

Partnerships proposal announced

A message from
Dr. Kenneth Ozmon,
 President of
 Saint Mary's
 University



After announcing the Partnerships proposal, at a joint news conference held on February 17, 1995, the four university and college presidents take a last look at the document they outlined. From left to right: Dr. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston, President, Mount Saint Vincent University, Rev. Edward Aitken, President, Atlantic School of Theology, Dr. Kenneth Ozmon, President, Saint Mary's University and Alice Mansell, President, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. Photo courtesy of Kerry Doubleday, Photographer, The Halifax Herald Limited.

I am pleased to announce that thanks to the joint efforts of Saint Mary's University, Mount Saint Vincent University, the Atlantic School of Theology and the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, a Partnerships proposal has been presented as a recommendation to save money, improve services, generate new sources of revenue and meet the needs of students interested in higher education in the province. This proposal is based on "The New Beginnings" document that I submitted to the metro universities presidents in November, 1994. It is a call for joint and shared systems that will allow each institution to remain unique.

On Friday, February 17, 1995, all four partner presidents made the announcement at a joint news conference held at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design. This Partnerships proposal is in direct response to the Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education's "Green Paper," a discussion paper on ways to rationalize higher education in Nova Scotia.

I feel strongly that this is the best option for the province. It is a proposal based on a willingness to streamline services, improve cost efficiency and service to students, and most importantly move higher education into a viable future.

What fellow partner presidents say:

"We know that to ignore the past is to be doomed to repeat it. The successes of the past are those in which the partners have voluntarily participated and in which each is considered and treated as an equal. Any other model suggested for Nova Scotia does not provide the framework of respect for one another, or for our rich academic past ...," says Rev. Edward Aitken, President, Atlantic School of Theology.

The bottom line is that this system will save money, improve efficiency, be more productive and more accessible for our almost 12,000 students from all four

partner institutions.

"This partnership is the first step to establish and make visible our mutual commitment to the three goals set forth in the Green Paper. We firmly believe that quality, mission and savings will be achieved and the end result will be a more streamlined,

cost efficient, student and community-focused partnership for Nova Scotia," says Alice Mansell, President, Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

"The future of this province demands that we choose the right solution — one which

is sustainable, adaptable and capable of taking us into the future with vision and purpose. Nova Scotia's universities, our students, staff and faculty are among the province's most valuable assets. Built on today's organizational model of strategic alliances, decentralization and accountability, our Partnerships model will enable us to enrich these assets for the future benefit of all Nova Scotians," says Dr. Elizabeth Parr-Johnston, President, Mount Saint Vincent University.

In conclusion:

It seems to me that over the last five and a half years we have spent too much time beating each other up. Now, we can begin to help each other up by working towards a common goal — improving the system of higher education in the province.

I firmly believe that this Partnerships proposal will save money, provide us with new revenues, and be a winning solution for everyone and most importantly for the students. Visitors from other university systems around the world, most recently other Commonwealth countries, were impressed by the level of co-ordination and co-operation they found in Nova Scotia. Universities and colleges are unique. Each has its own mission and cultural identity, and therein lies the strength of Nova Scotia's higher education system. We are merely proposing to build on this strength and take a bold step into the future.

This Partnerships proposal is not limited to metro Halifax. Other discussions with universities and colleges province-wide could see many more partners join this initiative. The University College of Cape Breton has already given initial support to this idea.

With the rationalization process currently underway change is inevitable. But with the universities and colleges directly involved in that process, we have a say in our future direction.

I sincerely welcome your comments. ♡

Here is what we are proposing:

- Common course numbering, scheduling and grading systems across our institutions will allow for maximum use of classrooms and labs. It will also allow for greater movement by students among various institutions.
- Shared management systems, such as student information and financial information systems, will generate savings, improve service to students and provide better accountability.
- A common application and registration system would be more user-friendly for many students while permitting different acceptance criteria for individual institutions. This would also be much more cost efficient.
- More shared and joint academic programs will make for better and more effective use of our academic resources while reducing costs. Drawing on our collective resources, we will be able to minimize duplication and enhance the quality and variety of programs. We also have the chance to raise new revenues.
- Co-ordination of services such as food services could be included with a transferable debit card used by students, faculty and staff, at all partner institutions.
- Co-operation in student placement and career counseling would provide for better services and resources to students while saving money.
- Co-ordinated management and marketing of the universities' conference facilities could result in better use of physical plants, enhanced revenues and lower costs.
- Joint promotion of our universities to international markets will achieve better results at lower cost.

