

Goals in Canadian Universities

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ABSTRACT

An examination of university goals provides an understanding of institutional purposes and priorities. The study reported here was designed to ascertain the goals of Canadian universities as perceived by presidents and board chairmen; to compare their perceptions of existing and preferred goals; and to compare perceptions by respondent position, and by region, age and size of university. Although some differences attributed to region and size were observed, perceptions of university goals were remarkably uniform. Generally, process goals were perceived more highly than the traditional outcome goals of teaching, research and service.

RÉSUMÉ

Un examen de la mission de l'Université est essentiel pour comprendre les priorités et objectifs institutionnels. Cette étude fut effectuée pour avoir une idée précise de la mission des universités canadiennes telle que perçue par les présidents/présidentes d'universités et les directeurs/directrices de conseils d'administration. Également, l'étude visait à comparer les perceptions existantes aux perceptions souhaitées selon le poste du répondant, de la région, de l'âge et de la taille de l'institution. À l'exception de quelques différences observées aux niveaux de la région et de la taille, les perceptions étaient très uniformes. De façon générale, les buts de type opérationnel étaient plus valorisés que ceux reliés à l'enseignement, la recherche et le service à la communauté.

In organizations, according to Parsons et al. (1961), goals and goal attainment has priority over all problems. Whether explicitly stated or not, goals provide the basic orientation of an organization. To define the goals of an organization is to clarify the very nature of its essence.

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Goals have functional value in an organization. According to Clifton Conrad (1974), goals may serve as standards by which to judge its success; constitute a source of legitimacy; define needs and priorities; define production units or outputs; define its clientele; and define the nature of the relationship between the organization and society. Rising demands for organizational accountability places greater expectations for goal clarity upon an organization.

As complex organizations, universities have been defined as "organized anarchies" (Cohen and March, 1974) which are characterized by ill-defined goals, unclear technology, and fluid participation. The very complexity of universities makes it incumbent upon them to seek goal clarification.

The most comprehensive attempt to measure university goals was an extensive survey by Gross and Grambsch (1968) of administrators and faculty at sixty-eight major universities. Their study conceptualized forty-seven output and support goals in five categories and asked respondents to identify their perceived and preferred goals. A replication of their study in 1971 revealed only little change following the decade of the turbulent sixties. Gross and Grambsch (1974:3) concluded:

Universities remained in 1971 what they had been in 1964; institutions oriented toward research and scholarly production, set up to provide comfortable homes for professors and administrators, and according students and their needs a distinctly secondary position.

Beginning in 1969, a research group at Educational Testing Service, New Jersey, began the development of the Institutional Goals Inventory (IGI) designed to assess the perceived importance of goal statements according to present (Is) and preferred (Should Be) importance (Peterson, 1970). The IGI consists of eighty goal statements in twenty goal areas, thirteen of which are outcome goals – the substantive objectives of institutions, and seven are process goals – ways and means of functioning. In addition, the IGI contains ten miscellaneous goal statements and also provides for the option of ten local goal statements.

Since its publication in 1972, the IGI has been used in hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States and elsewhere. It has been translated into French, Spanish and even Saudi Arabian and Thai. Its popularity rests upon its ease of administration and interpretation of results. An excellent manual provides technical information and also serves as a helpful guide for its use (Peterson and Uhl, 1977). The most comprehensive use of the IGI was made by the California Joint Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education (Peterson, 1973). Although the results are too massive to summarize here, the findings identified the congruence and divergence of perceptions held by samples of administrators, faculty, students, members of governing boards, and community citizens for the goals of California colleges and universities.

Several Canadian universities have used the IGI to identify goal priorities for institutional development. At the University of Ottawa (Piccinin and Joly, 1978), the IGI was used effectively to illuminate convergence and discrepancy of goals

as perceived by administrators, faculty and students. The University of Manitoba (1977) surveyed six constituent groups – administrators, faculty, support staff, students, legislators, and community representatives – to help in clarifying goals for developmental plans at the institution. Several other Canadian universities have also used the IGI for planning purposes.

METHODOLOGY

The profile of Canadian university goals presented in this paper grew out of a project on university goals initiated in 1981 at the University of Alberta (McNeal, Konrad and Hodysh, 1981) and culminating in a graduate thesis (McNeal, 1982). The study was designed to ascertain the goals of Canadian universities as perceived by presidents and board chairmen; to compare their perceptions of existing and preferred goals; and to compare perceptions by respondent's position, and by region, age and size of university.

