The University of Otago has grown rapidly in recent decades. The expanding student roll is only one factor putting pressure on our physical facilities. Traditional lecture rooms do not meet all the requirements for modern approaches to teaching and learning, which involve much small-group teaching, informal learning, and use of advanced technologies. Otago is also New Zealand's most research-intensive university, and one of the two largest research institutions in the country. There is a continual need to provide more laboratories and other research space, so that vital work (often funded by external bodies) can be carried out.

The University has substantially increased its capital expenditure over the last five years, following adoption of a Critical Space Plan. During 2008 we decided to embark on a major planning exercise, to produce a Campus Master Plan which can guide the development of our campuses over the next 20 or 25 years. The last comprehensive plan of this kind was completed in 1980.

The international consulting firm (DEGW) that was commissioned to lead this process brought extensive experience of campus planning and design in many parts of the world. Their experts worked in conjunction with other firms specialising in matters such as sustainability and pedestrian movement. They were also assisted by a Dunedin architect, Mr Tim Heath.

The consultants went about their task with exemplary thoroughness. Not only did they examine every building on our campuses in Dunedin, Christchurch and Wellington, but they also sought to understand the aspirations and goals of the University and its constituent parts. Using surveys and focus groups, they obtained the views of students and staff about the campuses as they are today, and about their vision for the future. The consultants met with many interested parties outside the University, including the Dunedin City Council, Otago Regional Council, Otago Polytechnic, and District Health Boards in Christchurch and Wellington.

For well over a year, many of us at the University met regularly with the planning consultants, as they canvassed various options and scenarios. It has been a time-consuming but fascinating process. The exercise has produced numerous documents, while this report provides the distillation of the consultants' recommendations.

I hope that others will be as excited as I am by the vision that is set out. The consultants have invited us not to "make do" with run-of-the-mill facilities, but rather to create world-class campuses which will enhance the experience of students and staff, as well as benefiting the communities in which we are placed.

I would like to thank all of the consultants, especially Chris Alcock (Sydney) and Steven Smith (London). I am also grateful to my colleagues within the University who have put time and effort into this exercise. Special thanks are due to John Patrick and the staff in our Property Services Division, including Barry MacKay, Sue Larkins, and Chris Doudney.

An important point needs to be made. This report does not yet represent University policy. The consultants listened to those of us who challenged particular recommendations, but we made it clear that we wanted their own expert opinion. I hope the report will now be discussed extensively, not only within the University but also by other interested bodies and the wider public. Realistically, it would not be feasible for the present University Council or its executive to "sign up" to an entire plan which would involve the expenditure of well over a billion dollars over 20 years or more.

This plan provides a vision that should inform and inspire all who are involved in making decisions about capital investments in the years ahead. Anyone who thinks that the plan is unachievable should reflect on the ambition of the early Scottish settlers who founded the University of Otago. They started to build the grand blue-stone buildings on the banks of the Water of Leith only 30 years after the John Wickliffe and the Philip Laing berthed at Port Chalmers.

David Skegg
Vice-Chancellor