

**Report on *Growing Esteem* Consultation
The University of Melbourne**

5 October 2005

1 INTRODUCTION

This report provides a broad summary of the diverse perspectives voiced by groups and individuals from across the University community in response to the discussion paper, *Growing Esteem*.

2 MODES OF CONSULTATION

- The discussion paper was released in mid-July.
- Three public meetings were attended by about 700 people.
- Five small group briefings took place.
- A ‘future scenarios’ lunch session took place with 12 participants.
- 13 focus groups were attended by 140 people.
- 130+ written responses/submissions were received.
- 90+ responses/submissions are now published on the University website, with permission from the authors.

3 RESPONSES

The exercise has stimulated considerable discussion across the University. The Vice-Chancellor’s Office has received many excellent contributions from individual staff, students, representative groups and other members of the wider University community, including retired staff. These display an enormous range of insights into the topics raised in the paper. Respondents took up the dilemmas presented and brought a wealth of experience to bear on them.

Some challenged the way issues were framed in the paper, offering new ways of seeing them. Others reminded us, gently or bluntly, of considerations and constituencies that the paper did not explore, that are critical to the fabric of the University. (For example: Campuses other than Parkville. What about alumni? General staff? Whither equity? What’s our wider social vision? Our educational philosophy? Our concept of sustainability?)

The overall response to both the discussion paper and the consultation process has been highly engaged, collegial, creative, and constructively critical.

The responses reflect considerable consensus about what the primary aims and aspirations of the University should be and many shared concerns about common problems and constraints currently experienced by staff. However, strategies and solutions are scarce, as is any wide consensus about proposed strategies of solutions.

4 SOURCES OF PERSPECTIVE

The main part of this report makes extensive use of ‘quotable quotes’ from the written submissions in particular, to illustrate the range of views and proposals expressed on the major themes.

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the future scenarios discussion, prepared by Vin Massaro.

Appendix 2 provides a summary of the survey data gathered, replayed and discussed in the focus groups.

5 SELECTIVE SUMMARY OF PERSPECTIVES

A challenge for this report has been to draw out the main themes and proposals without losing the sense of nuance with which they have been voiced. Inevitably, the report uses extracts, often edited ones, to illustrate themes, mostly from the submissions. It does not present an encyclopaedic list of matters raised or opinions offered. A fuller view of most of the written perspectives is accessible via the published submissions on the website.

5.1 Common aspirations

- Aim to be ‘better, not bigger’
- Gain more depth from current breadth: a ‘broad base with a sharp edge’
- Produce knowledge, learning and graduates that ‘make a difference’
- Create a vibrant Melbourne Experience for students, scholars, staff
- Offer scope to work with world-leading scholars
- Tackle significant problems
- Stay campus-based and face-to-face, but be more IT-enabled
- Expand ‘inter-cultural learning’ on and off campus
- Boost the public intellectual and public policy roles
- Connect more to build a sense of community across internal/external boundaries
- Invest more in interdisciplinary structures and programs
- Do more with knowledge transfer and industry engagement but define and manage these better

5.2 Common concerns

- Workloads and working conditions, lack of time
- Frustration with systems, processes, admin loads
- Poor or inadequate teaching spaces and computer facilities
- Formalising recognition of (wider types of) staff contribution
- Equity, access and support for students if (for example) full-fee numbers increase
- Inadequate measures and incentives to assess and improve practices and contributions to the work of the University

5.3 Common debating points

- How to match UM's resource constraints with its aspirations
- Reconciling academic breadth and diversity with depth and impact
- How best to attract and support outstanding staff and students
- Meeting 'elite' student expectations at a 'mass' scale
- Mixing online modes and resources with physical and face to face ones
- Setting priorities: why, who, how
- Having structures to get the best from existing resources and expertise
- More intensive use of physical campus facilities
- Lifting study abroad as part of the Melbourne Experience

6 SUMMARY OF PERSPECTIVES, PROBLEMS, PROPOSALS

6.1 Framing the mission and vision

There is very strong support for the view that the University should excel in both teaching and research, be a great place to work and study, and have a strong international outlook and profile. The focus group data at Appendix 2 (Tables 1-5) indicate that this includes leading Australia in both research impact and teaching quality, and producing outstanding graduates, capable of making leading contributions in their fields. To achieve this, the University should:

- provide the best possible facilities for staff and students
- offer scope to work with world-leading scholars
- provide a distinctive, multi-cultural educational experience
- make students feel part of a vibrant learning community
- forge stronger links with world-leading universities
- offer leading edge work on significant problems.

With the exception of the last point, these aspirations reaffirm the main themes expressed in the original Melbourne Agenda. The written submissions also reflected these kinds of aspirations. They variously emphasised the research, teaching, cultural, intellectual and public good dimensions of the institution's academic mission:

'A university which is known mainly for its community of international scholars doing both excellent teaching and research ...' Michael Hynes, Department of Genetics

'I wish to work in an organization that strives to be educationally and intellectually elite, that has the brightest minds working to address important local and global issues and to translate their findings for societal good...' Sue Elliot, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

'A research led university is one in which new knowledge is: created, organised, tested, taught, translated into practice (health benefit) commercialised (economic benefit) accessed by the community (community benefit)...a place...where the knowledge we generate makes a difference...' Jim Angus for Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

6.2 The Melbourne Experience for students, scholars, staff

6.2.1 Students

Table 4 of the focus group data indicates that the most strongly agreed aspiration within the University community is that Melbourne students ‘must feel they are part of a vibrant learning community’. The ingredients for this extended well beyond scholarly pursuits and study facilities. For students not living at home especially, it might also include where they live and who they know:

‘Boiled down, the benefits of college, especially in first year, are practical (bed, food, roof), academic and pastoral (tutorials, mentors, role models) and, overwhelmingly, social. In essence, the knowing and being known that Kerri-Lee Krause reports as the cement that sticks people to courses and institutions...’ Phillippa Connelly, Medley Hall

‘Recognise students need a “home” on the campus. Some place to meet. They need a place where they will see students they know. UM is now so big it can be impersonal. Over the years all the meeting places and labs have been converted to graduate student desks etc...Colleges are great. Part of the UM scene. For Asian students International House is the benchmark – a wonderful institution. Colleges are simply an important and essential part of the diverse UM landscape...’ Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

For several of the respondents an existing or potential mix of elements combined to create a primarily *social* environment where work and study blended into a sense of belonging to a vibrant intellectual community that enjoyed a stimulating lifestyle, particularly for students.

‘a significant motivating factor in students coming to Melbourne to study will always be the lifestyle. Marketing to interstate students must also tie the attractiveness of studying at the University of Melbourne closely to the attractiveness of living in Melbourne...’ Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

‘in selling the merits of the Melbourne Experience to prospective students or others we should not fail to emphasise the many attractions of Melbourne the city along with those of Melbourne the campus, and Melbourne University the institution. I feel we have much to gain by emphasising the holistic benefits of studying here, not just the academic benefits...’ Alan Abbott, Committee of Convocation

Others emphasised the need for scholarships and targeted assistance to attract students from other Australian universities:

‘The ANU offers scholarships to attract our top students into their final year Asian Studies honours programs. Carefully targeted assistance could go a long way toward retaining our best students for honours and doctoral work, and in attracting the best from other Universities...’ Michael Leigh, Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies

6.2.2 Scholars

Some respondents observed that the ‘Melbourne Experience’ was equally important for attracting and supporting talented staff. There was a mix of views about what the essential ingredients were: some mix of scholarly reputation, research and study facilities, intellectual engagement, professional development, formal incentives and support; and (for the Parkville campus at least) the University’s campus environment and city location.

Table 3 of the focus group data suggests that for academic staff, ‘scope to work with world-leading researchers’ is more critical than paying ‘the best academic rates in Australia’. Several submissions suggested that the magic mix was mostly about colleagues, facilities, pay and conditions, others the less tangible elements of lifestyle and ethos:

‘The best scholars will be attracted and retained by: world-class research colleagues and facilities; competitive remuneration; opportunities to collaborate nationally and internationally in research and research-led teaching; a vibrant and supportive community of practice; and sustained, responsive professional development to support research and teaching endeavours...’
Kerri-Lee Krause for the Centre for the Study of Higher Education

‘The key drivers in attracting and retaining staff include: access to quality students... infrastructure, laboratory space, platform technologies, collegiality in a critical mass of world-class staff, an environment where internationally competitive research can be performed on a sustainable basis...’ Jim Angus for Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

‘To attract good academics, salaries, while important, are probably less important than conditions conducive to research. And there is probably more that the University can do to protect and improve research-conducive conditions than, given its constrained revenue position, it can hope to do by increasing salaries...’ Ian McDonald, Faculty of Economics and Commerce

‘The University should not seek to be an academic salary leader in Australia. It should pay well in Australian terms, and have the flexibility to pay to attract and retain where necessary. It is unlikely that salary alone is going to determine the choice of employment for outstanding academic staff. The University cannot compete with leading US and European universities, and therefore should concentrate on the academic environment as outlined above to attract and retain staff... The University must become more flexible in relation to attraction of senior staff from overseas. One way is to guarantee spouse employment, another is to formalise joint appointments with overseas Universities...’ Human Resources Group

‘Key aspects in attracting top scholars are obviously a good research reputation in their area, potential for research support... and good staff. However other things are also important like having a university which appreciates a balance between science/technology and the humanities. I managed to attract a top person from TU Vienna because of the Potter Gallery and the café environment around Lygon Street... Lifestyle is important... we need to show that exchange rates do not necessarily relate to cost of living – use the “Big Mac exchange rate”... The key thing is to get them to Melbourne to taste the lifestyle and get a feel for the cost of living – we usually then have them hooked. While a good academic environment is essential it is the quality of life on and off campus that gets them in...’ Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

‘notwithstanding the very real fiscal and workload pressures upon Melbourne academics. I wonder if more might be done to promote ‘The Melbourne Experience’ to the best and brightest younger academics and support staff in, say, leading British, Asian and American universities... What trade offs can be made in terms of salaries, teaching and research expectations to create a sufficiently attractive overall package... As your ‘tenured core’ retires, self-consciously aligning recruitment with the Melbourne Experience might serve as a key attractor in building upon excellence and broadening further the University’s international ties and international perspectives...’ Damian Powell, Janet Clarke Hall

‘I do not believe that it is difficult to recruit international scholars to settle in Melbourne. There are many people in the UK and the US, in Germany and other European countries, whose working conditions are deteriorating, whose cost of living is prohibitive, and whose values are affronted by their national political culture. Likewise, as universities in our region grow so dramatically, exchange positions and mutual recruitment will increase...’ Janet McCalman, Department of History and Philosophy of Science/School of Population Health

Recognising that the physical size and spread of the University works against the prospect of creating a 'learning community' by default, some respondents framed the current challenge in terms of an 'imagined community' or of 'multiple communities'.

'The university operates as a series of communities, some well-defined and bound together strongly, while others are others fragmented, less cohesive and by their nature more transitional. These multiple communities coexist...but contain different aspirations and ideas about their connections with each other and with the university...The balance between serving the varied needs of these multiple communities and binding them together is extraordinarily difficult, with this balance by its own nature dynamic and elusive...How can the university engage the broader community and involve it in its operation, and make more of its infrastructure and facilities? It should be one of the most vibrant places within the City of Melbourne, attracting people who may never study or work here but nonetheless, benefit from and experience the space, facilities and opportunities for entertainment and enjoyment...' Garry Thomson, for Health, Counselling and Disability Services

'sustainability means: first, ensuring that we all know, value and utilise what is already on offer; and second, ensuring that we all know enough of each other's activities, lives and values to establish a rich and convincing sense of community (be it intellectual, social, professional or commercial)... Attention to the functional elements of the campus must be matched with attention to the social needs of the people who use them... Integrating our existing range of recreational and cultural facilities, events and forums... may all appear as 'soft' outcomes...but they are central to the maintenance of a shared conception – an 'imagined community' – of the University...' Chris McAuliffe, Ian Potter Museum of Art

Other respondents focused on the ethical and interpersonal dimension of working at Melbourne, as expressed in the values, policies and practices the University promotes and upholds:

'In realising the aim of being one of the finest universities in the world...the University could work towards becoming a truly "great place to work" and to study – a place where people feel valued and respected, that operates with fairness and integrity and is known to do so, and that take actions to develop the potential of all its staff – not merely a favoured few. Such an institution can be elite in its achievements, but not elitist in its values, mode of operation, or its level of social awareness and responsibility...' Maree Gladwin, Equity and Diversity

Still others emphasised job security and career opportunity as a platform for sustaining commitment to the work of the University:

'For high quality teaching we need more permanent staff – or at least longer term contracts. Otherwise there is not enough commitment to building up and deepening a subject...we will need more full time 'permanent' tutors with a career path – rather than the cheapskate alternative of sessional appointments...' Nicholas Low, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

6.2.3 *Administrative and professional staff*

Several of the submissions touched on the question of the role, status and formal recognition of administrative staff:

'There remains a strong cultural divide between academic and non-academic staff in the University...This is an underlying issue in relation to attraction and retention of professional general staff. The complexity of the world the University now operates in requires professional staff to manage its finance, legal compliance, human resources and Information Technology ...commencing salaries for staff in generalist professional areas are generally competitive, but turnover of general staff from early career positions is high. While partly a societal problem, it

also may also be due to work organisation and the perception of limited opportunity and the academic /general staff status issue...' Human Resources Group

'We believe that the University needs much more flexible arrangements allowing for the promotion and upgrading of administrative staff within their current positions within departments and schools. Academics can be promoted within the same department but this is not the case with general staff. Subsequently, we lose many excellent general staff to other departments and faculties. We believe that this would create a better sense of ownership and engagement with departments and schools if this were the case...' Henry Jackson, Pip Pattison, Simon Cropper and Professor Alex Wearing for School of Behavioural Science

'The discussion paper is short in its coverage of career pathways at the University. The paper discusses these matters in terms of the recruitment and retention of academic staff. The paper makes no reference to its general staff. Career prospects for general staff are framed solely in terms of management. Career development is generally seen as training for management roles. This disadvantage those general staff members whose skills and expertise are better suited in other career pathways. The University is geared to assist academic leaders into general staff roles, but it has no pathways for general staff with academic qualifications to re-enter back into academic-type roles...' Neville Buch, University Planning Office

6.3 Physical facilities and uses of technology

Table 4 of the focus group data indicates lukewarm support for the proposition that there should be 'more scope to study online' and fair support for the proposition that the student experience should be 'campus-based'. Yet despite wide endorsement of the 'campus-based' approach, there is general recognition that teaching space is tight and that physical facilities are lacking for the number of students on campus. How to deal with this while remaining true to the notion of a 'campus-based' university was the challenge.

Should University facilities work all year round to sustain quality (by optimising use of the physical assets that make up half the University's operating costs)? The focus group data at Table 6 suggests neutrality on average, but behind this average lay a wide spectrum of responses about its feasibility and impact on staff. A sample of reasons for and against came up in the focus group discussions, and also the submissions:

'I feel some attention should be paid to trying to develop the campus as a 24hour/day 7 day/week zone. This would enhance safety and the overall campus experience...' Glenn Browning, Department of Veterinary Science

'All-year-round teaching represents a tremendous opportunity to increase efficiency and get more out of existing campus resources...there would be significant negative equity implications if the standard academic year were to change from current two-semester arrangements. However, this should not preclude students doing standard courses from taking subjects over a third, summer semester (as occurs at low levels already). It should also not preclude intensive courses being offered across the entire year, particularly at postgraduate coursework level. Again, this is being done already, but an expansion of such programs would be a very good way for the University to get more out of existing resources. There would be challenges associated with ensuring there is no negative impact on equity and access, as well as staff research activity, but these could be managed...' Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

'This has been raised numerous times in the past, and is the cause of considerable angst for staff that already see their abilities to conduct research compromised by new and apparently increasing pressures...many of our Honours intensive courses jointly-taught...with Monash are taught in the Summer break. Most of these don't employ our lecture theatres or teaching labs (mainly being field- or research lab-based) and therefore one might argue our 'infrastructure' is under-utilised at this time. Nevertheless, staff currently juggle all of these demands at the same time as attempting to write ARC grant applications, supervise their PhD students, conduct their own research and possibly spend at least some time with their families during the summer holidays! In the case of field-based studies, the abilities to travel into the field with Honours or PhD students requires blocks of time free from formal classes and this flexibility may be lost with the introduction of a more formal Summer semester...Perhaps if a greater number of subjects could be taught in intensive mode (e.g., over 2 weeks full time rather than 12 weeks) this would become less important. At present however, this does not seem feasible...' Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

In discussion the focus groups reaffirmed the view that online support should supplement but not replace face to face teaching and learning. This view was supported in the written submissions. No-one argued a case for online study as an alternative to a campus-based education, although some considered that postgraduate students might well spend less time on campus.