The Canadian edition of the Institutional Goals Inventory (IGI) was used in the survey. A French version was used for the francophone institutions in Quebec and New Brunswick.

Data collection and analysis occurred in the 1981-82 academic year. Questionnaires were mailed to all presidents of public degree-granting universities in Canada, and usable returns were received from thirty-eight (76 percent) of the fifty presidents and sixteen (33 percent) of the forty-eight board chairmen in Canadian universities. Returns were fairly evenly distributed across geographical regions, although Ontario had the lowest total response rate of only forty-six percent.

Although the validity of the board chairmen's responses was questionable due to their low returns, they were used as a comparison with the presidents' responses. On all other analyses, the data were combined from both groups in examining differences between existing and preferred goal perceptions by region, age and size of the university.

THE FINDINGS

The primary purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of Canadian university goals as perceived by presidents and board chairmen. The findings of this study can be generalized only to the extent that presidents and board chairmen reflect accurately the existing and preferred goals of Canadian universities.

Goal Consensus

This section portrays the ratings of both existing and preferred goals as perceived by the total sample. Mean scores show the average rating of perceived importance for each goal area – the higher the mean, the greater its perceived importance. The standard deviation (SD) shows the amount of agreement among respondents – the lower the standard deviation, the higher the consensus within the respondent group.

Table 1
Perceptions of Major Goal Areas
Ranked by Is and Should Be Means

Is			Should be				
Rank	Goal	Mean	SD	Rank	Goal	Mean	SD
1.	Community (P) *	3.71	.61	1.	Community (P)	4.29	.55
2.	Democratic Governance (P)	3.53	.58	2.	Intellectual Orientation (O)	4.28	.50
3.	Freedom (P)	3.51	.94	3.	Academic Development (O)	3.98	.50
4.	Academic Development (O)	3.49	.54	4.	Accountability Efficiency (P)	3.87	.63
5.	Intellectual Orientation (O)	3.42	.68	5.	Intellectual Environment (P)	3.86	.64
6.	Accountability/ Efficiency (P)	3.27	.70	6.	Democratic Governance (P)	3.72	.60
7.5	Research (O)	3.23	.90	7.	Individual Personal Development (O)	3.60	.70
7.5	Intellectual Environment (P)	3.23	.68	8.	Freedom (P)	3.63	.93
9.	Individual Personal Development (O)	2.97	.74	9.	Research (O)	3.61	.78
10.	Meeting Local Needs (O)	2.95	.58	10.	Innovation (P)	3.41	.62
11.	Innovation (P)	2.88	.60	11.	Meeting Local Needs (O)	3.36	.52
12.	Advanced Training (O)	2.85	1.06	12.	Advanced Training (O)	3.20	1.05
13.	Vocational Preparation (O)	2.81	.63	13.5	Public Service (O)	3.20	.73
14.	Public Service (O)	2.75	.65	13.5	Humanism/Altruism (O)	3.20	.80
15.	Social Egalitarianism (O)	2.43	.68	15.	Vocational Preparation (O)	3.17	.70
16.	Humanism/Altruism (O)	2.42	.76	16.	Culture Awareness (O)	3.07	.67
17.	Cultural Awareness (O)	2.41	.60	17.	Social Egalitarianism (O)	2.82	.81
18.	Social Criticism/ Activism (O)	2.39	.64	18.	Social Criticism/ Activism (O)	2.76	.75
19.	Off-Campus Learning (P)	2.09	.51	19.	Off-Campus Learning (P)	2.58	.68
20.	Traditional Religiousness (O)	1.50	.72	20.	Traditional Religiousness	1.77	.97

*Letters in parentheses distinguish outcome (O) from process (P) goals.

In Table 1, the major goal areas are ranked by Is and Should Be means. The findings did not support the traditionally held view that outcome goals are most important; generally, respondents ranked process goals above outcome goals on both existing and preferred dimensions. Five of the seven process goals ranked in the top ten Is listing, and six in the top ten Should Be listing.

All goals were rated on a one-to-five scale. Only three process goals – Community, Democratic Governance and Freedom – were perceived as having high importance (3.50 to 4.49) on the Is dimension. Five outcome goals and one process goal fell into the low importance range (1.50 to 2.49). The other eight outcome goals and three process goals on the Is dimension were perceived as having medium importance (2.50 to 3.49). Only on rating Advanced Training was the standard deviation (SD) above 1.0, indicating a low level of consensus among respondents. Greatest consensus was achieved on rating the importance of Off-Campus Learning, Academic Development, Democratic Governance, and Meeting Local Needs.

