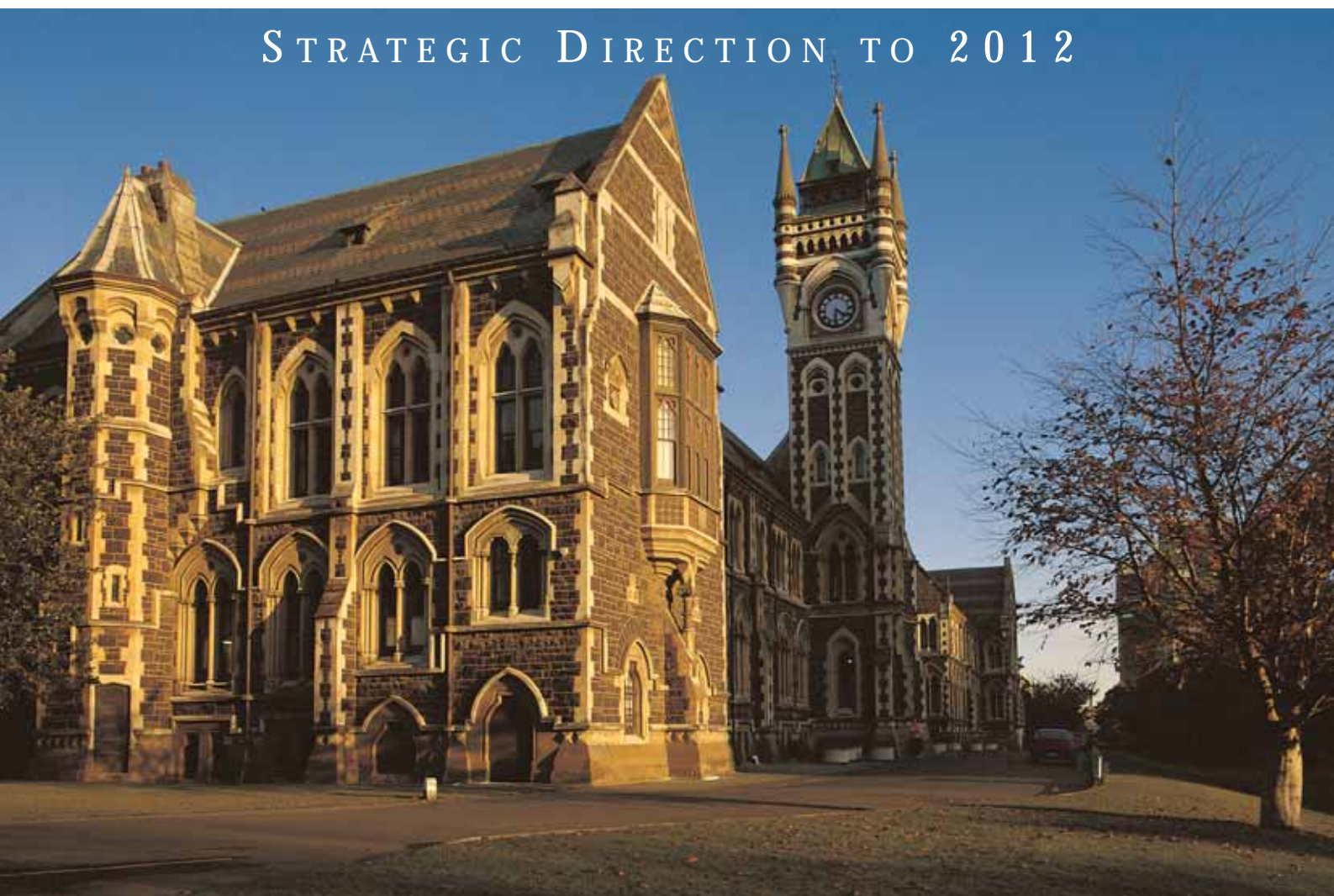


UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

STRATEGIC DIRECTION TO 2012



APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL  
MARCH 2006

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION TO 2012

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This document presents the current strategy of the University and identifies key challenges it is expected to face through to 2012. Universities operate in a rapidly changing environment, so it would be naive to specify in any detail what the University of Otago will be like in 2012. Nevertheless, the University has the opportunity to make choices that will help to forge its future direction and character.

The main purpose of *Strategic Direction to 2012* is to support the vision and mission of the University, as outlined below and in the University Charter, by advancing Otago as a research-led University. Developed with substantial input from the University community and other interested parties, the document is designed so that it can be used as a framework by units of the University in their own strategic and operational planning.

Key actions being taken centrally to develop the University and to monitor progress will be contained in an annually-updated *Strategic Direction to 2012 Action Plan*.

## 2 VISION AND MISSION

The University's previous statement of strategic intent, *Strategic Direction to 2005*, was prepared in 1999. Since then, there have been significant changes within the University and in the wider environment in which it operates.