'students must be given a reason to come onto campus. There is little value in attending a lecture where the lecturer reads off lecture notes or slides for the whole class – student is able to do this online in their own time. Thus there is much truth to the suggestion that seminar-, tutorial- and lab-based learning will assume greater importance than lectures. This is

complemented by the desirability of giving students greater interactivity, with both fellow students and staff, in their education....' Paul Donegan, for interim Student Representative Council

'At least at this stage of our evolution, face to face contact and the environment in which these contacts occur are critical. No matter how much material is available on-line, students still value contact and they want to identify as part of a group. Staff are no different, they also wish to work in an environment that supports their goals and adds to their intellectual lives...' Meryl Davis

'One colleague suggested that on-line learning might be combined with face-to-face teaching. For example, lectures might be delivered on-line, possibly pre-recorded in video or audio format. During semester, the lecturer might then meet with the students in small classes for seminar discussion related to lecture material that students access in their own time... To improve teaching, it will be necessary to develop and introduce more refined measures of the quality of teaching than are currently in place, as well as to develop systematic initiatives which do lead to the improvement of teaching quality at the University...' Howard Sankey for Department of History and Philosophy of Science

'The availability of i-lectures and on-line resource materials mean coursework students come to campus for personal interaction – social and educational. Interactive lectures, tutorials, the opportunity to be with friends, faster internet access and the lack of on-line materials in some disciplines are the reasons students cite for coming to Parkville. Coffee shops are often preferred to the library as a location for study. The design of learning hubs needs to take this into account. They need to be visually attractive, wireless, comfortable, flexible spaces that allow for interaction and consumption of coffee and food: Lygon Street with readily available information, email and for at least a few more years, printing facilities...' Sue Elliott, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

'Online learning is a wonderful tool when used in conjunction with on-campus teaching, and should be used as such. Many students, especially postgraduate students, appreciate the convenience and efficiency of online learning tools. However, MUOSS is in the opinion that online learning, if implemented in full and as a substitute for on-campus learning, will undermine the Melbourne Experience and that the quality of teaching will be eroded...' Yun-Han Lee et al for Melbourne University Overseas Student Service

'On line resources (e.g., journals) are clearly the way of the future and are already taking over from hard copy for many of us. We should certainly embrace this change and increase the number of on line resources we offer. For many if not most of our staff and postgraduate students, online access to journals is already the primary means of accessing the scientific literature. The need to use the physical library to access older material is steadily diminishing, as these also are added to the online stock, and is likely to all but disappear in just a few years. This pattern in the sciences is probably different to that in the humanities, but clearly indicates that a massive shift in emphasis is underway and we must be prepared for this...' Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

For research and teaching purposes, there was support for greater online resources, but on the question of whether 'every student should own a laptop', opinions varied. Here there were many subtexts: the cost and convenience for students, the issue of what public facilities should be available, the pedagogical implications and wider questions about the use of on-line resources in the University:

'Every student should not be required to own a laptop; however, every student should have access to good university-wide computer laboratories across campus. The decision to bring a laptop to university, and to ensure its security on campus and during transit should be the student's...' Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

'While an extensive wireless network is desirable I don't believe equity is served by requiring possession of wireless enabled laptops by students. As an early user of Blackboard I have been very disappointed by its failure to incorporate crucial parts of Webraft and Omar, both of which I

had been using successfully. In fact Blackboard has insufficient functionality at the moment to supplant Webrat. I feel that experience gained from past on-line teaching is not being utilised effectively in planning the future...' Glenn Browning, Department of Veterinary Science

'all students should have access to a wireless laptop. Let's just bite the bullet. For those that really have problems we can look at loans etc but we need to be careful that this is not abused. If we were to organise bulk purchases of 5,000 laptops I think we would be very surprised at the cost – certainly below \$1000...We are already operating in a virtual world, however face-to-face teaching is still essential...' Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

'Laptops and interconnectedness for all would allow student e-consulting and group preparedness and would enhance all aspects of interprofessional learning...' Jim Angus for Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

'While on line teaching may appear to foster independence, because the student learns "independently", without physical presence in the classroom, much on-line material simply updates traditional chalk and talk lecture based approaches, with more bells and whistles. Independence under this conception is a very limited thing indeed...' Gillian Wigglesworth

'The CSHE supports the university priority of using technology as a tool to enhance learning in a campus-based environment, rather than as a driver for change in and of itself. The university must invest resources in: a) continuing to develop and provide support for innovative technology-enhanced pedagogies; and b) establishing a rigorous research program focussing on the effectiveness and implications of new technologies for learning and teaching. There are several initiatives around the university which presently address some aspects of the above-mentioned mandate. However, in order to be nationally and internationally competitive, the university will need to be more visionary in establishing strategic alliances and partnerships along these lines to exploit key opportunities for accessing current technologies, and to establish e-learning research partnerships at institutional, national and international levels. It is only through an ongoing and responsive research program, alongside access to innovative technologies, that the university will maintain its edge in the e-learning arena. Before developing a policy on whether all students should have a laptop, further research is needed on the impact of "laptop engagement" on student learning – particularly in classes designed to encourage discussion and interaction. Consideration should also be given to disciplinary contexts and learning objectives when making decisions about appropriateness of technology use. While there are creative ways of integrating laptops into pedagogy, they can quickly stifle discussion and limit student engagement with learning unless skilfully managed. Ubiquitous wireless access should certainly be the goal, but again, academics need to be skilled in knowing how best to capitalise on the interactivity and other unique opportunities afforded by such technologies so as to continue community building beyond the boundaries of the classroom...' Kerri-Lee Krause for the Centre for the Study of Higher Education

'A campus-based experience remains central to the university education Melbourne should offer. There is no other way to give students the benefits of face-to-face interaction...Laptops tend to be used by students for note-taking and as a response to the shortage of student computing facilities on campus. Their capacity to transform the learning experience tends to be overstated. A better approach would be to focus on improvements to campus computing facilities...The campus infrastructure should reflect, rather than constrain, the kind of education the University would like to offer. It will also be desirable to develop a campus which blurs social and academic spaces, thereby contributing to students' participation in learning communities. To some extent, precinct-based "learning hubs" are an important aspect of this, but resource constraints will probably mean development of such hubs must be balanced with upgrades and extensions to existing facilities...' Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

Against this campus-based view, one submission argued that for postgraduates other arrangements were possible:

‘The principal reason why we do not attract more research postgraduate students from other states is that university regulations make it impossible for students to enrol without residing in Melbourne. This has been driven by “The Melbourne Experience” philosophy and is completely outdated. Currently, a rich Melbourne experience for students is defined as campus-based. It would be more sensible to redefine it as contact-based. British and American universities do not have this requirement. Other universities (e.g. UNSW and James Cook) have developed postgraduate programs that do not require students to be permanently resident in Sydney or Townsville; why cannot we? Besides, we would prefer if our research postgraduates could spend as much time as possible where their principal research materials are, which is often overseas or interstate. New programs need to be developed in which interstate students could come to Melbourne (say) three times a year, where they would have intensive supervision, seminars and so forth, communicating the rest of the time with their supervisors by email. Periods of research overseas, too, need to be freed up. The requirement for external supervisors to set up for them there is unrealistic, given that they will normally be working in libraries or archives, and are better off communicating by email with their supervisor. This would make it easier to attract overseas PhD students, who might be attracted by the opportunity to work with a particular supervisor, but are put off by the requirement to reside in Melbourne when they may have better resources where they are. If we developed a clearly differentiated postgraduate research experience based on initial high level coursework and training, followed by a dissertation (according to elements of the US model), then we would actively differentiate our research program from that of other Australian universities. This would attract interstate as well as international students...’ David Marshall et al, School of Art History, Cinema, Classics and Archeology

One submission placed the issue of IT infrastructure and uses of technology generally squarely at the heart of the academic mission: should technology be applied to enhance existing conceptions of the University and existing practices in higher learning, or does its application transform them?

‘There seems to be widespread support for the claim that a central LMS will be an agent of change, but whether such change is viewed positively or negatively seems more informed by theoretical and dispositional bias than empirical evidence. Indeed much concerning the adoption of an LMS is in a contested domain. It sits at a fault line within the University between many competing conceptions of the University’s mission and management. It can be seen for example as being positioned between traditional academic and educational-design driven teaching; between collegial approaches to academic governance and managerial models of university business; between flexible ad-hoc local IT systems and purportedly efficient enterprise-wide systems; between notions of intellectual freedom and imperatives for the commercial management of intellectual property; even between so-called “digital native” students and “digital immigrant” teachers – in short, between the traditional and the new. LMS adoption may affect, and be affected by, staff profile, skillsets and familiarity with different modes of communicating. Student expectations of, and responses to LMS usage are unclear. The LMS is an area where academic and non-academic roles collide, and it operates at a point of change in the conceptualisation and dissemination of information / knowledge...’
Lisa Wise and James Quealy, Learning Management Systems (LMS) Governance Project

6.4 Intercultural learning, outreach and engagement

The idea of intercultural learning found support among many respondents, but with debate about mechanisms. There was wide support for enriching learning experiences on campus and for greater overseas interchange. There was a mix of views about the wisdom and feasibility of study abroad as a norm rather than an exception, about Asia literacy as a primary focus, and about the question of whether staff diversity should better reflect student diversity.

Should study abroad for local students become a defining feature of the Melbourne Experience? The focus group data at Table 5 indicates neutrality on average (in discussion, wide ambivalence) and behind this average sits a wide spectrum of responses. In discussion, there was support for the general aim, but good reasons not to make it a requirement, due to considerations of finance, work and family obligations, alternative intercultural experiences in Melbourne or in Australia, and the challenges of cross-institutional accreditation.

‘Ideally, all students should have the possibility of engaging in some form of student mobility abroad during their studies at UOM. This would not only encompass formal joint degree programs and reciprocal student exchange, but a range of other options – summer schools, internships, field trips, clinical placements, and undergraduate and postgraduate research placements...’ Jenny McGregor, Jacyl Shaw and Liz O’Keefe, AsiaLink and International Office

‘Further consideration should be given as to the most effective ways for University of Melbourne students to learn from each other across cultural boundaries. We teach multicultural classes but for the most part do not organise those classes to generate multicultural experiences...’ Howard Dick, Australia Centre for International Business

‘some subjects could address... intercultural learning head-on, with ‘Asian’ students being seen not so much as a problem but a resource...I could imagine a subject called ‘Intercultural Planning’ based around seminars and tutorials specifically designed to explore cultural difference in relation to urban planning...’ Nicholas Low, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning.

‘It is a common regret of completing international students that their level of interaction with domestic students at the University of Melbourne was not substantial. Similarly, many domestic students’ level of interaction with international students is negligible. If Melbourne is committed to being a truly international University, much work must go into reversing these trends... Increasing levels of project work and group-based learning, through which domestic students should be encouraged or mandated to work with international students (and vice versa), will also contribute to both domestic and international students having a more “international” educational experience at Melbourne. Such an international experience will also be enhanced by recruiting more staff from overseas, and recruiting more domestic staff from non-English speaking backgrounds...’ Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

‘We strongly endorse the need to promote the intercultural experience of all students at the University of Melbourne...internationalization should not just refer to key Asian countries. To be truly international, the institution must include all six continents as part of its global outreach research and teaching activities. The role of foreign language departments in exposing students to ‘different cultural settings’...needs to be emphasised. While the sentiments (of overseas study) expressed are laudable, they raise questions of equity of access. Perhaps a more realistic goal would be to ensure that all students majoring in a language, whether European or Asian, have access to a minimum of one semester living overseas. At present we are far from being able to achieve this...’ Gillian Wigglesworth for School of Languages

‘Overseas study should be part of an international education such as that which Melbourne aspires to. It would be desirable to broaden the range and accessibility of exchange options available, such that it would be common or standard practice for undergraduate students to spend at least one semester on exchange...Strategies would have to be developed to promote equity of access across wide student numbers, as the resource implications would be substantial, but this would be an extremely positive development. As well as representing an important aspect of a more international education, this would represent a real point of difference from other Australian universities and contribute to a genuinely distinctive “Melbourne Experience” for domestic students...Wider appreciation of other languages and cultures among domestic students is also likely to contribute to more positive experiences at Melbourne for international students...’ Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

‘While experience of other cultural settings...for students is a worthy aim, who will fund this and what further financial burdens might it place on students?...the University could think less parochially about what an ‘international’ experience might mean... there are opportunities... within Australia...and to some extent on campus...’ Kate Darian-Smith and John Murphy, Australian Studies Centre

There was general support for the view that the University should do more to develop external relationships with other institutions, sectors, professional groups and alumni. There were many aspects to this.

‘The University needs to improve its outreach to its immediate communities: our actions do not adequately reflect our words regarding the interdependency of great universities and great cities. The finest universities in the world have a stronger emphasis on their external relationships. Our strategies need to ensure that we continue to meet the needs in our immediate community for graduate professionals...’ Committee of Convocation

‘We need to find ways to assess and value participation in communities, including communities of innovation. For example, the guidelines for academic promotion by service are minimal, effectively discouraging individuals from serving the university through active participation in communities...’ Paul Fritze, Information Division and Leon Sterling, Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering

‘In order for the University to be effective in its internal and external collaboration it needs to present a more coherent picture of its strengths across the faculties and disciplines. This goes beyond branding. It goes to creating points of access which the outside world can approach which are capable of assembling multi-disciplinary strengths across the university and applying them to solving key externally generated problems. Research Clusters and interdisciplinary centres are one way of achieving this, as are the activities of such organizations as MRIO, but a clear strategy needs to be developed to fit these into a coherent, comprehensive and accessible framework...The above requires the University to quickly seize opportunities which may often be to solve a nationally significant problem which may require the skills from several disciplines in different faculties...’ Jim Falk, Australian Centre for Science, Innovation and Society

‘The imperative for knowledge transfer that you discuss reinforces the need for a greater level of partnership between business...and the University...My own work includes both a primary research program and a research program investigating the best ways to achieve adoption of evidence into practice. While this is different to knowledge transfer from labs to clinics many of the imperatives are similar in a health system plagued by safety and quality issues. I believe this kind of work cannot be achieved by any academic situated solely in a University because it requires a significant level of dialogue between researchers and the users of this research...How we build this exchange more productively with those located on campus at the University will be a major challenge if the University is to be at the forefront of knowledge generation...’ Sanchia Aranda, Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre & School of Nursing

'many universities regard alumni relations activities as simply being a precursor to fundraising. It is our understanding that this is not the case at the University of Melbourne. Alumni relations stands on its own merits at the University, with the fostering of the relationship between the University and its alumni being underpinned by the University's fundamental philosophy of lifelong education and engagement...The University has a key role to affirm the value of certification/ credentialling over the long-term by maintaining the currency of the qualification and offering the possibility of updating and extending it. It would seem that the University also has an obligation to ensure the increasing value of its alumni's academic qualifications over time, as the institution gains increasingly international recognition and status. The University can also be instrumental in instilling the 'habits of scholarship' which then offers it a platform to extend the relationship beyond the gate, once the scholar has physically left the institution. In addition, positive relationships with University alumni can bring many benefits to the institution including alumni operating as advocates for the University and...promoting the University of Melbourne to prospective students and their key influencers; influencing key government, industry and other decision makers in respect of initiatives which support the University's agenda; providing employment or career mentoring opportunities for current students and recent graduates; facilitating two way industry liaison; and directly or indirectly providing financial or other 'in kind' support...' Wendy Lawler, Marcia Lewis, Holly Sereni, Mike Bicknell, Kate Kennedy, Sue McGraw, Ben Ragg, Tim Roman, Ann Clark, Development Office