The Should Be ratings were considerably higher than the Is ratings on all goals. Presidents and board chairmen perceived that universities should be doing *more* in the future than at present. In a time of fiscal restraint, the strong emphasis upon process goals may indeed enable a university to do more with less. Five process goals and four outcome goals were rated as having high importance (3.50 to 4.49); only one outcome goal, Traditional Religiousness, was regarded as having low importance. A fairly high level of consensus was achieved in rating all Should Be goals, except Advanced Training.

Maintaining a climate of Community on campus was perceived as the single most important goal area, both at present and in the future. Few would dispute the collegiality this goal suggests as a university ideal, but it was somewhat surprising that it rated so highly.

The relative importance of goals remained quite stable according to the Is and Should Be rankings. Three goals moved up by more than two rankings – Intellectual Orientation, Intellectual Environment, and Humanism/Altruism. Conversely, respondents felt that two goals should receive relatively less emphasis in the future than at present, Democratic Governance and Freedom, both process goals.

Presidents and board chairmen also rated ten miscellaneous and ten local Canadian goals (Table 2). The miscellaneous goals were included in the published IGI instrument, but the local Canadian goals were related to current issues drawn from an examination of Canadian university goal statements (McNeal, Konrad and Hodysh, 1981).

Three of the twenty single-item goal statements were perceived as having high importance (3.50 to 4.49), thirteen as medium importance (2.50 to 3.49), and four as low importance (1.50 to 2.49) on the Is dimension. The three that received a high importance rating were Institutional Reputation, Adult/Mature Student Programs, and Institutional Autonomy. All goal statements received higher ratings on the Should Be than on the Is dimension. In the respondents' perceptions, twelve of these goals should achieve high importance in the future, and only one – Intercollegiate Athletics – should have a low rating. Generally, the level of consensus on these goals was lower than on the major goal areas. Seven of the standard deviations exceeded 1.0 on the Is and six on the Should Be dimension.

As with major goal areas, respondents indicated shifts of more than two rankings on several Canadian and miscellaneous goal statements. Relatively less

Table 2
Perceptions of Miscellaneous and Canadian Goals
Ranked by Is and Should Be Means

Is				Should Be			
Rank	Goal	Mean	SD	Rank	Goal	Mean	SD
1.	Institutional Reputation (M) *	3.87	.89	1.	Institutional Reputation (M)	4.40	.69
2.	Adult/Mature Stud. Prog. (C)	3.72	.88	2.	Organizational Planning (M)	4.28	.74
3.	Institutional Autonomy (M)	3.50	.89	3.5	Adult/Mature Stud. Programs (C)	4.06	.76
4.	Accessibility Part-Time (C)	3.46	1.15	3.5	Graduate Literacy (M)	4.06	1.05
5.	Accessibility: Handicapped (C)	3.34	.85	5.	Program Evaluation (M)	4.02	.66
6.	Graduate Literacy (M)	3.33	1.17	6.5	Accessibility: Handicapped (C)	3.98	.64
7.	Organizational Planning (M)	3.20	1.04	6.5	Faculty Development/Evaluation (C)	3.98	.71
8.	Faculty Development/Evaluation (C)	3.06	.83	8.5	Accessibility: Part-Time (C)	3.87	.99
9.	Community Liaison (M)	2.94	.88	8.5	Community Liaison (M)	3.87	.73
10.5	Program Evaluation (M)	2.93	.97	10.	Institutional Autonomy (M)	3.85	.92
10.5	Campus Consensus on Goals (M)	2.93	.97	11.	New Faculty Employment Patterns (C)	3.69	.82
12.	Extracurricular Activities (M)	2.91	.91	12.	Campus Consensus on Goals (M)	3.61	.92
13.	Program Delivery/Remote Areas (C)	2.80	1.23	13.	Community Participation in Planning (M)	3.28	.90
14.	French-Canadian Cultural Programs (C)	2.76	1.15	14.	Extracurricular Activities (M)	3.24	.95
15.	Community Participation in Planning (M)	2.67	.95	15.	French-Canadian Cultural Programs (C)	3.20	1.23
16.	New Faculty Employment	2.52	.77	16.	Development of Ed. Technology (C)	3.17	1.06
17.	Development of Ed. Technology (C)	2.43	.92	17.	Program Delivery/Remote Areas (C)	2.94	1.30
18.	Intercollegiate Athletics (M)	2.42	1.01	18.	Bilingual Instruction (C)	2.48	1.42
19.	Bilingual Instruction (C)	2.04	1.12	19.	Intercollegiate Athletics (M)	2.45	.93
20.	Experiential Learning (C)	2.02	.96	20.	Experiential Learning (C)	2.44	1.06

*Letters in parentheses distinguish miscellaneous (M) from Canadian (C) goals.

importance than at present should be given to Institutional Autonomy, Accessibility: Part-Time, and Program Delivery/Remote Areas; conversely, greater emphasis should be placed upon Organizational Planning, Program Evaluation, and New Faculty Employment Patterns.

