



UNIVERSITY OF
ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT TO COLLEGIUM

SEPTEMBER 20, 2017

My first year (2015/16) was mainly focussed on building a foundation—through a series of key hires, the rebuilding of a financial management system, and a detailed analysis of our endowment funding.

My second year (2016/17) has been focussed on reanimating and reinvesting in undergraduate student life. While much of the energy and vision for this over the past 12 months has been provided by Principal and Vice President Randy Boyagoda, I have also benefitted from the work of many senior colleagues, Collegium members and alumni in advancing this tremendously important objective.

NEW TEACHERS

You are already familiar with the big news under this heading. By hiring 6 new professors and 2 post docs, we have finally addressed a major and serious criticism, namely that we had ceased to invest in our sponsored academic programs, depending entirely on an ever-changing array of sessional instructors.

Randy's vision was supported by the hard work of Effie and Kathryn and their respective teams, who secured the funding for an initial three-year term and are now building the basis for long term, sustainable support. As we share this story, we are now beginning to see a typically positive and generous response from our wonderful alumni, who are coming forward to support this initiative.

THE GILSON SEMINAR

Randy has also completely reimagined our first year seminar program. Places in our new Gilson Seminar on Faith and Ideas were the hardest to secure of any of the University of Toronto's foundational programs for first-year students. This is a major improvement over where we were just a year ago. That the Gilson Seminar's second semester features a program in Rome added to the excitement.

We also thought it appropriate to teach these impressive scholars in the single most attractive classroom on campus, a place well known to Etienne Gilson himself: the Shook Common Room at 59 Queen's Park Crescent.

RENEWING BRENNAN HALL

Our focus on student life also includes an impressive project, planned and launched in the past year, to move the Registrar's Office out of its current user-unfriendly space in Alumni Hall to a brand new facility housed in Brennan Hall. This will enable us to modernize and improve our student services, and will have the added benefit of bringing much more student traffic through Brennan Hall and the Coop. Here again, Effie and her team are central to making things happen, while Kathryn and her team have built this project into our fund raising campaign. For his part, newly installed Registrar Giancarlo Mazzanti has immediately stepped up to lead his portion of this important project.

REIMAGINING STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Dean of Students Duane Rendle joined me and Oriana Bertucci (now Director of Student Life) in the difficult job of investigating evidence of wrong-doing by some of our student leaders in a pattern that goes back a decade or more. I believe that we have now consigned to history a culture that was the antithesis of good government.

Our response has been multi-faceted, positive and focussed on a much better future for student societies on campus.. There will be new SMCSU elections in the fall. Importantly, these will take place in the context of new guidelines for student leaders, something that will offer a far more positive vision of student government. Administration oversight of the transfer of funds to SMCSU will continue, and new resources have been added to a student life portfolio under Oriana's leadership.

CONNECTING WITH OUR STUDENT DONS

I have made the reform and renewal of student leadership culture a personal priority. Among other things, I personally interviewed all of the candidates seeking to serve as residence and commuter dons, explaining that their work overseeing residence floors or otherwise assisting our student body is a direct extension of my own work as President. I ended each interview with the invitation to continue our conversation in the year ahead, something I will follow up on.

A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

While Bursar Effie Slapnicar has made important contributions to our student life initiatives, she and her team have been moving quickly to introduce a new deeper and much more profound culture of accountability across campus. At the macro level, this involves balancing the budget and meeting our commitments. At the micro level, this involves careful work, division by division, to ensure that we are all living up to the highest standards of probity, accountability and value for money. Among other things, we have introduced new guidelines relating to travel and hospitality expenditures.

We are determined to enhance our capacity to act as truly responsible investors of College funds. While recognizing the need to achieve adequate returns on the funds which have been entrusted to us, we have begun a program of shareholder engagement in order to take steps to align our investment activities with our values. In this, we are benefiting significantly from the support of our advisers at the Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE).

ENHANCED SECURITY

We have also continued our efforts to enhance campus security, including the introduction of new video intercom systems and more cameras around campus.