6.5 International profile and impact

There is strong support for continuing to build the University's international profile and standing. The Future Scenarios session (Appendix 1) indicated that being among the top 50 globally was a reasonable aim. The focus group data in Table 1 indicates general support for the aim of being among the top 25 in the world in 10 years. The wider debate was about how to define what this meant, what it would require and how to assess progress towards it. For example, many respondents expressed ambivalence about *rankings* as meaningful measures of quality or drivers of what the University did:

'Our motto says "Postera crescama laude". It does not say "Jiao Tong crescama laude". It is my submission that undue focus on the alleged rankings or strengths of other universities, most of which operate in different cultures and financial environments from our own, has been a distraction.' Alan Abbott, Committee of Convocation

'The University should define itself by what it values and not by rankings or numbers.'
(Undergraduate students focus group)

'Whose ranking, under what criteria? The University should not aspire to a ranking that may not reflect the University's strengths.'
(Postgraduate students focus group)

'It is critical that measurements are sufficiently sophisticated, reflect the University's aspirations appropriately, and do not promote outcomes other than those which are desired. For instance, focusing too much on raw staff:student ratios runs the risk of privileging the quantity, rather than quality, of staff employed in an area...Staff:student ratios are important, but they are far from the sole determinant of the quality of student experience. Similarly, Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) data, while important in terms of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, is unsophisticated and suffers from many limitations. Consequently, it is not the best driver of future actions...' Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

'We don't have good biblio-metrics of research impact. ANU looks better because so much is channeled through its Institute of Advanced Studies. At Melbourne much of what we do is 'lost' through other institutes.'
Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Services meeting,
Shepparton

At the same time, respondents recognised that 'high citations reflect positively on research reputation', 'ratings of research impact can't be entirely ignored', and that the University 'can't afford to be self-referential only' (Heads and Department Managers focus group). Respondents who discussed this question in the focus groups recognised that international rankings and 'brands' do matter, especially with international students. One of the written submissions framed the 'ranking' issue this way:

'As much as some academics don't like rankings they mean a great deal in Asia. So do alumni networks. We have great connections which we under utilise. (the) little booklet with statistics showing UM was #1 in Australia and #22 in the world has had a very good impact and been a great hit. We simply have to try harder in this area...' Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

Wider recognition of this is indicated by the data on a scenario where the impact of 'Harvard coming to Melbourne' was considered (Table 7). Student groups, particularly the international student group, rated the University's competitive position poorly in this scenario. This assessment was also reflected in the Heads and Departmental Managers group. In discussion, this assessment did not reflect a judgement about relative quality; respondents simply took the view that a Harvard degree opened more doors for graduates, and that international students especially took account of this.

The International student focus group suggested that if Melbourne wanted a strong international profile, 'it should benchmark against international universities rather than the Australian Go8 universities'. In his report on the Future Scenarios discussion (Appendix 1) Vin Massaro concluded that if the aspiration is to be 'among the top 50 globally', then comparisons with world-leading universities suggest some general preconditions for sustainable success:

'In seeking suitable comparators from among highly ranked international universities such as Harvard, Yale and Cambridge, it is clear that quality rather than size is the crucial determinant ...The other determinant is funding and the flexibility this creates in being able to offer both high quality teaching and research...becom(ing) an internationally renowned university rests on having high selective entry levels and staff: student ratios which enable staff to devote sufficient time to their teaching and research without one overwhelming the other...'

Specifying what might be needed to reach this position, Vin Massaro suggests a broad mix of strategies must be considered (Appendix 1). These are summarised here as:

- Lifting research performance with outstanding performance in selected areas;
- Building a reputation for high quality, innovative teaching;
- Devising income-generating strategies for sustainable financing of programs;
- Devising management structures that support high quality staff, flexibility and rapid responses;
- Internationalising academic programs and aligning degree structures with the 'Bologna' model;
- Considering a smaller student body and a changed undergrad/postgrad mix;
- Encouraging government to concentrate research efforts in a few institutions and further de-regulate the Australian student fees market;
- Developing better relations with Alumni and philanthropists.

6.6 Constraints on meeting aspirations

In the submissions and focus groups, concern was often expressed about current workloads, the competing demands of research, teaching and administration, and their combined effects on standards, quality and staff well-being. Much of this was attributed to the size and complexity of the institution, coupled with resource constraints:

‘the most significant issues for academics are time pressures, workloads and conflicting academic priorities...’ Paul Fritze, Information Division and Leon Sterling, Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering

‘(we need) an administrative environment that protects the key resource of time for academic activities...’ Jim Angus for Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

‘the greatest threat to maintaining research productivity for many staff is the availability of unfragmented time...’ Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

‘most staff are doing ‘too much’ and therefore often doing nothing properly. Arts departments need to rationalise teaching programs and increased administrative support for departments can relieve academic heads...’ Janet McCalman, Department of History and Philosophy of Science/School of Population Health

‘It is crucial to remedy the “time poverty” of academic staff engaged in research...There is much greater encouragement of teaching modes which promote direct student engagement with staff. Unfortunately, increasing staff-student ratios undermine such engagement and impose unrealistic burdens on staff. For educational reasons, as well as on the research-related grounds outlined above, the University must persist with, and strengthen, its target of maintaining and reducing staff student ratios...’ Sean Cooney for NTEU Branch

Some respondents also challenged the level of overhead the University carried, the complexity of committee structures, poor systems and over-delegation of institution-wide policies as impediments to efficiency and responsiveness:

‘At the same time as academic work-loads have increased, there has also been an increase in administrative workload for administrative and academic staff. Most departments now have Departmental Managers and other administrative personnel in order to contend with the volume of administrative work which must be completed on an ongoing basis. But it is not always clear that every single task that the University requires departments to do is really all that necessary...’ Howard Sankey for Department of History and Philosophy of Science

‘Researchers...have less time to perform their research activities or think about their research problems than ever before. This is in large part due to increasing burdens on research team leaders to satisfy regulatory, reporting and administrative requirements...(including) ever-increasing safety, ethics and OTGR regulatory requirements, annual reporting needs...and external contractual obligations. In most cases, as these...requirements have increased, support to assist meeting these has become less helpful. In some cases, support provided is advisory only, leaving the research team leader to educate themselves about complex regulatory requirements and perform the tasks themselves. This is the case with OHS and satisfaction of Safety MAP...In others, centralized administrative systems...fail to meet needs of end-users in departments. Themis HR and the soon to be launched Themis Research are good examples of this. Other support systems, for example MRIO, fail to provide timely individualized advice to researchers on their specific reporting deadlines or prompt handling of time-critical commercial contracts and IP matters. Lack of professional IT support, untimely and uninformative account statements for research grants, and similarly slow and unresponsive HR support for new staff contracts and management of leave entitlements add to the administrative burden...The University’s research performance would be enhanced by provision of: (i) professional, targeted support systems and services that are designed to better meet the needs of individual research

team leaders, rather than central requirements. (ii) local professional staff for IT, OHS, financial and HR services and contracts who actually perform the work required, rather than just provide advice. We suggest a review of the interaction between central support services and departments....' Owen Woodman for Department of Pharmacology

'the University is over-managed in the sense that there is an excessive management from the centre to the department in policy matters and an insufficient realisation by the centre of the cost to the academics of various management initiatives...Many scholarship schemes are too expensive on academics' time to be cost-effective...In general, the University should refrain from maintaining and introducing "equity" schemes. It should realise that the cost on academics of administering these schemes is significant...(also) An important imposition on academics' time is the urging of them to earn grant revenue, in particular in the arts and humanities. In my faculty, Economics and Commerce, for academics in the teaching and learning departments the value for research of grant income decreases rapidly after the first \$10,000 or so. Unlike Science, Medicine and Engineering, research in the arts and humanities does not require expensive equipment and many research assistants. Time spent writing grant applications would be better spent writing papers. The emphasis on equity schemes and grant income by the centre is no doubt seen as in the interest of the University in that it responds to outside expectations of what the University should do. However...the University should resist these outside influences when they are inconsistent with the mission of the University...' Ian McDonald, Faculty of Economics and Commerce

'From my "business" perspective the administration/academic ratios of staff and cost, as indicated in the Annual Budget as being close to 1:1, (or 50% - 50% of the total people costs), are cause for serious concern...Have the requirements of externally imposed issues such as occupational health and safety, harassment, equality of opportunity, student assessment appeals, and human relations in general led to the creation of a number of substantial teams to address each of these areas? I accept the need in a large organisation to maintain small cores of specialised expertise in these types of areas. But too often I have seen the creation of these teams lead to their uncontrolled expansion...it might actually be more cost and outcome effective to actually accept the risk of occasional challenge in each of these areas, and even the risk of unsuccessful defence, than it is to spend so much trying to avoid the risks that the whole process becomes more cumbersome...' Alan Abbott, Committee of Convocation

'We believe there should be greater integration at the central University level of management and academic input. Do we have the most efficient system of approving new programs, new courses, etc? There is concern amongst academic staff about the amount of money being consumed by the Central Administration...' Henry Jackson, Pip Pattison, Simon Cropper and Professor Alex Wearing for School of Behavioural Science

Some submissions attributed the problem less to administrative overheads and more to cumbersome governance structures, locally or centrally:

'Current highly collegial models may no longer be the most appropriate (governance models)...A more executive style of management and leadership within a well supported central policy and systems framework might retain the benefits of collegial identity but within a more responsive and strategically agile institution...The VCA recognises that many (university) committee structures are predicated on assuring quality...(however) the processes for approving and reviewing the academic curriculum could be streamlined...a recent... proposal...had to be processed through no fewer than eight committees of the VCA and the University combined, with no changes occurring or value being added after the initial drafting of the proposal...' Andrea Hull for Victorian College of the Arts

'Another potentially productive area is reducing the bureaucratic labyrinth the University uses to make (or avoid making) decisions. My own Faculty, for example, has about the same number of staff as the labour law firm I used to work for, but has an administrative structure that's 20 times bigger...' Paul Mees, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

6.7 Ending student growth

Apart from structures, overheads and processes, the impression that student growth has become part of the problem is widely accepted in the University. There is wide support for the proposition that continuing growth in student numbers is not a desirable or sustainable path. Several of the written submissions cite over-stretched staff, crowded facilities, and inadequate spaces on the central campus for students:

‘the continued growth in student numbers is considered a high risk to quality. The University needs to specifically determine an optimum size for its student body and the appropriate proportions of its components to further improve quality, rather than have these emerge as a consequence of other decisions. We need to protect and enhance the student experience on campus...’ Committee of Convocation

‘I believe the resources of the central campus are already stretched. We have reached, if not exceeded, the optimum size for the student body...’ Chris Cobbett, Department of Genetics

‘It is clear that the University’s campus and human resources are quite stretched at present. Moreover, the first-class education the University should aspire to offer must involve lower staff:student ratios and greater access to high-quality campus facilities. Consequently, any strategy predicated on significant growth in student numbers is untenable...’ Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

‘There are many areas in which hard choices present themselves, but the growth dilemma is the key one for us, and the evidence is clear. If we wish to maintain standards, let alone raise them, it’s time to put the brakes on growth in student numbers and focus on raising the quality of the students we have...’ Paul Mees, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

‘Unless the University proposes to extend the size of the campus dramatically, it would surely appear that, at least with regard to the student population, the University is near maximum capacity. One need only attempt to move around the Old Arts building between lectures to sense the overcrowding that already exists...Postgraduate facilities also need improvement. Postgraduate students require study space, and improved computer facilities...’ Howard Sankey for Department of History and Philosophy of Science.

On this issue some of the submissions reflected how complex the strategic equation is, combining as it does physical, financial, quality, competitive and scholarly factors. In the absence of an obvious solution that matched resources with program demands, some respondents began to explore ways of reconfiguring the core academic business, to make it sustainable:

‘The optimal (staff:student) ratio, balancing cost, space and educational requirements, is critically affected by the ratio of undergraduate to postgraduate students, and the discipline mix of the university. Providing an overall number therefore assumes a particular configuration of the university...’ Sue Elliot, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

‘The size and mix of the University needs first-principles debate and agreement – modeling the optimum mix between HECS, full fee, full fee international, local, interstate, postgraduate, undergraduate etc...’ Damian Powell, Janet Clarke Hall

Some submissions noted that choosing the optimum sustainable mix of courses, fee regimes and students leads back to the question of what kind of university Melbourne wants to be, what its internal strengths and weaknesses are, and what other players do in the policy and market domains.

‘The balance between HECS and local full-fee student numbers will be mainly a budgetary issue as will the balance of local and international full-fee numbers. However the balance between undergraduate and graduate is more strategic...The bottom line is we have to be viable and world class...(but) We have to be clear what sort of university we want and what disciplines we want...’ Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

‘a strategic conversation about planning the balances between undergraduate (HECS and full-fee), postgraduate coursework and research, and international coursework and research is important. Part of this discussion will need to include how much similarity or difference in these balances there will be between faculties, and what incentives and planning processes would be needed to shift the balance...’ Kate Darian-Smith and John Murphy, Australia Studies Centre

This sense of complex interdependency brought the discussion paper’s ‘Rubik’s Cube’ metaphor to life, not just internally but externally. For example some respondents outlined possibilities for more co-ordinated effort between institutions, at the state level:

‘The first response I had to the idea that we might shift out of the under graduate field is to see some real advantages for us, but some serious problems for everyone else...the answer to our own strategic questions will be linked to the positions taken by other institutions in our region, including government institutions...(for example) The state government might be encouraged...to take a more positive role in bringing otherwise competitive universities together to deal with...growing deficits in undergraduate training...Growing undergraduate demand (domestic and international) could be distributed across a set of explicitly linked, but differentiated institutions...’ Mark Considine, Centre for Public Policy

‘When I reflect upon the engineering schools of our State I see Melbourne, RMIT, Monash, Swinburne, Victoria...struggling to offer a more or less full range of engineering disciplines, and all falling short of the standards to which they aspire, and which are necessary to be truly competitive with overseas providers. I think it could be rewarding for all parties to achieve a revised structure in which each separate discipline, (for example, Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering), is offered at not more than two campuses. This should increase the chances of achieving the “critical Mass” of student enrolments and industry or community support necessary to achieve outcomes competitive with high ranking overseas suppliers...the time is right to move from the "mile wide – inch deep" strategy in all of our Victorian universities, and to embrace a more Victoria-wide model...’ Alan Abbott, Committee of Convocation

‘some disciplines are clearly high priority and other are not. If...(they) are not going to be supported, then they should be traded to other Universities rather than suffer the "death of a thousand cuts", in return for a consolidation of those disciplines that MU does best...In short "horse trade" to the mutual benefit of both institutions. I believe that this should have been done on several occasions over the past couple of decades, and the failure to do so has cost MU in terms of its reputation and our society in terms of a negative outcome where a positive outcome was possible... "sustainability in a changing environment" seems to be a fine focus for research and teaching at MU at almost every level and meaning...’ Greg Moore, Faculty of Land and Food Resources

‘Once systems are developed to manage risk and reduce transactions costs associated with such activities, it appears likely there are substantial efficiency gains to be made in the outsourcing or co-delivery of teaching, and in exchanging course content with comparable institutions. If there is a narrowing of subject offerings at the University, these kinds of activities are also likely to increase in importance as a means of continuing to offer students broad subject choices. Many Melbourne students will also benefit from interacting with students from other institutions, and find this rewarding. Nonetheless, an institution with such high standards as Melbourne must approach such initiatives with caution. Extremely strict quality assurance processes must be put in place to ensure that such activities do not compromise the quality of teaching and of course content...’ Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

6.8 Reversing growth in student numbers?

To judge from the submissions and focus group discussions, few respondents have seriously considered the prospect of significantly *reducing* student numbers as a means of taking pressure off staff and facilities or improving quality. The focus group data in Table 4 shows solid support on average for the view that students should have ‘access to better facilities’. However Table 6 suggests moderate support on average for the proposition that the University needs ‘fewer students and better facilities’; and behind the average sits a very wide spectrum of views.