In summary, there was a high level of consensus among respondents on the rating of university goals, particularly in the major goal areas. All Should Be

Table 3
Means of University Goals that Reached Statistical Significance (.10)
By Respondents' Position, and Region, Age, and Size of University

Goal	Position	President	Board Chairman
Vocational Preparation (O)**	IS	2.93 ^h *	2.52 ^l
Freedom (P)	IS	3.68 ^h	3.13 ^l
Faculty Development/ Evaluation (c)	SB	3.87 ^l	4.25 ^h

Goal	Region:	West	Ontario	Quebec	Atlantic
Individual/Personal Development (O)	SB	3.38	3.92	3.22 ^l	3.95 ^h
Humanism/Altruism (O)	IS	2.00 ^l	2.75 ^h	2.19	2.65
Cultural Awareness (O)	SB	2.93	3.40 ^h	2.47 ^l	3.20 ^h
Graduate Literacy (M)	IS	3.00	3.67	2.50 ^l	3.80 ^h
Extracurricular Activities (M)	IS	2.50 ^l	2.73	3.25	3.33 ^h
Program Evaluation (M)	SB	4.19 ^h	4.13 ^h	4.25 ^h	3.60 ^l
Program Delivery/Remote Areas (C)	SB	3.75 ^h	2.73 ^l	2.25 ^l	2.67 ^l
Accessibility:Part-time (C)	SB	4.31 ^l	3.93	4.13	3.20 ^l
Adult/Mature	IS	4.25 ^h	3.80	3.25 ^l	3.33
Student Programs (C)	SB	4.44 ^h	4.13	3.38 ^l	3.93
Accessibility: Handicapped (C)	SB	4.33 ^h	3.67 ^l	4.00	3.93

Goal	Age:	Before 1900	1900-1929	1930-59	Since 1960
Innovation (P)	IS	2.73 ^l	2.68 ^l	2.65 ^l	3.20 ^h
Accountability/Efficiency (P)	SB	3.53 ^l	3.51 ^l	3.83	4.21 ^h
Organizational Planning (M)	SB	4.17 ^h	4.14 ^h	3.93 ^l	4.15 ^h
Community Participation (M)	SB	3.33	2.57 ^l	3.60 ^h	3.25
Adult/Mature	IS	3.58 ^l	3.43	3.40 ^l	4.15 ^h
Student Programs (C)	SB	3.92	4.00	3.67 ^l	4.45 ^h
Faculty Development & Evaluation	SB	4.17	3.71	3.60 ^l	4.25

Goal	Size:	Under 4,000	4,000 - 11,999	12,000+
Individual/Personal Development (O)	IS	3.21 ^h	2.84 ^l	2.61 ^l
Cultural Awareness (O)	IS	2.59 ^h	2.35	2.07 ^l
Vocational Preparation (O)	IS	2.57	2.98	3.11 ^h
Advanced Training (O)	IS	2.22 ^l	3.21	3.80 ^h
Research (O)	SB	2.64 ^l	3.50	4.07 ^h
Innovation (P)	IS	2.85 ^l	3.44	3.82 ^h
Extracurricular Activities (M)	SB	3.33 ^l	3.65	4.20 ^h
French-Canadian Culture (C)	IS	3.58 ^h	3.15 ^l	3.43
French-Canadian Culture (C)	SB	3.46 ^h	2.76	3.45
French-Canadian Culture (C)	IS	2.69 ^l	2.29 ^l	3.64 ^h
French-Canadian Culture (C)	SB	3.23	2.65 ^l	4.00 ^h

** Letters in parentheses identify outcome (O), process (P), miscellaneous (M), and Canadian (C) goals.

* Lower case letters identify the high (h) means from the low (l) means in the statistical comparison on that item.

ratings were higher than Is ratings, indicating that presidents and chairmen felt that universities should give higher priority to all goals than at present. A greater emphasis was placed upon process goals than on the traditional outcome goals of universities, although several interesting shifts in priority among goals were observed.