MORE TARGETED FUND RAISING

Under the leadership of Kathryn Elton, fundraising totals were up significantly in the past year (\$3.9 million cash in last year vs. \$2.2 million cash in the year before). Major gift pledges are gratifying (5 new pledges worth \$100k or more) and our prospect list is growing. Kathryn and I conduct regular outcalls, and my strong sense, borne out by recent results, is that our story of renewal and growth offers a compelling rationale for alumni support. We are also aided enormously by the strong support of the Department of University Advancement at the U of T. I am tremendously grateful to Kathryn for her efforts in keeping that important relationship front and centre.

You can expect to see Kathryn focussing our fundraising priorities under two clear themes: investing in exceptional teaching, and investing in an exceptional student experience.

ALUMNI INVOLVEMENT

Over the year we had close to 5000 alumni visits to campus through the course of more than 50 events. What I found particularly noteworthy is that these events also attracted large numbers of students. Seeing both communities, mingling at events like the Ross Douthat lecture or the Salman Rushdie reading (highlights of a very successful new College speakers' program) offered deeply satisfying glimpses of what we are at our very best.

WELCOME SHEPTYTSKY

We were offered a similarly compelling vision of what we can be at our best when we welcomed some 400 guests to celebrate the arrival of the Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies into our midst. It is gratifying to have such distinguished scholars on campus—and to have added their impressive library to the collection at Kelly.

PREPARING FOR ATS

We are already working closely with Dean Ginther to prepare for the visit, early next spring, of a team from the ATS (Association of Theological Schools) who will be checking on our progress to meet the criteria necessary for accreditation. Among other things, the ATS team will be focussing on progress to increase enrolment and reduce any deficit. To that end, we are

thinking carefully about the Faculty's business plan and the underlying financial assumptions that support it. ATS has confirmed that they welcome and encourage pre-visit preparation along these lines.

CONSERVATION AT KELLY

We continue to make significant investments in the Kelly Library. Last year saw us open a new Conservation Studio, something that will be of real benefit to the library itself, while offering a wonderful teaching opportunity for students in our Book and Media Studies program.

UPDATING OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH PIMS

We are working closely with colleagues at PIMS to update our relationship under two headings. We are examining the nature and extent of our academic collaboration with a view to finding new possibilities for working together. We are also reviewing the nature and extent of our support to PIMS (which includes the provision of office and library space, plus administrative services), with a view to ensuring that this is closely related to the nature and extent of our academic cooperation.

TELLING OUR STORY

The past year saw us make further progress in telling our story, as we develop, for the first time, a professional communications capability. The most important element of this work plan last year was the renewal of our website, transforming it from being a rather uninspiring repository for a mountain of unread material to being a vehicle for serving and engaging students, alumni and our faculty and staff. Creating it has involved a long and careful process of consultation. We expect to unveil the new site in the next few weeks.

In the course of redesigning the site, we also decided to reintroduce our historic crest, simplifying it and updating it slightly for modern use. You can see the new crest atop my report.

We have also coordinated and improved our social media outreach, updated our stock of photos and images and are creating a collection of videos capturing key events. These in turn are used to good effect by Kathryn and her team at fundraising and alumni-outreach events.

RETURNING TO THE ROOTS OF CONTINUING EDUCATION

Last year saw us conduct a review of our Continuing Education program. In response to this, we have launched work to determine whether we can reconnect with the original mission of the program, which was focussed on lay formation.

ST. MIKE'S RETURNS TO RECRUITING

We are also reanimating the office of Registrar under new leadership, a project that will see us focus even more intently on services to our students, and to return, after a lengthy absence, to the important task of student recruitment.

MY PRIORITIES FOR THE REMAINING MONTHS OF MY TERM ARE CLEAR:

I want to consolidate and nurture important changes and new approaches made in the last two years.

I want to ensure that we are, all of us, across the university, embracing a culture of accountability, probity and transparency in the management of funds.

I want to oversee a more strategic fund-raising campaign focussed on raising money for our investment in teaching and student experience.

But, most of all, I want to ensure that we live up to the commitment I made to the class of '21 at our Invocation ceremony in Convocation Hall just a few weeks ago. I promised these incoming students that, in addition to providing things like a first class education and inclusion in a welcoming community, St. Mike's will offer something that is at the heart of our mission as a Catholic university. I described this as an invitation to a four-year conversation about what it is to be a human being fully alive.

David Mulroney
President & Vice-Chancellor
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