As with all three ‘sustaining quality’ propositions in Table 6, views were mixed because of the mix of implications. In discussion, focus group participants attributed different subtexts to these propositions, and discussed the various implications of having fewer students. No-one in any focus group (except the Deans and Faculty General Managers group) sought to argue for a smaller student cohort. None of the submissions seeks to specify what an optimal longer term size and mix might look like. It seems reasonable to infer that, despite the problems it creates, growth is known as a reliable source of additional revenue for the University; and in the absence of a government commitment to support as many students as institutions are prepared to enroll, fee growth also gives scope to sustain wider access. Thus while further growth is widely seen as problematic, becoming smaller has become culturally counter-intuitive.

At the same time, the Future Scenarios discussion suggested this may be a precondition for meeting the University’s aspirations. Reflecting on the scenarios, Simon Marginson frames the issue for Melbourne this way:

‘In the global higher education environment the powerful norm is that of the selective research university, a university that is elite in both its student composition and its intellectual/research performance, which are the joint well-springs of university prestige. Many of us may well consider that other objectives are important, such as scholarly values, and maximising social access. But here I am talking about the logic of the global inter-university competition for prestige. In that domain, the strategic imperative for a university like Melbourne is quite simple. It must do what it takes to maximise measurable student selectivity and to raise measurable research performance. Despite the importance of prestige to all universities, Australian universities have often been routed away from a focus on the well-springs of prestige, into a growth-dependency mode, due to policy requirements, combined with social demand pressures and perhaps also traditional communities and social habits. Market share and size have become positive ends in themselves. Certainly, that is where the funding incentives have been, especially in the Dawkins system period. But the Nelson reforms, especially full fee places, have changed that. This means Melbourne has more policy freedom than it had before to adopt a developmental strategy designed to turn itself into a globally elite research-focused institution, if that is what it wants to do (note that the adjustment would be difficult, and it would mean putting the other possibly contrary objectives aside). If that was the objective adopted, and it was pursued unequivocally, Melbourne would need to reduce size, particularly of undergraduate enrolments. This would push up entry scores and create more room for a university-determined selection process, and for research degree students. Following this strategic logic, perhaps 20,000-25,000 students and 30% HDR would make sense.’

6.9 More full fees?

Apart from optimal size and course mix there is the question of the optimal mix of full-fee and subsidised enrolments. Table 6 of the focus group data indicates neutrality (in discussion, wide ambivalence) toward the prospect of enlarging the number of full-fee students (in discussion this meant either in total or as a proportion of the whole). Again, behind the 'neutral' average sits a very wide spectrum of views. Some respondents argued a 'resource' or 'economic' case in favour of higher numbers of full-fee students. Others argued an 'equity and access' or 'standard of entry' case against this. As one of the written submissions put it,

'Equity of access should be a central tenet of a university that sees a true global role for itself and not simply an economic global role. In short equity of access should be part of the Melbourne agenda and we should recognize that what might seem as prudent financial strategies (eg allowing institutions to set tuition fees) may ultimately undermine the very nature of the University. If we continue down present paths we are in danger of becoming a finishing school for global elites...' Doug Langley, Learning and Education Development

A related option, increasing *prices* as a way of sustaining fewer students and better facilities, was not raised in the focus groups. However it did appear in the Future Scenarios report (in the form of encouraging further de-regulation of student fees), and also in the submissions:

'a number of factors and issues must be taken into consideration when considering the appropriate proportion of fee-paying students...the negative impact...on equity and access...diversity of the student population...attracting very high quality students...compromising the University's equity responsibilities and public character through reducing its offering of Commonwealth-supported places)... Reconciling (the University's strategic imperatives) will not be easy, but it is better to do so through explicit policy rather than just "seeing how things go". As with fee-paying international students, a price-focused, rather than volume-focused, domestic fee-paying student recruitment strategy may be a means of reconciling some of the imperatives...' Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

Of all the responses to *Growing Esteem*, only one frames the University's constraints primarily in financial terms. It argues strongly for changing the mix of subsidised and full-fee students, coupled with price deregulation, as the only viable path to meet the University's stated aspirations:

'Making the University "one of the finest in the world" is not on. The reason: MONEY, LACK OF...the real options (are)...Increase fee-paying foreign students substantially while reducing domestic students, so that total number of students stays approximately constant... (or) Switch the domestic student ratio away from HECS undergraduates to fee-paying graduates... (or) Leave things as they are. Give up ambitious "visions" and face reality. This is a good University, with an important role in Melbourne, but the Commonwealth Government stands in the way of doing anything better...(unless) The Government changes its mind...gives up the 35% rule (and perhaps raises the 25% limit on HECS surcharge). Thus the University charges high fees for undergraduates, of which a part is paid by the Government, but all of which is HECS-HELP eligible, so that the students don't have to pay anything up front...With more money, more can be paid to get first-class staff, facilities can be improved etc...' Max Corden, Faculty of Economics and Commerce

Against this perspective stands a countervailing one, most clearly articulated by the NTEU branch:

‘Seriously inadequate public funding has created a conundrum for the University. It is forced to rely increasingly on fee income. The NTEU is alarmed at the equity implications of permitting preferential access to public universities on the basis of capacity to pay. The Branch believes that many staff share this concern...We welcome the University’s expansion of its targeted access program. However, this covers only a relatively small minority of students. The problem could be addressed through greater public funding. Realistically, of course, public funding is not likely to increase in a substantial way in the foreseeable future. And, even if it did, it might well be tied to further unwelcome interventionist requirements. Under these conditions, the University will no doubt continue to turn to alternate sources of revenue...(but) it should not walk away from the push for more public funding...There are powerful economic and public policy arguments for greater funding of higher education...We would propose that the University build advocacy for greater public funding into its strategies, even if they are unlikely to bear fruit in the short term...’ Sean Cooney for NTEU branch

6.10 Constraints to setting program priorities

Given all these constraints and complexities, collectively respondents expressed considerable ambivalence about how exactly the University should finance and support its central aspirations in teaching and research, measure progress towards them, and make them happen. With little near-term expectation of significant growth in government funding, commercial revenue or philanthropic income, none of the proposals sets out to fix the institution's central strategic dilemma of financing significant improvements to facilities, programs or staff capacity *without* further reliance on fee income.

Most respondents either ignored the financial dimension altogether, or turned their attention to ways of using existing resources more efficiently or effectively. But even here agreement was hard to find. For example, some took the view that young graduates were a cost-effective way to cover teaching loads, others argued against this:

'While staff-student ratios are important I don't think that is the main game. What I sense has happened over the last decade is that we have substantially increased our use of research fellow, post doc, and graduate and undergraduate students for teaching, tutoring, demonstrating and even supervision. What we need is more access to funds to support these people. This is MUCH more cost effective and may in fact achieve a better academic outcome...' Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

'We have been unwisely modelling ourselves on inappropriate US 'ideal environments', and too many believe that research funding exists to relieve oneself of teaching. We must not go down the path of the rich US universities with our undergraduates being taught by graduate students. Teaching relief should be at the tutorial, laboratory and administrative level and I was pleased to see in my professorial contract an obligation to teach first year and carry out normal academic duties...' Janet McCalman, Department of History and Philosophy of Science/School of Population Health

Many worthwhile suggestions for change and improvement to quality and work satisfaction were made. However most offered only incremental gains, or focused on fixing a small part of the elephant. This led to the vexed question of whether, where and how to set *priorities*. It was possible to frame a rationale for these in general terms, and to make a case for strategic choice:

'We should continue to strive for the highest level of excellence, but possibly in a reduced number of fields, identifying our strengths and consolidating on those, while retaining the capacity for an increasingly multidisciplinary approach. The finest universities in the world don't try to do everything. A focus on excellence is the best counter-measure to the risks the University faces...' Committee of Convocation

'In general I would like to see a shift of priority from teaching to research (dissemination of knowledge to knowledge building) - although I recognise that the two are deeply connected. A strategic approach, however, suggests that we have to choose, that is to make either one or the other the top priority. Unfortunately we can't be both Newman and Humboldt at the same time...' Nicholas Low, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

But again, both the focus groups and the written submissions reflected wide ambivalence about the implications of 'prioritising' or 'rationalising' research or teaching programs.

6.9.1 Research priorities

Should the University put more resources into some areas of research (and by implication withdraw resources from others) to boost impact and quality?

The focus group data at Tables 1 and 2 indicate ambivalence, here reflected in a 'neutral' average score, and a wide spectrum of responses to these kinds of propositions. In the written submissions and focus groups, some supported this proposition on the view that resources and research effort were currently 'spread too thinly'. This was the 'mile-wide, inch-deep' view, where respondents argued that priorities must be set and resource choices made for significant progress to occur.

'the university has to decide what disciplines it wants, where does it have strengths and then put in place the arrangements to support them...' Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

'It would be more strategic to focus our efforts on having world-class expertise on selected key international problem configurations rather than compete across a range of issues, in particular those where our competitors have Centres of Excellence or market share of relevant ARC grants...' Jenny McGregor, Jacyl Shaw and Liz O'Keefe, AsiaLink and International Office

A common caveat was that most priorities should be set *within* faculties and departments according to discipline-specific criteria, not centrally, and then via a transparent and consultative process.

'I strongly support the concept floated in the discussion paper of focussing research in particular areas or units to build 'critical mass' and nurture emerging scholars; although naturally the process for making decisions in this area must be unimpeachably fair and transparent...' Paul Mees, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

'MDHS agreed that there was merit in defining preferred research areas for future research efforts. The preferred discipline areas should be decided at a departmental level with this input used to develop a central University policy on areas of strength and focus for the University...' Jim Angus for Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

Some opposed the general proposition on the view that diversity and breadth were virtues in themselves, and also an essential precondition for 'serendipitous discoveries'. Some argued that supporting excellent researchers in what they wanted to do was the key thing, and that 'picking winners' led to missed opportunities. Again there was concern about who would set priorities and what criteria would apply. Specific concerns were to do with the prospect of setting priorities that merely mirrored government priorities or concentrating resources in fields with commercial potential at the expense of those without such potential.

'I would not try to pre-select research directions for the university. It's too serendipitous. I would instead be opportunistic and support emergent researchers in early to mid career...I would look for opportunities among these emergent researchers for synergies within and between departments and institutions...' Mark Burgman, School of Botany

'We would argue against deliberate efforts to focus resources into specific, defined areas of research and risk becoming 'one dimensional'. The breadth of quality research activity at Melbourne is already a key point of our differentiation from other institutions, and one we should value and protect...' Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

‘Any attempt to focus research resources must recognise the need to focus resources on capacity to support a broad range of activity, enhancing the capacity for entrepreneurial staff to use these resources to identify novel directions for enquiry, rather than focussing resources on very specific areas that may require very dedicated infrastructure...I believe that decisions about research infrastructure development need to be made collegially, possibly through faculty research and research training committees, rather through a centralised structure. Decisions should emphasise the capacity of the investment to allow a breadth of research activity, rather than a capacity to compete in a relatively narrow field...’ Glenn Browning, Department of Veterinary Science

‘it would be undesirable for the University to concentrate its research efforts merely in accordance with the government’s agenda...social impact should not be narrowly construed (for example as commercial applications) but include social, civic and cultural contributions...’ Sean Cooney for NTEU Branch

‘While it is clear that some decisions about research directions need to be made, this needs to be done extremely carefully, and not to the detriment of areas of research which may not be seen as having immediate commercial impact...The University’s current focus on identifying and supporting areas of research expertise with significant funding from the university is laudable, but it is of concern that these appear to focus almost exclusively...on science and medical based research...’ Gillian Wigglesworth for School of Languages

Against this view was a countervailing concern about loss of collaborative potential due to laissez-faire individualism guiding choices of research topics:

‘I think a research culture is one in which people get together...to co-ordinate and focus their efforts...Why is this so hard? I suspect the individualistic nature of research stems from the time when research was largely something academics did more or less in their spare time...(hence) the tendency for Faculties to accept PhD candidates with projects that really do not fit into the research agenda of any staff member...’ Nicholas Low, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning.

Many respondents were accordingly somewhat equivocal on the issue, arguing the virtues of both breadth and depth.

‘In sum, we prefer the model of “kilometers wide and kilometers deep”. Strong research Departments across the Faculty attract a caliber of staff that only a research led University can. In addition, the synergies between the Departments in the Faculty are strengthened by the breadth of the research...’ Margaret Abernathy for Faculty of Economics and Commerce

‘While the University may decide to divert resources into key areas of research excellence, it is crucial that the University continue to maintain a strong presence across a broad spectrum of topics and disciplines...Not all areas of intellectual endeavour are capable of generating the same level of resources in a market or commercial environment...’ Howard Sankey for Department of History and Philosophy of Science

‘I concur strongly with the view that the University should focus its development in a limited number of strategic priority areas in which it has outstanding and demonstrated strength and capacity and critical mass, while providing broad opportunities in other areas which do not warrant the same priority in core resource allocation – a broad base with a sharp edge...’ Tilman Ruff, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

One respondent focused on the possible flow on effects of setting research priorities for teaching, on the assumption that a research-teaching nexus was the norm:

‘Some “narrowing” of the University’s research profile may be inevitable and/or necessary in order to focus the University on areas where it can make a significant contribution...However, if a research-teaching nexus is assumed, any narrowing of the University’s research profile will also engender a narrowing of the University’s teaching profile...it is important to ensure that the “narrowing” process is one which is done with a degree of sophistication, taking into account the importance of both teaching and research...’ Paul Donegan, for interim Student Representative Council

Another argued that universities, like R & D organisations intent on innovation, could ‘plan for serendipity’:

‘Serendipity is enhanced with cross-fertilisation from a broad range of ideas and disciplines. It requires critical mass...talent...technology...world-class science...strategies for serendipity can be identified: Build human infrastructure; Support capable people; Encourage entrepreneurial and intelligent culture; Create mechanisms for connections; Be patient...’ Jacqueline Rowarth

Others observed that with research, the agendas and priorities of other players outside the university affected what kinds of research would be funded from these sources, and that the University needed to balance this with its own priorities:

‘In setting its own research priorities, the University ought not to neglect research *impact* (the ‘third-streaming’ activities of researchers). It is unclear how this matter will be dealt with in the RQF. In any case, we consider it appropriate for the University to make an independent commitment to recognise and support research which has demonstrably positive social impact, even where it has not yet met criteria for research quality. Moreover, in order to enhance the University’s engagement with our local, national and international community, social impact should not be narrowly construed...’ Sean Cooney for NTEU Branch

6.9.2 *Teaching priorities*

There is evidence that rising student expectations are likely to put *more* pressure on staff and University facilities rather than less:

‘The University must become more flexible, and be prepared to tailor learning experiences to student needs and desires more than it has in the past. Face-to-face discussion, “hands-on” and experiential learning, group-based project work, industry or “real-world” experience and higher levels of individualised or personal attention should all characterise students’ learning experiences to greater degrees. These present a range of challenges, but are absolutely critical to a distinctive “Melbourne Experience”...’ Paul Donegan, for interim Student Representative Council

Should the University reduce the number of subjects or courses to boost impact and quality? Again, the focus group data at Tables 1 and 2 indicate ambivalence and behind this, a wide spectrum of responses to these kinds of propositions. Table 8 shows the spectrum of responses to the proposition that the University should offer ‘fewer courses, better supported’. This diversity of views is also reflected in the written submissions. A common view was that in principle, diversity is a good thing and that students should have lots of choices, but that in certain cases the price of proliferating subject choices is excessive workload, under-enrolment, questionable quality, or needless duplication and competition:

‘There is too much wastage in teaching. I have three departments teaching the same questions...’ (Deans/Faculty General Managers’ focus group)

‘At present there is competition between departments and faculties for similar students...’
(Heads/Departmental Managers’ focus group)

‘Students are attracted to study at the University by the wide choice of subjects on offer.
Diversity in both courses and disciplines is important...’ (International students focus group)

‘The University should not have to duplicate courses and offer specialized degrees with funkier
names when a general Arts degree covers these areas already...’ (Undergraduate students focus
group)

‘Some areas are poorly taught and resourced. If limiting the available courses means those
offered are better supported, the trade-off may be worth it...’ (Postgraduate students focus group)

‘At the University of Melbourne we offer a very large number of subject options for students to
choose from. This has the benefit of allowing students to follow their own preferences and to
capitalise on what they perceive as their skills. However, it also carries several disadvantages.
Students often focus their learning quite tightly and miss out on the breadth of study that
supports a balanced view of life and that allows the students to know themselves more fully. The
second disadvantage is more prosaic: the teaching and learning timetable has become
dysfunctionally full...’ Michael Lew, Department of Pharmacology

‘A managed approach to coursework programs (which have proliferated in the Faculty of Arts)
is needed: indeed the Faculty has progressed along these lines with a review of coursework
programs...Recent moves...to focus undergraduate subjects...are a step towards addressing
these issues. But the question of over-teaching and ‘rationalisation’ is not simple and should be
examined/ implemented on a Faculty basis...’ Kate Darian-Smith and John Murphy, Australian
Studies Centre

‘Without doubt there are too many subjects offered at this university...I have been astonished at
how many subjects are “rested” each year and how many are suspended at late notice due to the
enrolment of only 1-3 students (and at the time consuming process of doing these routine
procedures). The Faculty of Arts is clearly not the only faculty running subjects with only 4-10
students enrolled...Core with several electives, and well defined streams within courses, seem
more appropriate for our financially constrained environment than long lists of under-enrolled,
although highly interesting, subjects. A strategic review of coursework subjects and pruning of
those failing to meet baseline numbers will create tension but is probably long overdue...’ Sue
Elliot, Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

‘there are undoubtedly areas in which there are too many undergraduate course options, and
students would be better served by a greater concentration of resources and focus. Nonetheless,
any strategy to narrow course options must be sophisticated and forward-thinking...It would be
most undesirable for the University to unnecessarily lose its teaching capacity in areas which
may be less important, valuable or popular currently, only to find it would like to offer or expand
teaching in that area later on. Any strategy to narrow course options must also be well-integrated
with strategies to narrow the research and teaching profile of the University...Another strategy
which should be combined with the above is that of offering some subjects which fall into the
above categories only every second year. This preserves the range of University offerings and
goes a long way toward preserving student choice, while reducing the demand of staff and
campus infrastructure...’ Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

In summary, there is wide recognition of the workload problems that arise, and the
difficulty of sustaining quality and impact in teaching and research effort, where
individual choice for staff and students is highly valued, and where diversity of
expertise is considered a virtue and an institutional strength. Many respondents saw the
need to ‘rationalise’ teaching or ‘prioritise’ research, few had a clear mechanism in
mind for making this happen. The risks associated with potentially compromising
existing academic strengths and virtues, or perhaps causing conflict among their
colleagues, loomed large. In consequence, no clear path through the maze was visible.

