



Stimulus & Challenge

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New Years Resolution

For over 5 years the Dental Research News has provided news relating to the research and scholarly activities of our faculty. The Dental Research News has been published continuously since September 1987. A total of 539 pages of research information have been documented between the first edition up to and including this January 1993, edition. What will be in the next 539 pages? it is up to you. Dental Faculty members are encouraged to provide details for publication in the DRN. Such information may be about a new research project which you have started, news of one of your publications in the dental scientific literature or it may involve a report of your summer research project. The Dental Research News provides you with the opportunity to inform your colleagues in the Dental Faculty and Dalhousie University about your research

accomplishments. You should note that the DRN is disseminated to the broader Dalhousie community. Copies are displayed in the Health Sciences Library and back copies are available on the library shelves. The DRN thus provides a useful communication to the Dalhousie community about your research activities and accomplishments. This January 1993 publication of the Dental research News is our 61st issue. Make a new year's resolution to have your name recorded for posterity as a contributor to the rapidly developing research history of our Faculty of Dentistry, and have it recorded in the pages of the Dental Research News. This January edition breaks with tradition in that all of the pages from 2-5 are devoted to addressing the difficult and serious issues facing our University and especially our Faculty of Dentistry. At the beginning of a new year we look forward to an uncertain future. Let us look forward with hope and enthusiasm.

Challenge & Opportunity

by
Derek Jones

The challenge which we face is vitally important, it is in fact, the most vitally important business ever to be placed before our faculty in its entire history. We should look upon our task as both a challenge and an opportunity. We have a marvelous opportunity to possibly make changes which would not normally be conceivable. As we aim to develop our strategy let us not lose sight of what the role and purpose of a University Faculty is, "the search for and dissemination of knowledge."

Dean Ruedy of the Faculty of Medicine writing in the Dalhousie Medical Alumni magazine (fall 1992) perhaps summed it up best when he stated "...I regard the present as an unparalleled time for change and with change, opportunity for the medical school. Public accountability and a social contract, the need to develop new partnerships in support of teaching and research, changes in, and the very definition of, health- all are challenges to the medical school. It's an exciting time."

If we are honest with ourselves at Dalhousie, we have all known for some time that the days of *laissez-faire* in university education were over. The financial constraints now facing the university push us strongly to make some very difficult decisions. We must, accept the hard consequences of scarcity and learn how to make the maximum use of our resources. We face a choice. We can spread our scarce resources thinly in an effort to provide complete institutional coverage of all aspects of dental science and education. In doing so we will sink down to second or third-class status; on the other hand, we can aim at maintaining quality at the sacrifice of some of our ambitions of a comprehensive coverage. I believe that we have only one choice. No university institution worthy of the name would choose with its eyes open to be less than first class in what it offers.

As we go about our deliberations addressing the difficult decisions which have to be made, we should take note of the words of Winston Churchill, at a time he was also contemplating what appeared to be an impossible task, "Now is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

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In the professional faculties and schools such as Medicine and Dentistry, professional standards determine and dictate to some extent a large part of the curriculum and leave less freedom to set the individual priorities. Sorting out priorities and emphasis is the most difficult and urgent issue facing our Faculty of Dentistry. It is difficult because our past circumstances never permitted us much choice, and so denied us any practice in making choices. However, it is urgent now because of the drastic circumstances which we face across the campus at Dalhousie.

The aims of university education are many: the passing on of our inherited exact knowledge derived from scholarly research, the pursuit of new knowledge at the frontiers of science, the sharpening of intellects and the disciplining of minds derived from a knowledge based curriculum. The graduation of students who are technically competent and at the same time respect both logic and facts. Our aim must be the refining of knowledge and judgement based upon scholarship. In the modern world universities are by far the most important finders and dispensers of knowledge. Kelvin Ogilvie President-designate of Acadia University, stated recently "Canada's

survival is at stake unless improvements are made in areas of science and technology." He also made the statement that "Canada's ignorance and fear of technology must end." This is indeed important when we look at the first rate science which is being generated in our biomaterials and microbiology laboratories within the dental building. Kelvin Ogilvie further stated that "Canada's future depends on knowledge-based industry, and it is absolutely essential that we improve our record in understanding and awareness of science." Clearly we have an opportunity at Dalhousie to make a contribution to the prosperity of Nova Scotia through the knowledge and technology which is generated in our research laboratories.