A relatively stronger emphasis upon an Intellectual Orientation, Intellectual Environment and Humanism/Altruism, together with a lesser emphasis upon Accessibility: Part-Time and Program Delivery/Remote Areas may suggest a return to established traditions in higher education or simply a response to fiscal constraints. Coupled with an increased emphasis upon Organizational Planning, Program Evaluation and New Faculty Employment Patterns, the latter interpretation seems more plausible. The decreased importance given to democratic governance and freedom also suggests a response to constraints in institutional management. External pressures on universities may account for the major shifts in perceived importance of existing and preferred goals in Canadian universities.

Goal Divergence

Goal perceptions were examined to determine the degree of divergence that was related to the respondents' position, or the region, age and size of the university. Only the goal statements on which differences of means reached statistical significance at the .10 level are presented in Table 3.

Respondent position. Generally, the goal perceptions of presidents and board chairmen were very similar. On only three of the forty goals were the differences statistically significant. Presidents rated Vocational Preparation and Freedom higher than did board chairmen on the Is dimension, while board chairmen rated Faculty Development/Evaluation higher on the Should Be dimension.

Geographical region. Do university goals differ across the major geographical regions of Canada?

Although eleven of the comparisons reached statistical significance, no clear distinctions could be made on regional bases in the perception of importance of outcome, process or miscellaneous goals. In rating local Canadian goals, respondents in the West differed from respondents in other parts of Canada on one Is and four Should Be statements. Respondents in the West were more concerned than others with increasing access to higher education — in remote areas, and for part-time, adult/mature, and handicapped persons.

University age. How do perceptions of university goals differ by the age of the university?

None of the observed differences in perceptions of outcome goals were statistically significant. The other seven comparisons that reached statistical significance did not provide a strong basis for differentiating among goals on the basis of institutional age. There was some evidence to suggest that institutions established since 1960 tend to be more concerned than older institutions with such goals as Innovation, Accountability/Efficiency, Adult/Mature Student Programs, and Faculty Development and Evaluation. Overall, however, goal perceptions did not vary much by institutional age.

University size. Finally, goal perceptions were examined by university size. Respondents' perceptions differed significantly on eleven comparisons, seven on outcome goals.

The analysis lends support to the commonly held view that small institutions give more attention to the individual student than do large ones. Respondents at small institutions also rated Cultural awareness higher than they did at large institutions. Conversely, Vocational Preparation, Advanced Training, and Research were rated more highly in the large institutions than in the small ones. Among the single-item goal statements, Extracurricular Activities received a higher Should Be rating at small universities than at medium size universities; and French-Canadian Culture was rated highest on both dimensions at the large universities.

Goal divergence was not very great among respondents in this study. To be sure, a large response rate among board chairmen, and the participation of respondents from other constituency groups, may have resulted in different findings. Neither the position of the respondents nor the age of the university had much influence upon the perception of goal importance. Regional differences were found on a few local Canadian goals, and size differentiated somewhat on the perception of outcome goals. What was surprising was not that some differences were found, but that so few differences existed.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to provide an overview of Canadian university goals as perceived by presidents and board chairmen. An intriguing profile of Canadian university goals has emerged.

1. The traditional outcome goals of a university were not rated highly in this study. Generally, process goals were perceived more highly than outcome goals on both existing and preferred dimensions.
2. When all goals were combined, the top-ranked goal was Institutional Reputation, followed closely by Community. Presidents and board chairmen appeared most concerned with how universities were perceived in society. Clearly, the public view of universities directly affects governmental policies on universities. The high emphasis upon community or collegiality within the university suggests a strong concern for institutional functioning.
3. When only outcome goals were considered, the order of emphasis was first upon teaching-related goals, then on research, and finally upon public service.
4. In the perception of university presidents and board chairmen, Canadian universities should place greater importance on all goal areas than at present. How this can be achieved in a time of fiscal constraints may be suggested in the increased emphasis proposed for such goals as Accountability/Efficiency, Organizational Planning, Program Evaluation, Faculty Evaluation, and New Faculty Employment Patterns. The greatest changes in university goals proposed by respondents were in areas related to university management.
5. There was a great deal of consensus among respondents regarding the importance of Canadian university goals. Only very few differences in goal percep-

tions among respondents were related to their position, or to the region, age, and size of the university.

This overview of Canadian university goals provides a basis for developing a better understanding of Canadian universities. They resemble each other a lot, although a few differences attributed to region and size were observed. A list of goal priorities can serve as a basis for evaluation and planning, activities that can enhance the functioning of universities.

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