6.11 Constraints to organising and managing priorities

Here respondents focused on ‘systemic’ rather than ‘cultural’ impediments to collaboration, flexibility and responsiveness to pursue worthwhile projects across the boundaries of disciplines and organizational units, and in conjunction with external bodies. In his summary of the Future Scenarios session (Appendix 1) Vin Massaro articulated a view of how things could or should be, if the University was to achieve its stated aims:

- Devise a management structure for the University that supports flexibility and rapid responses....
- Devise flexible and simple arrangements for credit transfer and mutual recognition of qualifications to address global student movement...
- Address faculty and department structures, including the breadth of offerings to make best use of resources...’

One submission observed that University structures and practices that had grown over time tended to work against mobilizing institutional resources and expertise to fulfill strategic aims or tackle significant social problems in a concerted way:

‘In scientific disciplines, the development of interdisciplinary research is increasingly important. It is also important for graduate research training. Certainly it can be argued that this can be handled by consultation and agreement between departments and faculties but such priority setting then depends on a capacity for forward-looking joint planning, not necessarily in the shorter term interests of each faculty...The country faces huge issues of potential disruption to our way of life through religious zealotry, yet our impressive academic expertise in Islamic Studies and Asian affairs has little or no contact with our outstanding expertise in International Humanitarian Law and other important issues in law, and in Anthropology. National debate in some broader areas of policy has been facilitated by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, but this does not tie in with many other fields within University where major issues of public importance are subject to study. The Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences has sought to contribute to public debate on ethical issues relevant to medical research and health care, but the Philosophy Department has not been engaged and the issues of understanding and developing rational policy related to genetics is as critical for the Faculty of Land and Food as it is for Medicine, yet there is no framework for sharing of insights...In the early 1970s, the University sought to develop a multidisciplinary approach to environmental studies, but the initiative finally floundered...Engineering’s outstanding work in water and hydrology is highly relevant to Land and Food as it is to Geography and Geology yet we have no real framework to speak on these critical issues as an institution...Information management (with processing of huge volumes of data) is coming to be of high importance in very many research disciplines, yet our internationally competitive resources in Computer Science and Information Systems cannot readily interface with medical and health-related population or molecular research...A great university should be a place where ideas are not locked into silos of a traditional kind. It may well be that we should be backing structures and developments with facilitate cross disciplinary activities, both in research and in expanding our capacity to contribute in generating ideas for the development and good functioning of our community. This has been a traditional role of universities but one which can so easily be lost in an academic management culture which has, for good and understandable reasons, become preoccupied with accruing resources faculty by faculty...’ Emeritus Professor David Penington

Other respondents observed that there were some significant structures to support interdisciplinary work, but not enough:

‘We do, of course, have significant financial and structural commitments to large interdisciplinary collaborations at the institutional level (Bio21, Water, OEP)... We do not believe, though, that we do well in encouraging and supporting interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation more broadly across the institution, particularly at smaller scales and particularly in research and research training. We see this as an important gap because it means that the next generation of cross-disciplinary innovations may be more difficult to get off the ground – we become followers not leaders. Arguably, a difference between a great US university and our own is the capacity to give latitude and support to high-risk novelty. Some suggestions for fostering fruitful cross-disciplinary collaboration include: The means (eg structures, processes, competitive seeding funds) to support interdisciplinary research seminars and other academic activities for graduate students and staff, accessible centrally by graduate students and/or staff (eg funds to support visiting speakers, communication, consumables)...(and) a Harvard-style approach to fostering collaboration within the University, where the Office of the Provost has direct responsibility for faculty intercollaboration...and funds are also now available on a competitive basis to undergraduate students for inter-school academic activities...’ Henry Jackson, Pip Pattison, Simon Cropper and Professor Alex Wearing for School of Behavioural Science

Other respondents, particularly those who had considered the work of the University from an information systems perspective, also observed fragmentation and disconnection generally as impediments to collaborative effort:

‘when it comes to making decisions about, communicating or facilitating our research, we do not operate in a mode that enables a ‘hypertext organization.’ Data about our research is compartmentalized across different University communities trapped in its use for specific purposes, making an attempt to cross internal organizational boundaries and tap into each other’s expertise and knowledge difficult and time consuming. Whether the boundary to be crossed is researcher to researcher in another department, researcher to department administrator, department to faculty, department to central administration, or central administration to researcher, each time these boundaries are crossed fundamental information about research must be recomunicated. What is required if we are to operate effectively as a hypertext organization is an enterprise record of research activity that transcends these boundaries, and facilitates communications about research activity across the University...’ Simon Porter, University Systems Project

As well as structural and information impediments, some respondents observed that competition for funds and resources worked against collaboration:

‘Our experience is that University structures and funding arrangements tend to inhibit interdisciplinary collaboration, while external research policy developments tend to advocate such collaboration...We encourage that in making choices about the future, attention be paid to the design and support of institutional structures that facilitate and help sustain agile partnerships. Such partnerships should be evident both in research and teaching... The University has built an enviable record over the past decade of teaching innovation through the exploitation of advanced technologies. This activity has included a significant staff development component and a substantial element of curriculum reform. The expectations of a changing student cohort, and the success of other institutions, suggests that for this University, actively exploring multiple modes of subject development and delivery (e.g. on-line, outsourced, co-delivered with partners) is not optional, but essential. This must be done in parallel with an ongoing program of research and pedagogical evaluation and the continuing development of an in-house capability that can be rapidly scaled up, as a defensive strategy against competitor initiatives and environmental changes...’ Liz Sonenberg for Department of Information Systems

‘I think the most important point is that Melbourne Uni does not do enough to encourage research groups, teams, networks: collaborative research...I think a research culture is one in which people get together...to co-ordinate and focus their efforts...’ Nicholas Low, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning.

‘The effective structuring of Melbourne’s Asia agenda has been the subject of reviews, some uncertainty and occasional acrimony. Moving on to seize opportunities, build upon structures that already exist, and locating the University of Melbourne at the centre of Asian Studies in Australasia, is in our view critical to the international future of the University. We believe that rather than putting energy into creating new institutions and structures, the University needs to do what we are now doing, but to do that even better...For historical reasons, the University is strongly defined by its disciplines, which can marginalize innovative research across disciplinary boundaries. That problem is recognized intellectually, but often not when it comes to resource allocation...’ Michael Leigh, Melbourne Institute of Asian Languages and Societies

‘There are no incentives for doing collegial, collaborative activities across faculties with immediate pay-off or justification. There are no targets for collaboration and establishing links, yet without these linkages opportunities are missed...What we need is a more holistic framework linking strategy, evidence and practice, based around the notion of ‘communities of teaching practice...’ Paul Fritze, Information Division and Leon Sterling, Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering

‘Structural, curricular and financial factors within the University of Melbourne often mean that there is less than optimal collaboration between departments and across faculties...This extends to impediments to the cross-listing of subjects, and the lack of financial incentives for the development of cooperative teaching across departments. In fact, it often seems that the competitive models in place within some faculties serve to impede rather than encourage collaborative endeavours...’ Howard Sankey for Department of History and Philosophy of Science

‘As departments and faculties we have been forced into competing against each other for research funding and student enrolments at both undergraduate and graduate levels. This makes cross-faculty and multi-disciplinary initiatives difficult to effect and militates against collegiality and trust. There needs to be more central support for cross-faculty initiatives so that each new initiative is not at the expense of existing research and teaching commitments...The major problem for heads of department is managing difficult colleagues and heads do not have the authority in many environments to persuade colleagues to accept change. Major change, therefore, needs to be managed at faculty and Academic Board level...’ Janet McCalman, Department of History and Philosophy of Science/School of Population Health

One respondent observed that the University’s strengths were not fully leveraged, internally or externally:

‘The University is strong within its faculties and schools. But it is not so effective at building on these strengths across its disciplines and organisational units. Therefore a key challenge is to make more of the synergies that could exist across these internal boundaries within teaching and research. The funding of interdisciplinary steering committees is a helpful start as is the creation of...research centres...(and) larger collaborative ventures such as Bio21. The challenge, however, is to be able to facilitate further interdisciplinary ventures, where they are appropriate and coincide with the University’s strategic plan, by having available centrally the necessary strategic funding to allow such opportunities to be quickly taken up...Whilst the University has enormous strengths in research and teaching, senior industry and government figures have expressed their uncertainty about how to reach into the university to work with that potential. One way to achieve this may be to encourage the development of a number of research ‘clusters’ which are focussed on engaging with particular community needs. This requires funding approaches and recognition of performance to be shaped so that interdisciplinary research collaboration is properly supported...’ Jim Falk, Australian Centre for Science, Innovation and Society

There were several suggestions for funding strategic initiatives from the centre, reducing the number of organisational units, or creating positions to focus a particular mix of interdisciplinary expertise:

'Financial incentives should be provided to accelerate improved performance (in internationalization). This can be done most readily by imposition on faculty budgets of an internationalization tax. Faculties (and departments) which fulfil internationalization criteria would be able to claim tax credits. The net revenues so raised would be payable into an internationalisation fund that faculties could bid for to subsidise internationalisation initiatives in appointments, teaching, research and community activities...' Howard Dick, Australia Centre for International Business

'the number of departments, and within administrative divisions, 'teams' and 'sections', is excessive. We need to rationalise the number of organisational units, however NOT the teaching programs, which need to be run as discrete research / teaching programs. The concept that one teaching/research program = one department is anachronistic, and unsustainable. Similarly, the 'ownership' of admin staff by a small program/unit and strong, ongoing loyalty to it at the expense of the 'university' is counterproductive...' Michael Coyle, Melbourne Research and Innovation Office

'Departments as business units may not be a suitable model for balanced decision making on University wide/faculty priorities as many DMs and HoDs appear to be caught up in a silo academic management culture or structure that is preoccupied with maximising short term benefits to Departments without due recognition of a multi-disciplinary approach that may be more sustainable in the long term...Developing a group of skilled managers at a local level is one option that may enable the University to respond more readily to opportunities in a true business development way, as management skills are more readily transferable than academic skills bound by academic disciplines and academic staff bound by current promotion criteria. These staff are also less likely to be encumbered by the traditional academic management culture concerned more with accruing resources by discipline as opposed to a multi-disciplinary approach...' Martine Booth, Jon Callander, Nick Christopher, *Growing Leaders Program*

'I would make a case for a dedicated chair in sociology/social theory to be appointed in the Arts Faculty (focusing on)...socio-techno-environmental change...I would structure departments around research disciplines and programmes, with undergraduate teaching drawing from different departments, and with the administration of that less disciplinary-based...' Janet McCalman, Department of History and Philosophy of Science/School of Population Health

'Areas for a more central role for coordination policy and strategy ...some ideas might include VCs office to have a funding source for strategic initiatives; VC to make sure that the administration does things to help teaching and research, not make it harder ie THEMIS; developing a culture of more flexibility; also promoting a "can do" mentality instead of trying to find all the reasons why something can't be done...A more collaborative environment can be achieved but it requires leadership from the VC...if you paint the sort of academic community you want, go through the appropriate processes, you can achieve it. The VC has always had great support from the Officers of the Academic Board. This is very strategic. So if you want a community that is more connected and working as a "hypertext" organisation, we can get there...' Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

'One issue which needs to be addressed is the University's capacity to ensure implementation of centrally developed plans, policies and procedures at faculty, departmental and subject level. Many excellent initiatives are put forward centrally at higher levels of the University, but the uptake of and/or participation in such initiatives across the University is often patchy... the University must endeavour to increase the level of central coordination in aspects of its operations where inconsistency is undesirable or where centralisation will lead to efficiency gains and/or improved service quality. The University must also endeavour to ensure any move to greater coordination does not stifle innovation or get in the way of faculties and departments tailoring local solutions to local problems...it may perhaps be more useful for the University to focus not on what is the appropriate level of administrative devolution, but to give greater consideration to what activities are more appropriately devolved or centralised. The current review of shared administrative services is a good example of this approach.' Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

6.12 Reviewing the balance of undergraduate-postgraduate programs

Several submissions considered the most radical option floated in the discussion paper, reconfiguring the core curriculum and changing the mix of undergraduate and postgraduate offerings. For some, this made some sense, and was one possible path to rationalisation:

‘Of the models of universities summarized in “Snapshot 1”, it is that of the Parisian university that appealed to me most. That is, one in which “students enrolled for general undergraduate studies in the faculty of philosophy (later to branch into the arts and sciences) followed by specialist courses in theology, law or medicine.” To make this current we would need to add other professions such as engineering, teaching, town planning and architecture, etc. However, this would mean further years of general study for the students before they are allowed to follow their professional interests, and it might not be popular with many students. The advantage is that they would be more mature when choosing their vocation. It is probable that the popularity of double degrees in professional subjects such as law and engineering, commerce and engineering etc would diminish, since the students would have more of an idea of what would suit them best...’ Helen Goldsworthy, Civil and Environmental Engineering

‘The last, and most difficult, area is reduction in the number of courses we offer, including the suggestion of moving towards fewer, more generalist, undergraduate degrees with professional degrees at the postgraduate level...I think my own area is an excellent example of one where this idea should be seriously considered...’ Paul Mees, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

‘Having completed my MA in a US institution, I am personally attracted to the notion of graduate professional schools, particularly in my own area where a strong undergraduate program in biomedical sciences can lead to postgraduate opportunities...’ Mark Hargreaves

‘The problem to be solved is no doubt the conflict many of us experience between teaching and research productivity...The thing I envy most about the working conditions of my colleagues in the USA is the opportunity many of them have to teach graduate courses on their current research projects. Thus one colleague, for example, develops her project over two years with her graduate students, and produces one book at the end of each sequence. The conditions needed for this kind of research productivity do NOT involve a reduction in teaching. Rather, they require a flexible “catalogue” that allows topics for courses to change frequently, without the two year delay in planning that is required here...Colleagues in the humanities in the big universities in the USA are not held by their teaching obligations to their past work, but to their present and their future work. The integration of research with teaching is both guaranteed, and a guarantee in its turn of a first-rate learning experience. Ideally, this integration of teaching with research increases productivity without detriment to the other parts of an academic’s load...’ Anne Freadman, School of Languages

