to the institution's mission and vision. Budget allocations to support these strategic areas, and annual reports to measure progress would round out the cycle of accountability.

Canadian universities and colleges may not yet be at the point of linking data to objectives and therefore to decision making. However, as the costs of higher education, the number and type of education providers, and the degree of program specialization increase, the public need for useful information upon which to base choices will become even greater. Those institutions that respond to this need will find themselves at the top of the list.

KEEPING THE SMALL UNIVERSITY STRONG IN THE NEW ECONOMY

BY Janyne M. Hodder
Principal, Bishop's University

Bishop's University is a small (2000 students) liberal arts university founded in 1843, offering programmes in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, business administration and education, primarily at the undergraduate level. Situated in rural Québec, we are an anglophone institution in a largely francophone environment.

Along with our sister institutions, we have undergone severe budget cuts over the last several years, losing about 25% of our operating budget. A major effect of this was the reduction of the full-time faculty complement from 107 to 86. Some of them were replaced with part-time and sessional staff, and many were not replaced at all. Of course, the budget squeeze was also felt in all of the academic and service areas: a number of senior and middle-management positions have remained vacant, and operating expenditures have been reduced by about 20%.

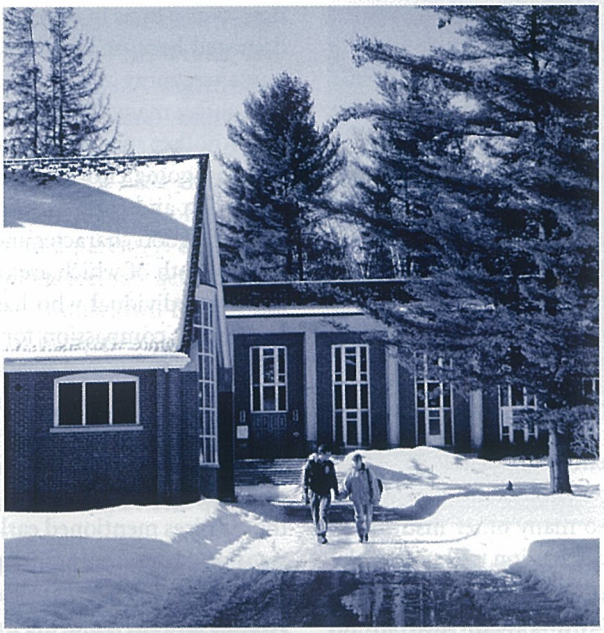
The Québec government has now indicated its willingness to re-invest in post-secondary education in the province, with substantial grants to be spread over a three-year period, as well as changes to the funding formula. Access to this funding is however contingent on the signing of a performance contract between each university and the Minister of Education. These are tailored to suit the specific circumstances of each institution.

As Bishop's University looks ahead over the next five to ten years, we see three principal areas of concern.

The first is the recruitment and retention of faculty. We must fill some of the positions which have been vacant for several years now, and hire in new areas of priority for our developing programmes. It is well known that the coming wave of faculty retirements will make recruitment a challenge for all Canadian universities. There is the question of competitive wages, as well as the thorny issue of market differential in certain disciplines, which

administrations and faculty associations will need to wrestle with. We as a small undergraduate school, away from major urban centres, face a particular challenge in attracting highly qualified new professors, and providing them with stimulating working conditions. How can we find mechanisms to support active researchers fresh from doctoral and post-doctoral programmes? We are focussing now on improving our support for faculty research by opening a Research Office to help with the search for project funding. We are also actively exploring opportunities for our faculty to collaborate in research projects and graduate student supervision with our neighbour, the Université de Sherbrooke, as well as other institutions further afield.

A second concern is student recruitment and success. Our goal is to maintain our student population at between 1850 and 2000 full-time students. Over the last fifteen years our recruitment base has shifted from the primarily local Québec anglophone community from which we drew most of our students in our early years. Beginning in the mid-eighties, we began to see more and more students from elsewhere in Canada, and in particular from Ontario. More recently, we have maintained a strong pan-Canadian base while also attracting increasing numbers of Québec students, often students whose first language is French. A few years ago, we significantly strengthened our recruitment efforts in the north-eastern United States and internationally, which has led to an increase in this student population from about 4% in 1995 to over 10% in 2000-01.



Concerned as we are for the recruitment of high-quality students who are eager for the special liberal-arts environment we offer, we have dedicated additional resources to our scholarship programme, which has grown from $300,000 to more than $700,000 over six years; this year 20% of our entering class were scholarship holders. These funds have come almost exclusively from private sources, as a result of a very successful capital campaign.

Now, demographics across Canada show a potential increase in university-eligible young people, but only in certain areas — Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia. Our challenge is to continue to recruit good students, and to make sure that these students succeed in their programmes at Bishop's. We are taking a closer look now at the first-year experience — this is a period when students away from home for the first time are most at risk — and we are examining our information on student perseverance and time to completion to see where remedial action may be needed.

A third area of concern (and this seems to be increasingly common across the country) is how best to respond to increasing pressures for accountability from government while at the same time preserving the essential autonomy of the university in the planning and development of its academic programmes. We have found the recent performance contract exercise difficult in that it did not permit us to follow the traditional planning processes of our Senate and Board, but rather obliged us to tailor our activities to fit what we perceived to be the expectations of the Minister. The management of the changing relationship with government is becoming increasingly demanding. We recognize that this may simply reflect the general public's increased interest in being better informed about the use of its resources. We still believe, however, that the most fruitful changes are and must be driven by institutional choice and ownership of the process.

Our challenge is to continue to recruit good students, and to make sure that these students succeed in their programmes at Bishop's.

Related to this issue, there is the question of levels of public versus private funding for higher education. Tuition fees in Québec have been frozen for some years at the lowest level in Canada: approximately $1,650 per year. Students from elsewhere pay a higher rate, but this additional amount does not return to our universities. The recent cutbacks in public funding have compelled us to exercise our imaginations in achieving our goals. Increasingly universities are turning to the private sector to fund essential aspects of the mission: technology upgrades, scholarships, dedicated faculty chairs, research programmes. At Bishop's, the level of private funding has risen from 1% of the budget to 6% in the last five years, but we still find that we have significantly less to spend on each of our students than comparable institutions in other provinces have. While there is certainly a role for fundraising from private sources within the university, in the current Canadian context where education is seen as a public good as well as a benefit to the individual, we can debate what the balance between these two sources of funding ought to be. What is clear, is that without major increases in the amount of money we spend, we are not going to be able to compete in the faculty recruitment and retention marketplace, nor provide to our students the educational and living experience they both need and deserve.

At the heart of our challenges is the need for small primarily undergraduate universities such as Bishop's to manage the changes that affect our academic landscape. These include the increased emphasis on high-tech team-based research, the focus on the "potential usefulness" of different programmes, and the increasingly competitive market for faculty and students. We must succeed in this, so we may continue to fulfil the mission to which we are profoundly committed: that of providing a sound and liberal education, the kind most likely to serve not only the new economy but also the society of which Canadians are justly proud.