Voicing

Our Strength



Ellen Farrell

Ellen Farrell, an active alumna, who graduated with a Master of Business Administration in 1988

"A lot was right in our education," she says. Farrell, who has gone on to teach Business Administration at Mount Saint Vincent and Saint Mary's, explained to the Council that the services offered at Saint Mary's for the students was and is excellent.

"At one institution all class work is translated by sign language. Writing skills can't be developed in huge classes that don't take the time. At Saint Mary's we (as students) would always talk to our professors. I speak for thousands of alumni, we want co-operation that would help us retain the differences of our universities."



Bernadine Halliday

Bernadine Halliday, Secretary, Economics Department and Treasurer of the Staff Union

"Many employees are finding this a stressful period," she says. "The Council's report didn't mention staff concerns. We represent over 150 employees with combined service of 1,135 years; the average being eight years. At Saint Mary's there has been mutual growth and concern for employees, students and the community. The University seems to understand the concerns of our members... however, the uncertainty surrounding rationalization makes it difficult for the University to make any promises. Saint Mary's is a good place to work," Halliday stressed.



Dr. Pat Connelly

Dr. Pat Connelly, Sociology Department and Co-ordinator of the International Development Studies Program (IDS)

Dr. Connelly, told the Council about the positive benefits with having joint programs, such as the IDS program and she also outlined a university for the year 2000.

"It must be flexible, in order to respond quickly to a rapidly changing society, it must have good teaching and research, it must be financially sound and not require huge government grants, it must be reasonably priced for students..., sensitive to the needs of women, the disabled and other minorities, it must reach out to the wider commu-



Barry Abbot

nity, relate to the private sector and connect internationally, must have a flat organizational structure with few administrators, must use physical resources to full capacity.... Saint Mary's is the university of the future."

Barry Abbot, Rehab Counsellor at the Atlantic Centre of Support for Disabled Students

(Bachelor of Arts, 1978)

"As a person who has experienced Saint Mary's and a disability I received a very warm reception. What makes an institution makes the people. The Green Paper mentioned accessibility, but there was no mention to people with disabilities," he says. "Our faculty are super and Saint Mary's has done that by making an effort. In the spirit of co-operation it shows what can be done."

Dr. Harvey Millar, F. Management Science founder of the Africa Education Project

"With amalgamation point in time when it inefficient. Small all flexible and live in our would be an exercise in management," he says. the merger of all met into one.

"It should be surffittest and it ought to a free economic system Dr. Millar would like free market system in universities.

From professors and secretaries to students and alumni more than 30 people presented reasons why Saint Mary's University is part of the solution to better Nova Scotia's higher education system. Overwhelmingly, the majority supported Dr. Kenneth Ozmon, President, Saint Mary's, proposal for shared programs and joint services.

Here is what a few said to the Critical Choices: Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education Forum on February 10, 1995.



Dr. Harvey Millar



Donald MacKinnon



Dr. Harold McGee

*Finance and
ce and Co-
can Canadian*

ation there is a
it becomes
allows us to be
our means. This
se in chaos
ays, referring to
metro universities

urvival of the
to be operated in
stem," he says.
ke to see a more
in place for the

*Donald MacKinnon, Vice-President,
Sales and Marketing, Farmers
Co-operative Dairy Limited,
(Bachelor of Commerce degree 1967)*

"I have always felt that Saint Mary's created a special bond with their students, the culture, environment and learning..., and this is the reason why we have in our employment a large number of Saint Mary's graduates and at least four in senior management positions."

"Saint Mary's attention to the bottom line and to its clients is held in high regard in the Nova Scotia business community. They have operated debt free and should be

held up as an example for the Nova Scotia economy. Co-operation among the university community in metro Halifax is the best way to become cost effective. I work in a very competitive industry and cannot help but feel that competition creates the necessity to be cost effective, and offers quality education to potential university clients."

Boris Mirtchev, President, Saint Mary's Student Association

"Students at Saint Mary's are keenly aware of the fiscal constraints faced by both federal and provincial governments. From the beginning this university has strived to take an active educational

role in the community. This interaction with the community continues today in the strong links established between the Halifax business community, the Frank H. Sobey Faculty of Commerce and in the extension and mature and part-time student programs. It is this community-minded spirit that is alive in the International Education Centre and the Atlantic Canada Studies Centre. As students and as customers looking for the "Best buy for our buck," we endorse Dr. Ozmon's call for more co-operation and co-ordination between Metro

universities in the name of cost-efficiency and elimination of duplication, however, we feel that dialogue must be meaningful and followed by action within a limited time frame."

*Dr. Harold McGee,
Anthropology Department*

Dr. McGee told the Council that the solution of maintaining autonomous institutions was good for the province because each institution has its own distinctive culture, history, mission and identity. "Through diversity brings solutions."