‘I would suggest the following re-shaping of teaching and learning at Melbourne... Introduce a new...Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The two existing faculties will be abolished... Introduce two undergraduate degree options: a three year basic degree in arts and sciences and a four year basic degree. The four year degree will allow for an 'honours degree' equivalent and also provide for 'pre-med' or 'pre-law' or other 'pre-vocational' courses in the final two years of the four year degree...Make the medical degree and the law degree and any other equivalent degrees available for postgraduates only...Introduce a new Graduate School of Arts and Sciences...Introduce a new category of employment based on the American model in which graduate students teach within clearly structured and transparent arrangements, quite distinct from the current model used here which carries the major disadvantage of unreliability and excessive casualisation ...Allow about five years for the new structures to be established...The above model...will allow the University to be internationally competitive, will improve working conditions over the medium to long term, will improve the ability to deliver high quality teaching processes, will enable first year undergraduates to make the adjustment to tertiary studies with greater ease and

higher morale, will enable a proper re-design of courses and structures within degrees and re-focus resources will not create excessive emphasis on some major disciplines to the detriment of others will guarantee diversity of offerings while providing a basis on which to assess the value and viability of programs will lead Australia in providing the best quality undergraduate education while supporting the research and postgraduate profile which is fundamental to quality at the University of Melbourne, is an easily understandable model in view of its wide use in the best research-based universities in the USA, whether Ivy League or city or state based will allow the University to address intolerable cost/resource/funding pressures while not jeopardising quality and diversity...' Jane Munro, International House

'I support a major evaluation of whether the university should be radically transformed into a US or Scottish structure, with HECS places supporting a 3-year BA-BSc program (with the addition of economics and pre-med biomedicine, and pre-engineering), followed by graduate school for the professions and masters by coursework and a mixture of research thesis modes for those working towards research training and doctorates... I believe we have real problems with undergraduate studies. The work-loads in Arts are such that many students do little reading for tutorials, and concentrate only on work for assessments... Students emerge with 'boutique' degrees, having a read a chapter 'of this' and an article 'on that', and can go on to PhDs only to encounter 'a crisis of superficial knowledge'... A US-style BA-BSc that enabled students to develop more background knowledge and discover their interests might be wise. It should include economics and economic history (but not business studies which are professional studies). I would favour a Masters programme with a one-year being equivalent to our honours year, and a two-year with 20,000-word thesis being a Masters with honours equivalent to the US pre-PhD masters. This type of teaching would be more effective and enable a better use of staff teaching talents in all their variety. It would permit an easier work-load in departments with survey courses for the BA-BSc for the first two years and more specialist courses for year 3... In Arts, I would focus courses like Media and Communication, Creative Writing, and many of the existing masters programmes at this post-grad level, with pre-Masters subjects in the 3rd year of the BA-BSc, as students develop their interests for professional or postgraduate study (eg. Pre-med and pre-engineering subjects in the BSc.)...' Janet McCalman, Department of History and Philosophy of Science/School of Population Health

One respondent observed that adopting such a model presented great possibilities, but also great challenges as it would mean significant change:

'(For Melbourne) the post-graduate path has many obvious advantages over further expansion of under-graduate numbers. The numbers needed are less, the knowledge creation effects are greater, and the capacity to add value to country-of-origin educational priorities is high. But our challenge is also great. Many of the facilities and teaching techniques we have inherited are designed for under-graduates. We are still somewhat ambivalent about the proper role of post-graduate coursework in some disciplines. We do not send strong enough signals in our own staff development, marketing and reward systems to assure a balance of international and domestic expertise...' Mark Considine, Centre for Public Policy

6.13 Intellectual agendas and intellectual leadership

The focus group data at Tables 2 and 3 indicate broad support for the proposition that the University should have ‘an intellectual agenda of significant problems to solve’, and strong support for the proposition that it should ‘offer leading edge work on significant problems’. Perhaps this presented a way forward, and a mechanism to support priorities. The main caveat was a familiar one: who would set the agenda, by what process and criteria? Otherwise, many respondents saw the ‘public intellectual’ role as an essential part of the university’s mission, and saw scope to do more on this front.

‘we maintain that one mark of a truly ‘international’ university is its capacity to support its own intellectual examination and leadership of issues and scholarship of national importance, and their relevance to global concerns and intellectual debates...’ (Kate Darian-Smith and John Murphy, Australian Studies Centre)

Several respondents saw scope to provide more support for individuals in using the media, to mobilize the institution’s expertise on complex and significant problems – and to formally recognise this aspect of the university’s work in promotion criteria:

‘The University should not only encourage a public profile for its staff, it should actively facilitate it...Don’t wait for public intellectuals to self-nominate...Staff should be encouraged to develop regular commentary roles in order to drive discourse rather than respond fleetingly to it...Improve the media unit...Public interventions should be endorsed and valued by being recognised as serious business...Build the platforms for the University’s public intellectuals: Develop an electronic journal...Stage debates... Identify staff, give them the teaching relief to write a Quarterly essay or a Deakin lecture...’ Chris McAuliffe, Ian Potter Museum of Art

‘(using the media) is clearly an area where the university could provide more assistance. At the moment it is very much up to the individual academic and most of us are hesitant to produce media releases. This is one area where CSIRO seems to excel...Although we have no direct experience of their model, we believe they have media officers who trawl the researchers outputs and meet with them rather than waiting for researchers to contact them or for the media to approach them with a query. This may be a model worth pursuing...’ Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

‘There is undoubtedly much research being done in the arts and humanities that does not readily flow into the public domain...The university has a register of experts for the media but does often not actively promote research findings outside its own walls. It tends to wait until the media comes to the university seeking expert opinion. More active promotion and marketing of research and expertise...and the effect it has on creating a ‘more active public role for intellectuals’ and their property is potentially great...’ Gillian Wigglesworth for School of Languages

Some respondents observed that greater formal recognition of this kind of work would help.

‘There is agreement that the University should be a place that encourages critical analysis of contemporary issues (e.g. political, social, environmental). But one colleague has argued that, if the University truly seeks to encourage such analysis, it is important that such efforts be formally recognized within the University. Participation in public debate, as well as in the formation of policy, are not currently recognized in the promotion processes of the University. But if the role of the public intellectual is to be taken seriously, then this aspect of academic work needs to be formally recognized by counting toward promotion...’ Howard Sankey for Department of History and Philosophy of Science

Other respondents saw scope to deploy existing expertise on complex problems, or specified mechanisms to mobilise it in a particular domain:

‘Universities (real ones) understand the fundamental role of freedom of speech, creation of knowledge and the transfer of knowledge. I would hope any future intellectual agenda would fit in with this...I am passionate about sustainable development (economic, environmental and social dimensions) and making the world a better place (both in Australia and in less developed countries) and see this as one of the key touch stones for any great university. What structures do we need? This is always a trade-off. On the one hand all staff need a “home” which has some independence...On the other hand multi-disciplinary initiatives require a mix of disciplines... How to promote this – get the right problems to solve, get access to funds and get the right people – and it will simply happen...Lots of academics at UM (could) play a more active role in the public domain. The question is really how to better tap this expertise. I suspect UM can do a lot better in promoting itself in the media...I suppose we should be leveraging off the more successful staff that do this well...’ Ian Williamson, Department of Geomatics

‘at a recent Research Planning Day we identified the area of climate change-landscape evolution-environmental change as one in which most, if not all, of our research groups could contribute...given our breadth, we have the potential to combine our existing concentrations of expertise and tackle such important questions in a way that no other institution in Australia can...’ Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

‘I would make a case for a dedicated chair in sociology/social theory to be appointed in the Arts Faculty (focusing on)...socio-techno-environmental change...I would structure departments around research disciplines and programmes, with undergraduate teaching drawing from different departments, and with the administration of that less disciplinary-based...’ Janet McCalman, Department of History and Philosophy of Science/School of Population Health

Other respondents focused on the idea of institution-level commitment and support for specified areas of research, roles or structures to support wider engagement and impact:

‘At an institutional level, commit the university to addressing and solving a substantial global issue...’ Garry Thomson, Health, Counselling and Disability Services

‘The University has the opportunity at this point to assume a position of leadership in the environmental area and to establish itself at the forefront of environmental thinking worldwide...’ Jacqueline Rowarth for Office of Environmental Programs

‘Perhaps Faculties might be invited to identify well focused ‘research themes’...PhD scholarships are truly a (good) ‘bargain basement’ way of lifting research profile...PhD scholarships should be provided to specific research areas...Application should be made to the university rather than faculty, and decided at university level...’ Nicholas Low, Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning

‘frame a ‘Melbourne Program’...with the mission to make a leading contribution locally and globally to the advancement of human progress in developing ecological sustainability, social justice and well-being and economic health. Such a Melbourne Program could span across teaching and research. Within this context it would be appropriate to annually consider and report on the University’s environmental, social and economic contribution to state, nation and humanity. This could combine reporting in these terms with some strategic funding allocated towards staff and student projects which demonstrably carry it forward. It could also support the development of partnerships and commercial and other collaborations within and outside the University which advance these aspects of the University’s work...’ Jim Falk, Australian Centre for Science, Innovation and Society

‘The university should support and maintain a group of ‘public’ intellectuals that arise from a number of key disciplines across the University. These ‘public’ intellectuals should seek to [a] build international collaborations with leading international opinion makers (OECD, WHO, etc) to influence the social, economic and political context in which the University is placed and [b]

similarly influence local key opinion makers. Such a role could be subject to clear agreed performance indicators...’ Alisdair Vance, Department of Paediatrics

‘Currently too much academic work is needlessly rendered inaccessible, and too much of what academics do is directed toward other academics...Media and other forms of contribution to the public domain should not be mistrusted, but should be welcomed as an opportunity for academics to share the important work they are doing with the broader community. Recently the University has increased the effort it has put into the professional development of academic staff members’ teaching skills; a similar increase in focus with respect to public intellectual leadership may be of value. A greater focus on making academics’ work more accessible, without compromising academic standards, is also likely to have positive implications for commercialisation and knowledge transfer. It will also improve academic staff members’ capacity to expose undergraduate students to research culture and methods, and to substantive research activities...’ Paul Donegan for interim Student Representative Council

Some respondents observed that public contributions often took place in national and international public policy forums rather than via the mass media. In these domains, institutional structures and critical mass were needed to support the role.

‘There is scope for MDHS to consider major areas that occupy policy makers internationally. These broad concerns could be best encompassed in the context of Institutes...the Nossal Institute of Global Health is an exemplar...(it) will enhance global health equity and build on existing world class expertise within the University and affiliated organisations, and on partnerships with developing countries...(it) will enhance capacity for world-class research, for evaluation of health interventions and policies, for technology transfer, for informed advocacy for developmental assistance, and education of the next generation of health leaders, researchers and practitioners in developing countries...(it) will provide the principal focus and strategic leadership for the global health activities of the University...’ Jim Angus for Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

6.14 Reconsidering ‘commercialisation’

In the focus groups (Table 6) there was solid support for two propositions, that the University needs more private sector funding to sustain its research effort, and that commercial activities must be both worthwhile and profitable. In discussion, it was agreed there were difficulties in reconciling both aims, and a risk of one serving as an alibi for disregarding the other, if a ‘self-funded’ program was to be sustained. In the written submissions, several respondents with direct experience in this area explored the conundrum of what *commercialisation* means in a public university. The main themes to emerge here were:

- the concept of ‘commercialisation’ and its rationale need reframing as part of the University’s core academic mission, rather than primarily as a (financially risky or morally dubious) means of funding quite separate, but traditional academic purposes that have nothing to do with the world of commerce
- a shift of institutional culture was needed to lift engagement with industry in particular, and University policies, processes and practices need to reflect the right mix of incentives, risk management and professional development to make progress with ‘knowledge transfer’ in its wider sense (beyond publishing), to be both aligned with the academic mission, and become self-funding over time.

Respondents observed that the University needed to be less conservative and more outward-looking, with the right kinds of incentives in place for academic recognition for this kind of work:

‘the University of Melbourne needs to position itself not only as pre-eminent in research and scholarship, but also in being excellent in turning those strengths toward economic and social development... There is a need to enhance the University’s capacity to contribute to innovation in business, government and the community... industry will expect the University to be able to enter business ventures, take and manage risk, and negotiate on a time scale which is compatible with theirs. This may require some cultural shift and organisational change to ensure that the University is quick enough on its feet to engage in attractive ventures, and extricate itself from those which prove unprofitable...’ Jim Falk, Australian Centre for Science, Innovation and Society

‘There are research outcomes where the University has a social obligation to develop and transfer the technology... the risk of commercial ventures must be weighed against the University’s current default position as a highly conservative, risk averse organisation, to allow growth of future enterprise... leadership in commercialisation of research will not be achieved simply by the prudent management of risk...’ Jim Angus for Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

‘Businesses are looking globally to satisfy their R&D needs... The opportunity, in essence, is the chance to bolster the level of Universities’ activity in knowledge creation, and its resourcing, through closer links to the business sector... this source of funding is currently substantially less significant to the Higher Education sector than Government funding, but given the stagnation in growth in Government R&D funding (and the apparent lack of political will to redress this) its importance as an avenue for further growth is crucial... Whilst virtually all academics are themselves familiar with the publication process and other traditional mechanisms for transferring knowledge, there is a wide variation in the level of familiarity with the commercial sector and the ways in which ideas find their way into profitable products. There is thus a role to be played by a University in supporting this activity, and academics will increasingly consider the University’s policies on technology transfer as part of their career decision making. The University should therefore see its investment in Technology Transfer capability as part of its value proposition to attract high-performing researchers...’ Charlie Day for Melbourne Ventures

‘there are several reasons why commercialisation should be a University imperative ... (but) IP policy, management, financial and incentive structures do not encourage inexperienced staff to protect IP and participate in commercialisation... each enterprise needs to be carefully assessed for risks and benefits... The University can clarify where commercialisation supports its academic mission (and) ... ensure... activities do not conflict with academic values through a clearly articulated code of conduct with transparent processes of dealing with conflicts of interest...’ Eric Reynolds, Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences

‘Commercialisation of research in The University of Melbourne continues to be burdened by a culture that accords commercial funded research less respect than fully publically funded research. This is demonstrated by the greater prominence given to funding obtained through ARC Discovery and NHMRC grants. The processes for commercialisation are also hampered by slow handling of some contracts and invention disclosure applications. It also seems that sometimes the recognition of commercialisation is focussed on quite narrow definitions of appropriate commercialisation pathways...’ Glenn Browning, Department of Veterinary Science

‘Should the University of Melbourne have a pro-active policy to support dual activity professors with one foot in university and one foot in industry? This dual activity allows the lead researcher to introduce innovation directly into departmental research and to influence the development of curriculum thus producing a stream of graduates equipped to grow the emerging industry. Should commercialisation of research be assessed equally with publications in journals? Or should there be two streams – academic careers and applied research careers – within the university where individual researchers can elect to move from one stream, and associated mode of assessment, to the other and perhaps even back again...’ William Hollier, EnGen Institute

‘if the University is to increase its overall research income then there will need to be a greater focus on research involving collaboration with the private-sector... MU is not as engaged with the private-sector as it could be or will have to be... it seems clear that any increase in private-sector collaborative research will require some change of culture within the University. Support for research centres which do have that orientation should be an explicit part of our future strategy... Also we need to examine what disincentives exist in the current way that research performance - at an individual and departmental/centre level - is measured. If academic advancement is strongly dependent on research outcomes that can only be achieved through traditional competitive research grants and through publication in academic (refereed) journals, then it will be hard to attract researchers (particularly young researchers) into research programs that receive substantial funding from the private-sector (or from other government, non-competitive, sources). In such research it is also likely that publication will be concentrated in reports and other non-refereed papers. Of course ARC Linkage grants do provide one way of increasing involvement with the private-sector and growing income from such sources. But there is a much greater potential to work with the private sector than through that mechanism and the University needs ensure that career advancement and recognition will still come to those who take that route...’ Chris Ryan, Australian Centre for Science Innovation and Society