The first responses to these changes were embodied in the University Charter. The present Charter was finalised in December 2003 and will remain current until the end of 2010.

The University revised both its vision and mission statements in preparing the new Charter to give greater emphasis to research. The new Charter also emphasises more clearly the special character of Otago and this is an approach that will be continued.

Together with the other key elements of the Charter<sup>1</sup>, the vision and mission statements provide a basis for the development of the University's strategy. They are as follows:

### VISION

A research-led University with an international reputation for excellence.

### MISSION

The University of Otago will advance, preserve and promote knowledge, critical thinking and intellectual independence to enhance the understanding, development and well-being of individuals and society. It will achieve this by building on foundations of broad research and teaching capabilities, unique campus learning environments, its nationwide presence and mana, and international links.

## 3 STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES: AN OVERVIEW

The following six strategic imperatives have been identified by the University:

- Achieving Research Excellence
- Achieving Excellence in Research-Informed Teaching
- Ensuring Outstanding Campus Environments and Student Experience
- Contributing to the National Good and to International Progress
- Strengthening External Engagement
- Building and Sustaining Capability

While there is, inevitably, some overlap between the imperatives, each addresses a critical issue or area from a particular perspective which is regarded as vital to the future of the University. The observations that led to the selection of each imperative and the proposed response to the imperative appear on the following pages.

<sup>1</sup> Particularly the University's Statement of Special Character and identified Core Values.

**OBSERVATION:**

Otago is one of New Zealand's largest research organisations and it is the most research-intensive university in the country<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, a lower than expected overall ranking in the first PBRF round, together with failure to be selected to host any of the first national Centres of Research Excellence, showed there are no grounds for complacency about research performance. If our mission statement is to be taken seriously, the research performance of the University needs to be improved significantly.

**RESPONSE:**

Otago will take decisive steps to strengthen its research culture and ethos, and to maintain and develop its national and international research profile.

The University will seek to attract and retain high-quality, research-active academic staff (including full-time researchers) from within and beyond New Zealand, and provide support and encouragement to such staff. It will also provide an attractive, supportive environment for research students and aim to increase the number of such students enrolling at Otago.

Existing areas of research strength will provide a foundation for promoting research excellence, and these will be nurtured and supported. In areas of academic endeavour where research is not strong, decisions will be made either to invest in improving research performance or to reduce our involvement or withdraw from the area. Attention will be given to both pure and applied research, and comparisons of departmental performance across PBRF rounds will assist analysis of research performance and potential.

Additional funds secured through the PBRF, the Partnerships for Excellence programme, and other sources will be deployed to support increased research performance. Joint research programmes with other universities and research organisations, both within and beyond New Zealand, will also be fostered.

High-quality research infrastructure, including an enhanced e-research capability as well as physical facilities and equipment, will underpin the enhancement of research performance.

**OBSERVATION:**

Given its vision, mission and core values, the University needs to favour teaching developments that involve a strong research-teaching synergy and ensure that teaching quality is enhanced, not weakened, by the response to the imperative above.

**RESPONSE:**

Otago will ensure that the research-teaching link that distinguishes research-led universities from other tertiary providers is nurtured and enhanced at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Innovative approaches will be used in the delivery of research-informed teaching<sup>3</sup>. National leadership in this will be achieved by fostering research-active academic staff within an institution that also supports their development and excellence in teaching.

The University will seek to maintain (or increase at a manageable rate) the student roll, recruiting a higher proportion of 'top calibre' entrants and a higher proportion of postgraduate students, especially research students. There will be a continued commitment to distance learning, especially at the postgraduate level in areas where we have special expertise.

Otago will continue to maintain a balanced approach to the internationalisation of learning through the incorporation of international perspectives in the curriculum, clear quotas and targets in respect of international student numbers, and an emphasis on international student exchange.

High-quality facilities and support services, as well as the ongoing development of e-learning capabilities, will also be required to ensure teaching excellence.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Research, Science and Technology report (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Research-informed teaching encompasses teaching undertaken for the most part by active researchers, which is closely informed by current research knowledge and scholarship.

**IMPERATIVE****ENSURING OUTSTANDING CAMPUS ENVIRONMENTS  
AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE****OBSERVATION:**

Otago is nationally known, and generally renowned for its exceptional campus environment and student experience, centred on Dunedin, and also for its specialist facilities in Christchurch, Wellington, and Auckland<sup>4</sup>.

In recent years these campus environments have come under pressure from rapid growth.

Current national demographic trends and changes to the international student market suggest that enrolments are unlikely to grow at anything like the previous rate over the next seven years. At the same time, competition for students will intensify.