A call for restructuring higher education in Nova Scotia

by Renee Field

"...Not many people have clear ideas about the future (of education)," says Aims McGuinness, a United States expert on higher education policy, who spoke to over 200 people on opening night of the Critical Choices: Nova Scotia Council on Higher Education conference that began at Saint Mary's, on February 18, 1995.



Aims McGuinness

Invited by the Council, McGuinness, along with Janet Halliwell, Chair of the Council, Tim O'Neill, an economist and the Honorable John MacEachern, Nova Scotia's Minister of Education, stressed that higher education in the province has to be dealt with immediately.

"Nova Scotia is not alone. There are forces leading to these changes far beyond N.S.," he says. McGuinness oversaw the merger of the University of Maine system in Portland and has advised 20 states on the issue of restructuring higher education.

"Public funding is going down for higher education in all industrialized countries," McGuinness says. People in the States are committed to reducing budgets and not introducing new taxes. Most importantly, education is viewed as a private benefit, not a public good. The shift in the loan structure reflects this by placing the burden of education on the next generation.

While not all of McGuinness' analogies apply to Canada, parallels are evident: funding for higher education in Canada is being reduced; like our counterparts in the U.S. there are increased demands on universities but they are not oriented for it; there is growing conflict between the global role of universities and local constituents, who see the "nice life of faculty members"; and frustration among faculty members who seek universities where they can be creative, but due

to lack of funding are unable to do adequate research.

"Systems, policies and co-ordinated boards are much more barriers to change than constructive," he says. McGuinness stressed that universities have to reach an agreement on roles and priorities. The call is for change at every level, from the appointment of faculty members to governance boards. This is not a question of public versus academia.

"There are forces leading to these changes far beyond N.S.,"

There is a need for a highly decentralized system with a centralized framework, and they must be connected. Restructuring is not based on personality, he says. There must be a desire to work for change, "People must learn to do things differently."

McGuinness told members of the Council, fellow university and college presidents, faculty members and the general public that identifying different cultures is very important and must be taken into consideration when deciding on the best model for restructuring higher education in the province. "There are states in the U.S. that would die to have what N.S. has for higher education," he says.

Open discussion and debate are good, but the time has come for closure. A decision has to be made. "Develop a framework and work together. But the problem is financing and that is the bottom line." ▀

Having your say ...

Dr. Robert McCalla, Geography Department

Editors note: With the overwhelming response to the Council, not everyone had a chance to voice their opinions. Dr. McCalla, like many others, instead sent his remarks directly to the Council. Exerts from his letter have been reprinted.

I have never felt inhibited to do my research because I belong to a small primarily undergraduate institution. In fact, I would say just the opposite. The University has been very supportive. When necessary, I have involved undergraduates as research assistants.

My main remarks concern the high quality of education which forms the focus of this University, and how that quality might be affected if Saint Mary's were put into a bigger administrative environment — a forced merger perhaps.

I am a member of the Department of Geography and have been since 1975. Geography at Saint Mary's is a unique program within Nova Scotia. No other universities offer geography at the undergraduate level, nor does any university, including Saint Mary's offer a graduate program. We are a five person department. Currently the department has about 100 majors and close to 600 full course registrations. Students come specifically to Saint Mary's to do geography, but

we also act as a service department for non-majors.

As well as serving the needs of Saint Mary's we also have established strong ties with other Nova Scotia universities. These co-operative efforts have been established at the grass root's level. They have not been imposed on us from on high. We have a Memorandum of Understanding with the College of Geographical Sciences (COGS) at

Lawrencetown, Nova Scotia. That institution grants credit for work done at Saint Mary's by our graduates who enter programs at COGS, similarly we extend the same recognition to their graduates.

Let me stress that this co-operation among institutions has come because of a common identification of

need and mutually beneficial results. We get highly motivated students, many of whom already have degrees.

Let me now turn to what I see as the mission of Saint Mary's and how that mission may be compromised in the future. We value undergraduate teaching. These students are important to us.... In my department I may teach the same student in four or five different courses over their time here.... Will the students have the same access to their professors? Will the students be seen as individuals as well as students? I worry that the answer to these questions is no, no and no. ▀

"...this co-operation among institutions has come because of a common identification of need and mutually beneficial results"



The Times is produced by the Public Affairs Department of Saint Mary's University.

Submissions from faculty, staff, students and friends are welcome.

Director of Public Affairs: Chuck Bridges

Editor: Renee Field

Design: Jim Edwards,

Dexter Art & Design Associates