‘Commercialisation: my view is that the University’s prime aim in this area should be on fostering links with industry rather than on trying to make money. (This is in the same vein as fostering links with alumni for their own sake – the financial benefit will come later). The university has a history of trying to squeeze every last drop of intellectual property out of every collaboration in a way that inhibits interactions with industry. Somehow, the University needs to develop a means of assessing which collaborations need greater attention to potential intellectual property and which should be fostered for their own sake. More specifically, the contracts division of MRIO seems to be intractably bogged down at present leading to unacceptable delays in finalising contracts...’ Chris Cobbett, Department of Genetics

‘The term ‘commercialisation’, or even ‘research commercialisation’, has perhaps not been serving the University very well in planning and acting – the terms are too all-encompassing; it is often not helpful to label very different activities as ‘one’; and the term commercial implies a profit motive when often there are other or multiple objectives. The University will engage in a broad range of technology transfer and outreach activities and the potential benefits to the University of these

activities are not solely or perhaps even largely financial.’ Glenn Swafford for Melbourne Research and Innovation Office

(‘with technology transfer) the question...is not...whether or not we *should* engage with the business sector; rather...how can we engage *more effectively* with the business sector, and so cement the position of the University as a “vibrant centre for knowledge creation and dissemination”...the term “commercialisation” has become too general to be useful...The University should...choose language...which recognises the diversity of activities and policies required...terms such as “Technology Transfer”, “Skills Transfer” and “Courseware Licensing” could be used....The University should choose to recognise the importance of “use-inspired basic research” and review its policies in...HR and research support...The University should choose to accept the challenge laid out by government to play a regional economic development role...but define objectives and targets that meet that challenge on its own terms...’ Charlie Day for Melbourne Ventures

‘The chances of the University making a genuinely significant amount of money from commercialisation are poor. Even universities such as Stanford that are well connected to private, technology-based industry do not make large sums of money directly from commercialisation. However, what the university can do is to encourage the formation of start-up companies, and have structures in place that allow researchers to move back and forth between these companies and their university jobs (because most start-up companies will fail). While this will not lead to large income for the university, it may lead to good outcomes for the economy as a whole: a public-good outcome, perhaps. In a different category is applied research supported by outside agencies. We really should draw a clear distinction between this and income earned directly through profits or royalties. The support mechanisms required are quite different but the impacts could be similar...However we end up defining what we mean by commercialisation, we also need to consider how we measure it...’ Janet Hergt for School of Earth Sciences

7 CONCLUSIONS

The consultation process has elicited a strong consensus about what the University’s aims should be; insightful analysis of where its main problems lie; fair consensus that continuing growth is not desirable; and very little consensus about what the University must now do to address problems, remain financially sustainable, and achieve its stated aims as an institution.

The consultation has elicited a host of concerns and aspirations, insights and ideas, agendas that might plausibly be pursued, and in many cases, plausible reasons why not to pursue them. The overwhelming impression is of a very talented and dedicated community of individual contributors pulling mightily in almost every direction. While it is clear there are many strengths and much good work to build on, from an institutional perspective, the University currently lacks a coherent strategic direction, and is constrained by internal factors as well as external ones.

At this stage, it appears there is considerable scope for the University to make minor improvements to many aspects of its operations, with tangible benefits for staff, students and the work of the University more generally.

But equally clearly, no widely shared, sustainable strategy has yet emerged to make the University ‘one of the finest’ in the world.

Prepared by Geoff Sharrock
5 October 2005

APPENDIX 1

University of Melbourne Future Scenarios Workshop 24 August 2005

Report

INTRODUCTION

This is a report on a Workshop held on 24 August 2005 to consider four scenarios which might impact upon the University's future directions and to develop strategies for dealing with them in the context of the University's broader aspirations. The Workshop was held in the context of the Vice-Chancellor's discussion paper *Growing Esteem – Choices for the University of Melbourne*.

The Workshop was attended by:

Professor James Angus - Dean of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Mr Michael Beaton-Wells - Acting Director, University Planning
Mr Sean Cooney – Faculty of Law and Staff Association Representative
Professor Glyn Davis – Vice-Chancellor
Professor David Kemp – Professorial Fellow, Australian and New Zealand School of Government
Dr Kerri-Lee Krause – Centre for the Study of Higher Education
Professor Simon Marginson - Australian Professorial Fellow, Monash University
Ms Linda O'Brien – Vice-Principal (Information)
Professor Field Rickards – Dean of Education
Mr Geoff Sharrock – Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Professor Ross Williams – Professorial Fellow, Melbourne Institute for Economic and Social Research
Ms Brooke Young – Manager, Marketing and Development, Faculty of Economics and Commerce.

Workshop Facilitator:

Professor Vin Massaro, Professorial Fellow, Centre for the Study of Higher Education

PROCESS

The Workshop was provided with four scenarios, which were agreed to following their earlier circulation and comments from members both before and at the beginning of the Workshop. The Workshop then concentrated on discussing strategies for each of the scenarios. The intention was to find common strategies to inform the University's thinking about its strategic plan.

The Scenarios considered are contained in Appendix A. They consisted of three scenarios which raised significant roadblocks for the University's aspirations and one which provided it with an income stream that would enable it to go a long way to meeting its objectives. The last was intended to test whether the strategies developed for the first three would remain essentially the same in a more financially secure environment .

OUTCOMES

The Workshop spent most of its time discussing strategies which could be considered to address each of the scenarios. Those strategies that recurred through the discussion have been summarised below, although the Workshop was not intended to make specific recommendations on strategies; and time did not allow for the exploration of differences of opinion to reach formal decisions. The discussion that follows seeks to encapsulate major points made by the participants and some broad agreements, so the list of strategies under the sub-headings below should not be seen to reflect the views of all participants.

The Workshop reached broad agreement that the University was in a good position to withstand many of the negative aspects of the scenarios presented. There was an appreciation that the University's current strength and prominence should not lead it into complacency but provide it with the opportunity to put in place long-term strategies that will safeguard its position and take it to a higher level.

The Workshop agreed that the University should set itself stretch goals to promote continuous improvement in its performance. Aiming to be the best university in Australia and among the top fifty globally was seen to be an appropriate target. It was agreed that safeguarding the University's place in the global education environment depended on its being able to position itself in a global rather than a local context, while still being conscious of its responsibilities to provide opportunities for talented students from lower socio-economic backgrounds through the provision of scholarships.

In discussing what it meant to be first in Australia and among the top fifty globally, the Workshop agreed that measures would continue to be based on research output, and that this was consistent with the University's performance and sense of itself. In seeking suitable comparators from among highly ranked international universities such as Harvard, Yale and Cambridge, it is clear that quality rather than size is the crucial determinant of status. The other determinant is funding and the flexibility this creates in being able to offer both high quality teaching and research.

The ability to become an internationally renowned university rests on having high selective entry levels and staff:student ratios which enable staff to devote sufficient time to their teaching and research without one overwhelming the other.

When examining the fourth scenario in which the University had a significant infusion of funds, the Workshop agreed that the additional funding should be devoted to the achievement of the objectives identified in the strategies for the earlier three scenarios.

The University should therefore strive to ensure that the right strategies are in place to support its research effort, including through the attraction of international researchers and by achieving teaching and research supervision quality to make the University an attractive choice for local and international students.

The question of funding was a recurring one and it was agreed that if this were not addressed both by government and the University itself its plans would be in jeopardy. The University would need to be a leader in persuading government that its aim to be an internationally renowned university rested on consistent and strong government funding support. As research performance is so crucial to achieving this status, governments should be encouraged to adopt a policy of concentrating research effort in a few highly successful universities and creating economies of scale by bringing the existing research institutes into closer relationships with those universities.

In broad terms, therefore, the Workshop discussion elicited suggestions that the University should:

- set itself stretch goals, aiming to position itself internationally within the top fifty universities and differentiate itself clearly from other Australian universities;
- achieve highly in research by improving its current performance, with outstanding performance in selected areas;
- achieve a reputation as a high quality teaching institution by using innovative and effective teaching approaches which are reflected in improved student outcomes ;
- devise income-generating strategies that provide it with sustainable income for its objectives;
- have internal management structures that support the attraction and retention of high quality staff of international repute;
- internationalise its activities in research and teaching (beyond student recruitment);
- consider reducing the size of the student body strategically to focus on its strengths and change its undergraduate/postgraduate mix;
- encourage government to concentrate its research efforts in a few universities and associated research institutes;
- encourage the further de-regulation of the student fees market in Australia;
- develop better relations and long term contacts with Alumni and philanthropists to increase its endowment income.

SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO THE SCENARIOS

The Workshop agreed that if the University achieves a reputation as the best in Australia and is highly ranked internationally, it will remain internationally competitive despite the events contained in the scenarios. The strategies identified for further exploration were:

Research and Academic Staff

- Focus internationally rather than nationally. The University now ranks second in Australia and 82nd globally in the Jiao Tong index, which largely measures research performance. The University's research must achieve the strength, depth and recognition that will support its broader objectives. Research funding in Australia is still comparatively low and it is not well directed. The forthcoming Research Quality Framework is likely to drive funding towards fewer and larger research concentrations, but the University will need to develop international alliances if it is to play a part in a global research context, especially as research becomes more expensive, with larger research teams working on research agendas of global reach.
- As research rests on having high quality staff and research students, develop strategies for attracting and maintaining staff in an environment where there will be an international shortage of well-qualified staff.
- Devise attractive remuneration and research facilities packages, while ensuring that it is possible for staff to gain international experience during periods of study and conference leave, and "mini-sabbaticals".
- Create time for research and teaching staff through "permanent sabbaticals" to free them from teaching or research while they concentrate on an agreed research or teaching project.
- Address the staff age mix to create senior opportunities for younger staff.
- Offer/increase the number of scholarships to attract and retain the best postgraduate students.
- Devise strategies to persuade governments of the benefits of Melbourne becoming one of a few research-intensive universities in Australia.

- Make the same case to corporate and individual sponsors.
- Develop closer links with research institutes with the aim of integrating them into the Melbourne research enterprise.

Students and the Student Experience

- Reinforce that the University's research reputation must be accompanied by high quality teaching and learning.
- Make Melbourne the preferred place for high quality students to go because of its culture, international focus, choice of specialisations and the campus experience.
- Improve staff:student ratios and increase exposure of students to the "Stars" in their field.
- Develop relationships with schools to identify and attract the best students early.
- Use school engagements to predict student expectations about teaching and learning.
- Ensure that desirable teaching and learning approaches build on the school experience.
- Use new technologies in ways that reflect student experiences and expectations.
- Become more highly selective and work towards deregulating the fees structure for Australian students. Devise strategies to support the admission of students from lower socio-economic groups through the provision of scholarships.
- Devise responsive approaches to life-long learning and continuing professional development.
- Assess the teaching model to focus on how students learn - fewer large lectures; more self-directed learning; use seminar mode for community building.
- Devise creative ways to use ICT, but retain the face-to-face on-campus experience as a unique part of the Melbourne experience.

Structures

- Devise a management structure for the University that supports flexibility and rapid responses to new environments and new opportunities.
- Devise flexible and simple arrangements for credit transfer and mutual recognition of qualifications to address global student movement.
- Address faculty and department structures, including the breadth of offerings to make best use of resources.

Funding and Endowments

- Create close links with alumni, industry and philanthropists.
- Develop an alumni giving program from graduation.
- Use position in life-long learning and continuing professional development to raise endowment funds.
- Use senior staff and "Stars" to develop relations with donors and alumni – focus the approaches to reflect relevant connections between donors and staff.
- Provide immediate life-long membership benefits to all alumni from the time of graduation at no cost.

Internationalisation

- Re-focus the University's Internationalisation strategy to ensure that it is more than student recruitment – high level engagement at teaching and research levels.
- Develop closer links with Asian universities.
- Use international peer review and quality assurance to raise the consciousness of Melbourne's reputation internationally (cf the recent ANU experience).

- Become part of the Bologna process through the development of links with European institutions and closer alignment of our program structures.

Vin Massaro

10 September 2005

APPENDIX A

SCENARIO 1 – GLOBAL COMPETITION

- For clear differentiation Melbourne decides that it will be one of the top 50 universities globally.
- Melbourne is on the way to becoming the clear leader in Australian higher education, but has not quite reached that goal.
- The ANU-led global alliance is proving successful and challenging U21. Sydney's 1-5-40 also getting traction.
- The Bologna process has been successful in achieving its stated objective to standardise European degrees, create complete mutual recognition of degrees and subjects.
- Students are able to take subjects towards their degrees from any university in Europe and graduates are able to practise anywhere in Europe.
- The Bologna objective is also to increase Europe's share of the international student market and begins to market pan-European university education in our traditional markets – in English.
- The US has struggled to keep up, but has been unsuccessful in being incorporated and recognised within the Bologna arrangements and becomes more aggressive in our markets.
- The Asian Tigers achieve their objective to become educational hubs for their region – Malaysia, Singapore - several Middle East countries also do.
- South Africa re-emerges as a major player in Africa.
- China and India emerge as major players, with increasing self-sufficiency.
- Security – last 25 years have seen a change in international student destinations due to security concerns – Melbourne has a major terrorist event.
- Melbourne continues to have a high reliance on international students.

SCENARIO 2 – LOCAL COMPETITION

- In 2003 Australia recorded 251,200 births – 61,000 in Vic; 86,300 in NSW; 47,300 in Qld.
- The Victorian retention rate in 2003 was 81%; aiming for 90% in 2010 – about 30-35% of these will go to University – a cohort in 2020 of 18,000-20,000 first year students for 9 universities.
- Melbourne took 5,000 last year – clearly not enough students to fill the places available.
- Melbourne has chosen to retain its existing range of on-campus offerings and faculties and resources are stretched.
- Its strengths are in Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Commerce, and Business.
- Hyper-availability of knowledge through ICT development.
- A major international university establishes in Melbourne.
- A major on-line provider begins to offer carefully constructed courses for working professionals.
- Several private niche providers are offering courses in competition with the University.

- Monash has developed close relationships with a range of major secondary schools to provide access to its teaching facilities for their students and automatic entry for pre-qualified students.
- The ANU re-introduces its conditional mid-year offers to Year 12 students.
- Schools and other agents become the intermediaries between students and universities.
- Retiring baby boomers provide a boon for student recruitment and life-long education takes hold – what and how will they want to study?
- Smorgasbord degrees – units from different universities?
- The professions become highly regulated with mandatory continuing professional development and re-certification.
- Heterogeneous group of students with different learning and support needs.
- How will students want to learn? On-line? On-campus experience for social interactions – every student with a human and a PC?
- Secondary schools determine student learning needs. “Super-teachers” teaching in schools and universities.

SCENARIO 3 – POLICY CHANGES

- Change in government policy – no more full fees or differential HECS and no additional funding.
- Some States re-enter the funding arena.
- Requirement for closer links between universities and vocational education.
- Research intensive/teaching intensive universities - Melbourne chooses research.
- A California multi-tier system is re-introduced – is ANU or Melbourne its Berkeley?
- The global ageing staff population creates a talent war - we risk losing staff to overseas universities.
- Melbourne becomes more focused in research – but in competition with private organisations and research institutes.
- The medical research institutes and CSIRO offer postgraduate research qualifications in their own right.
- A condition of research grants that they be held with a major research institute or an international research group.
- Research becomes increasingly expensive as projects require more sophisticated equipment and larger teams with senior researchers.
- Distributed research projects are available only to those who can demonstrate clear specialist expertise that can be provided at a distance.
- Several think tanks, both private and government supported, are undertaking high level humanities and social sciences research.

SCENARIO 4 – THE POT OF GOLD

- The University becomes the clear market leader in Australia.
- It has developed close ties with its associated research institutes, which have become semi-controlled entities.
- The Government offers to increase funding by 20% but universities must demonstrate what they would do with the additional funds.
- Melbourne has a major benefaction providing it with additional income of \$100 million per year.

Vin Massaro

24 August 2005

APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2 provides a summary of the focus group survey data and selected data illustrating points discussed in the focus groups, as referenced in the body of this report.