**RESPONSE:**

The quality of our campus environment and student experience will be nurtured and where necessary enhanced, both in Dunedin and elsewhere, to ensure that the University maintains its attractiveness to students, their parents, and future employers, and that it provides an appropriate high-quality environment for staff.

Investment is needed to ensure that our campus facilities, including grounds, buildings, equipment and information technology infrastructure, are world-class at all of our sites.

The University will work particularly hard to foster an appropriate social and cultural environment. Residential Colleges and Halls, the provision of first-rate student support services, and partnership with the Otago University Students' Association, the Dunedin City Council and other local bodies will all be crucial for success in this area.

The physical and cultural environment at each campus site will have to develop to meet changing student and staff expectations and the needs of a changing student and staff mix.

The special Otago learning experience, in which students develop through their wider student life as well as their studies, will be reflected in the qualities of graduates who are known for an intellectual and personal independence and maturity. These qualities will set Otago graduates apart from those who have studied elsewhere in the minds of both employers and the wider community.

**IMPERATIVE****CONTRIBUTING TO THE NATIONAL GOOD AND TO  
INTERNATIONAL PROGRESS****OBSERVATION:**

New Zealand is in the midst of major demographic, social and economic changes which, over the course of the next few decades, will transform the country. Key elements underlying these changes include the deployment of research (often with a collaborative and/or applied focus) in the development of New Zealand, the growing size and voice of the Māori people, the increasing size and aspirations of the Pacific community, greater global connectivity, and the rise of Asia and the Pacific rim in the world.

**RESPONSE:**

Otago will embrace a role that includes contributing to the regional and national good, being active in national debate about the future direction of the country, and being fully engaged internationally.

Resources will be deployed to encourage research that supports regional and national development,<sup>5</sup> or the needs of the developing world. Distance teaching in fields where the University has specialist knowledge and expertise will help sustain and enhance Otago's national and international role.

Building on the present relationship with Ngāi Tahu, the University will extend its partnership with Māori. This partnership will include collaboration in research, as well as efforts to increase the recruitment, retention and achievement of Māori students.

Otago will strengthen its links with Pacific communities both within New Zealand and in the Pacific region. It will take steps to increase the recruitment, retention and achievement of Pacific students, and to support the development of higher education in the Pacific.

The University will undertake a wide range of community service activities, embrace its role as a critic and conscience of society, and act in an ethically, socially, and environmentally responsible manner.

<sup>4</sup>The proposed merger with the Dunedin College of Education would extend the size of the Dunedin campus, and add further facilities in Invercargill and Central Otago.

<sup>5</sup>Including social and cultural as well as economic development.

**OBSERVATION:**

While the location of Otago's main campus in Dunedin confers outstanding advantages, it also separates much of the University geographically from the major centres of population and political and economic decision-making. Otago is therefore likely to have to work hard to engage effectively with national bodies.

**RESPONSE:**

The University will place a particular emphasis on building relationships with the country's political, business, professional and community leaders. It will also seek appropriate representation on key national educational and research bodies.

The University will raise awareness of its capabilities in research and of the unique and positive benefits of the Otago student experience. Through improved interaction with national bodies it will become better connected, more responsive to emerging national opportunities and priorities, and more active in influencing the shape of those opportunities and priorities.

A key element of the better-connected University will be an enhanced entrepreneurial spirit. This will see the University become engaged with a greater number and variety of partners, particularly in applied research and commercialisation. Collaborative partnerships and other arrangements that assist in the application of research will continue to be pursued.

Although the main focus of this imperative is national, it will also encompass regional and international dimensions.

**OBSERVATION:**

To achieve its goals, the University must secure sufficient resources and use those resources effectively and efficiently.

Given that staff are our most important asset, resources in this context include academic and general staff as well as physical and financial assets. The important role that academic departments and other units play in sustaining Otago's capability as a vital and collegial University is also acknowledged.

Effectiveness and efficiency depend on ensuring that the University does not burden itself with excessive bureaucracy, so that academics are able to devote their time to the core academic activities of research and teaching. A further characteristic of successful research-led universities is a participative and consultative approach to decision-making.

**RESPONSE:**

Otago will seek and advocate for adequate funding, and maintain a diversified funding base that provides protection from fluctuations or declines in particular areas of activity. It will invest in the staff and the physical and information technology resources required to achieve excellence.

Entrepreneurial and enterprise-based activities of the University, including the successful commercialisation of intellectual property, will assist in diversifying the funding base and in providing additional resources for investment in research and teaching.

Internal structures and processes will be scrutinised. Those that are excessively bureaucratic or that do not support the University's goals will be eliminated or modified. There will be similar vigilance about external obligations placed on the University by Government or professional bodies.

Care will be taken to sustain the University as a vibrant and diverse community, with members who are engaged in their own academic and professional callings, but who also have an effective voice within the wider organisation and are supportive of its development and broader goals.



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