Dian Cohen a leading economist recently wrote "We're living on the threshold of the greatest change we've ever experienced, with more opportunities than we've ever had to pursue for our personal dreams. Cohen talks about the new economy which is dominated not by industry but by information. According to Cohen the most important wealth creating instrument is imagination. "Everyone who has imagination and has figured out how to harness it to the market place legitimately will prosper."

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During the review of our economic plight, in an era of increasing participatory democracy and open decision-making, we must not lose sight of the need to avoid the tendency to move to the lowest common denominator and end up with an institution which is little more than a trade school. We should not regard our faculty as a community of contending groups and conflicting purposes that must be compromised and reconciled in order that we can live together in peace. The ends that Dalhousie should be pursuing are not a matter for pitched battle among diverse groups with sharply opposed interests. In these difficult times we have very important work to do and we all know pretty well what it is. We are considering the long-lasting significance of the future of the Faculty of Dentistry at Dalhousie University.

In recent days there has been widespread and gratifying discussion of the needs and objectives of our faculty. There is a genuine and accepted feeling that the infrastructure needed for our quality research and scholarship must not be skimmed. Central to our objectives is the transmission of hard-won knowledge and wisdom of the past, and the discovery of new knowledge and wisdom derived from

research and scholarship. At this particular moment in time, our attention and energy must be focused on the place and role of our faculty in a university setting in which excellence in scholarship are a primary goal.

While it is important to select areas for research which have specific goals important for the future needs of society this should also be tempered with a high degree of realism and credibility. It is very important that such guidelines and priorities focus attention on those areas in which Dalhousie currently has a critical mass of quality research. Such areas should have a proven track record of excellence with an international reputation which has been maintained for a number of years. To select priorities in areas in which we have no expertise would be futile. I believe that the area of Biomaterials has been shown to be a interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary subject which ideally fits within the Mission Statement of Dalhousie University. It should be recognized that the peer review process for research funding and publication has provided a good measure of the very high quality of our biomaterials research programme which compliments our graduate education in the subject area. The Division of
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Biomaterials subscribes to the sentiment expressed in Howard Clark's Presidential Draft Mission Statement that "Research and scholarship are essential to the quality of our educational activities, informing our curriculum with up-to-date knowledge and exposing our students to the process of inquiry, critical analysis and communication of new understandings." Our quality research and immense potential which we have in the area of microbiology is also a major factor which must be part of the future plans involving the preservation of the quality research and scholarship for the Faculty of Dentistry.

In these times of gloom and doom we should not lose sight of the exciting possibilities which are present for our clinical faculty members to participate in the clinical trials programme which it is planned to develop. Details of the proposed initiative were reported in the December issue of the Dental Research News. The incentive to participate in new ventures has perhaps never been stronger than at the moment. The Research Development Office have a workshop on clinical trials and clinical research in the planning stage. It is hoped that this will take place some time in early summer.

In addressing the economic problems facing us, I sincerely hope that at the end of some rational analytical thinking, we will all agree to preserve those quality elements which we have at Dalhousie University. We don't want a trade school in place of the Faculty of Dentistry, we don't want Dalhousie to be the little college by the sea. In the letter from Vice-President Denis Stairs replying to the excellent letter forwarded by Acting Dean Bill MacInnis, he points out that "the President's Office is fully aware of the increasingly impressive research record of your Faculty in recent years, and the extraordinary growth in the amount of external funding that you have been able to attract." I believe that we should not turn back the clock fifteen years to a time when our Faculty was indeed regarded by many as a trade school. Let us not turn back the clock, if we do, it will herald the end of the Faculty of Dentistry.

The University

There are few earthly things more beautiful than a University. It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see; where seekers and learners alike, banded together in search for knowledge, will honor thought in all its finer ways, will welcome thinkers in distress or in exile, will uphold every dignity of thought and learning and will exact standards of these things. Wherever a University stands, it stands and shines; wherever it exists, the free minds of men, urged on to full and fair inquiry, may still bring wisdom into human affairs.

John Masefield