Table 1
All focus groups
140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

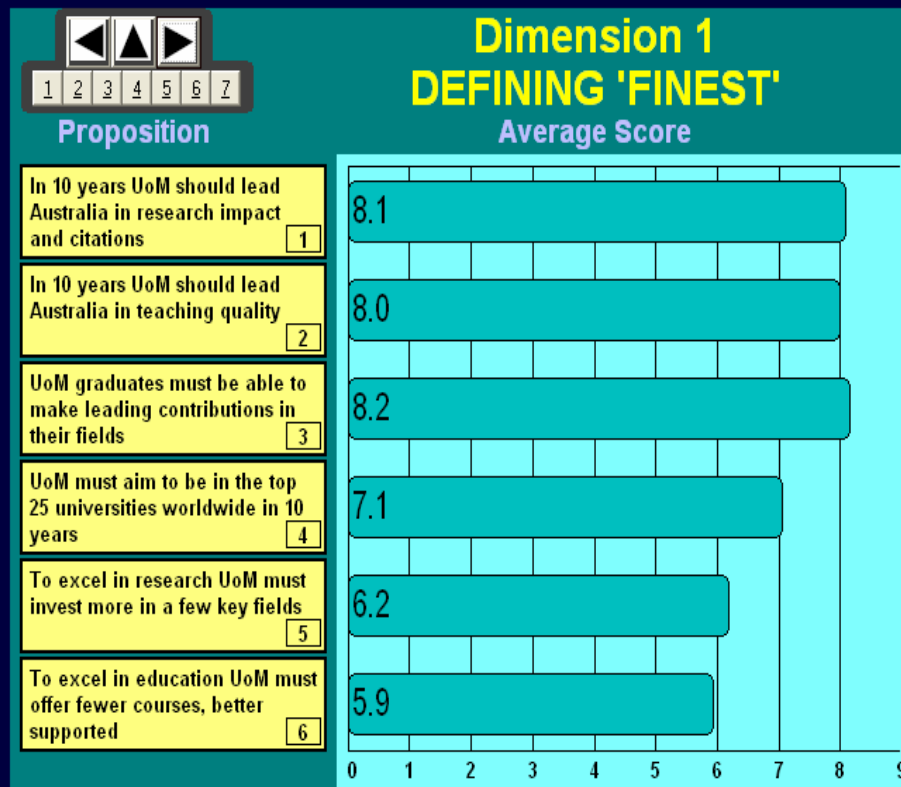


Table 2
 All focus groups
 140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
 Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

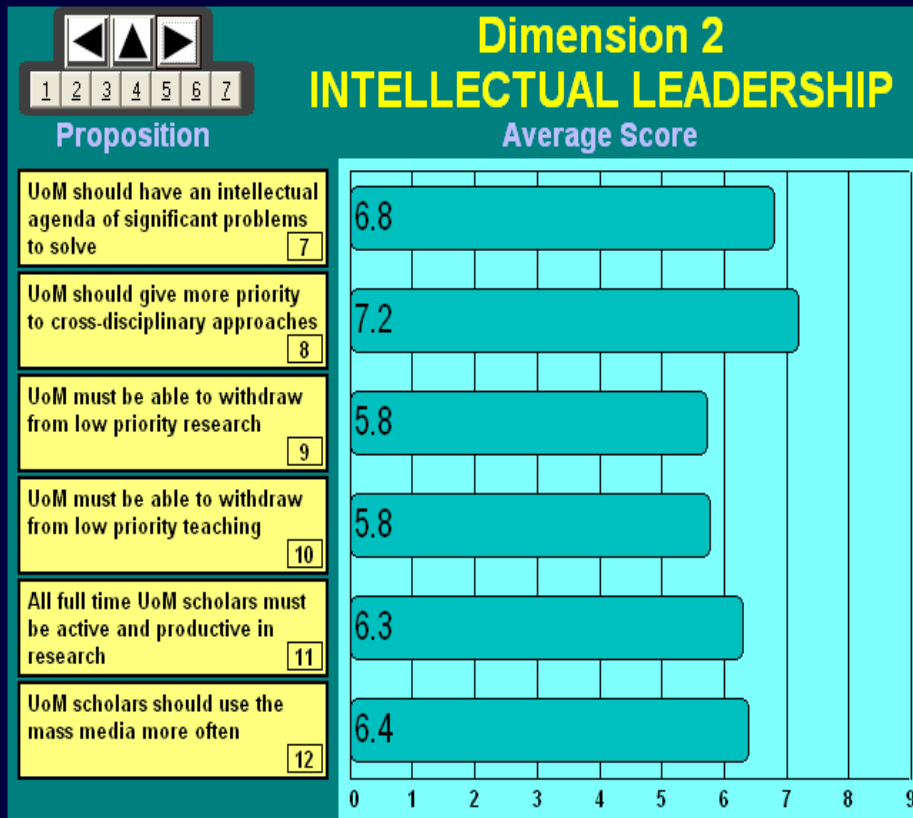


Table 3
 All focus groups
 140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
 Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

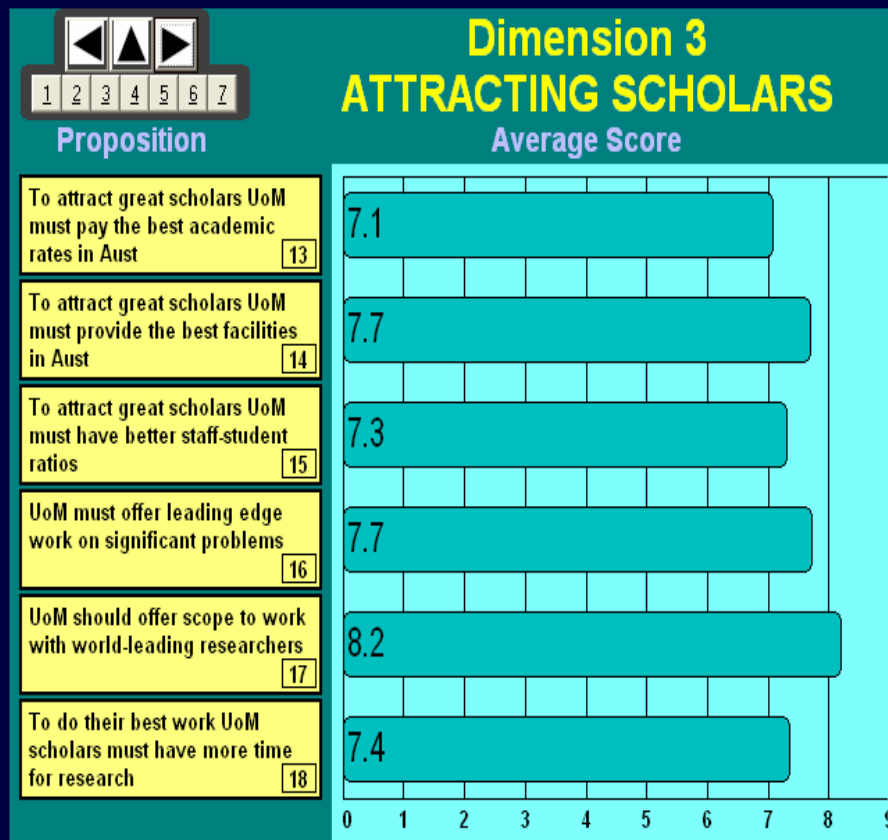


Table 4
 All focus groups
 140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
 Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

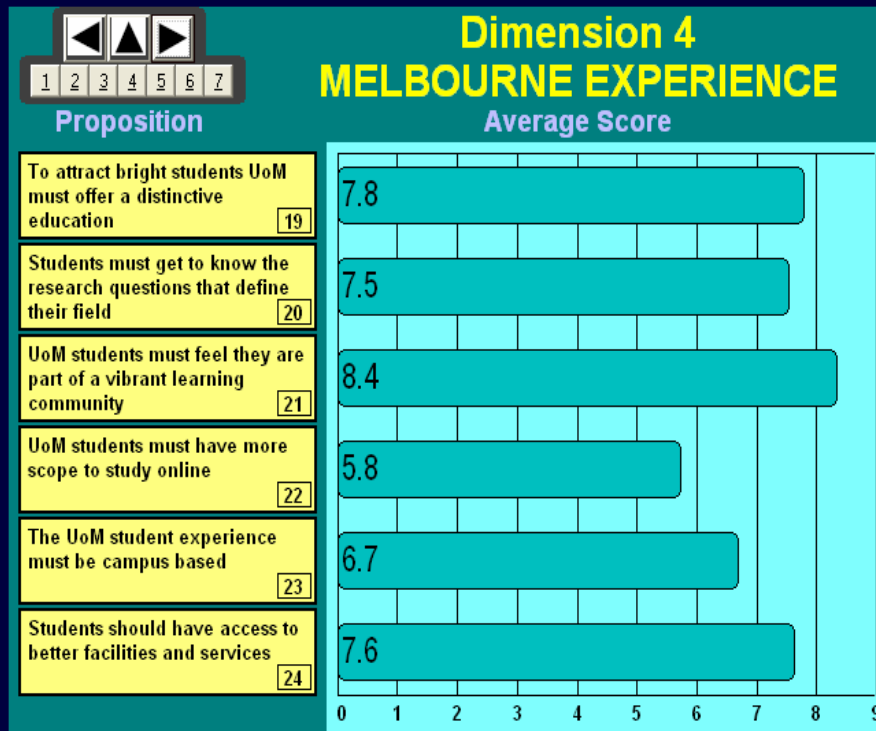


Table 5
 All focus groups
 140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
 Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

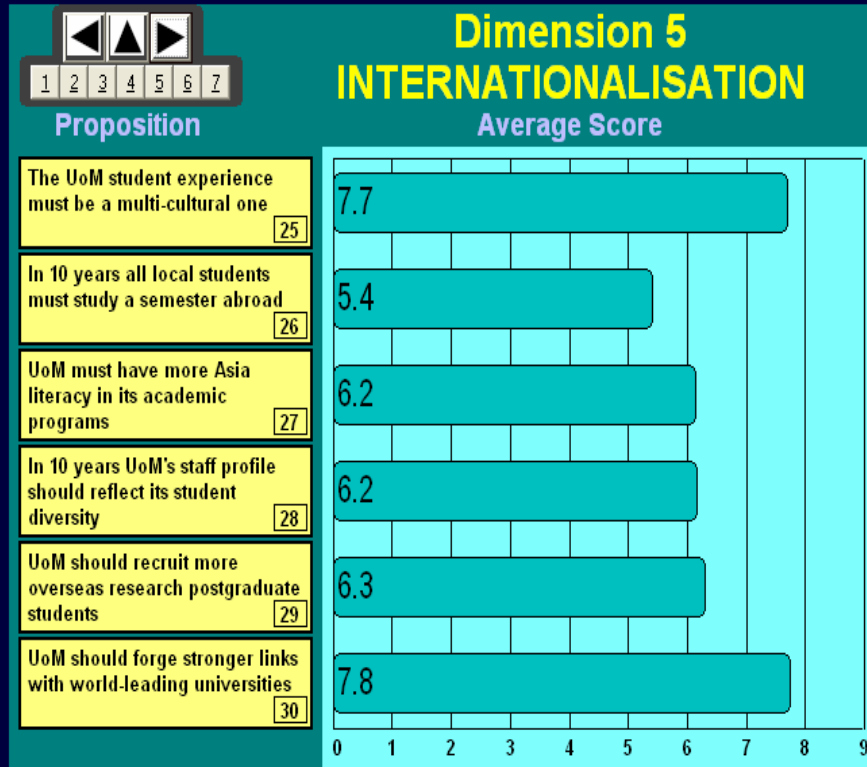


Table 6
 All focus groups
 140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
 Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

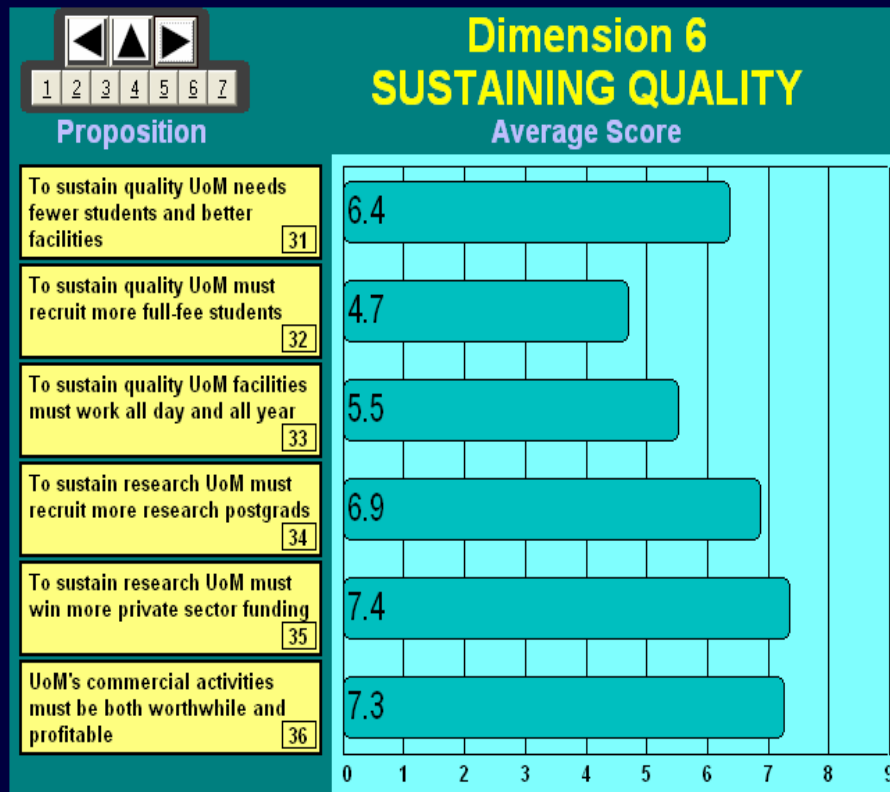


Table 7
 All focus groups
 140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
 Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

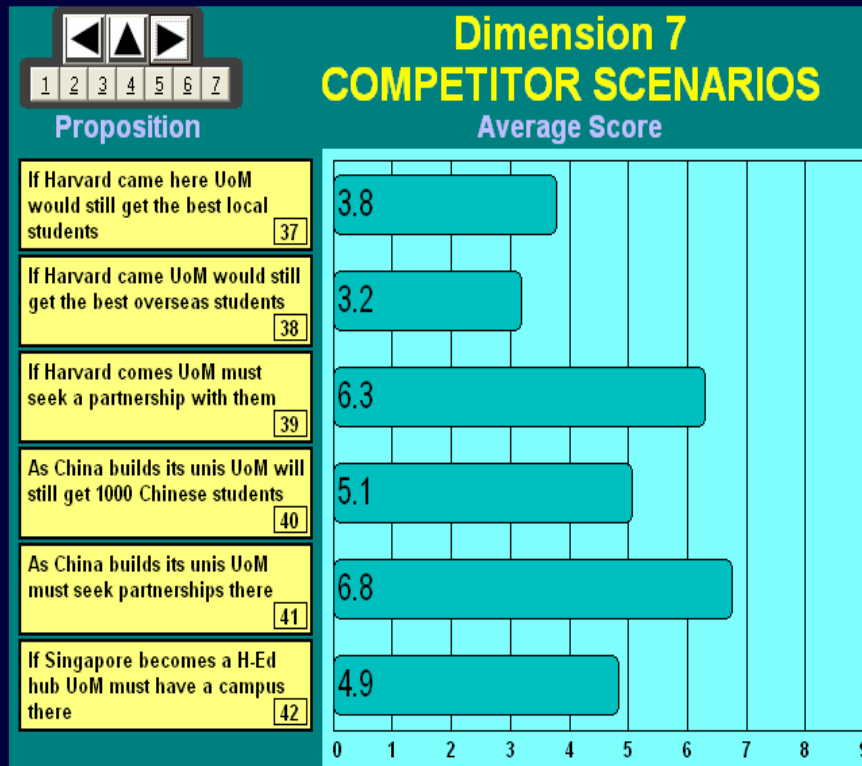


Table 8, Proposition 6
 All focus groups
 140 participants (100 staff, 29 students, 11 college heads)
 Rating scale: 9 = Strongly agree, 1 = Strongly disagree

