

Presidents' Commission on the Federated Universities

Laurentian University: A Collaborative Federation

PREFACE

The idea of convening a new study and evaluation of the Laurentian federation of universities, emerged from the regular meetings of Presidents from Laurentian, Huntington, Sudbury and Thorneloe during the spring of 1992. During the 1991-92 academic year, a Laurentian Strategic Planning Task Force had encountered a variety of opinions about the role of the federated universities, and the Presidents decided that a thorough enquiry would be valuable to all concerned. The final report of the Laurentian Strategic Planning Committee therefore made the following recommendation:

We recommend that Laurentian University, with its federated universities, in a spirit of cooperation, review and reconsider during the 1992-93 academic year the federation agreements and allied documents, existing policies, practices and standards, the role of the Dean of Humanities, existing funding arrangements, and related academic or administrative issues; and that this review be completed, with the findings reported to all interested constituencies by September of 1993.

The Commission first met on October 29, 1992. Membership consisted of the President of each university (including the Laurentian Vice-President Academic and Administrative), a member of the Board of Governors/Regents of each university, and a faculty member from each university. The Commission created sub-committees to make comprehensive studies in the areas of Academics, Finance and Governance. Submissions were solicited from concerned parties by the Academic Sub-Committee. That sub-committee also commissioned a research report on "Models of Federated Universities", which studied all major university federations in Canada.

The following report is the result of the Commission's findings and conclusions.

BACKGROUND

The granting of a charter by the Ontario Legislature to the "Laurentian University of Sudbury" in 1960 was not the result of any single initiative, but rather the result of the initiatives of many communities over time. It represented a convergence of community support for a Northeastern Ontario University. From the founding of the Jesuit Collège du Sacré-Coeur in 1913, to the founding of Huntington University, Thorneloe University and Laurentian University itself by the early 1960s, the Laurentian Federation represents the interest and commitment of churches, notably the Anglican, Roman Catholic and United, mining and lumbering industries, regional government, and many committed individuals for an accessible centre of higher education. The foundational documents of the constituent universities of Laurentian all prefigured the creation of a larger university federation. The result is Laurentian University as it exists in the 1990s, a university responsive to both French and English cultural and linguistic communities as well as to those of the First Nations; a university founded by several religious traditions yet identified with no single Church. A university supportive of the mining and geological needs of the area yet responsive to the educational, health service, scientific, recreational and entrepreneurial needs of northeastern Ontario. In both origin as well as current actualization, Laurentian is truly a collaborative university, whose goals have been truly expressed in its Mission Statement:

Laurentian University is Northeastern Ontario's comprehensive university. Dedicated to accessibility and excellent academic programming, teaching and research, it reflects the region it serves with an environmentally sound approach to human development and the universal quest for knowledge and truth. Through its unique system of federated and affiliated institutions, commitment to bilingualism and lifelong learning, and collaborative outreach programmes, Laurentian services the needs and aspirations of regional citizens, with particular provision for Franco-Ontarians and First Nations peoples. It prides itself on the personal and equitable treatment of its members, the high quality of its services and its programmes.

COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITIES

The model envisaged for the Laurentian university federation was that of many European colleges and universities as transposed to Canada in such campuses as those of Manitoba, the University of Toronto and Waterloo. With degree-granting powers delegated to the host university, the federated universities contribute to the overall life of the university their teaching faculty, their scholarship, and the intellectual communities of learning formed by their students and faculty.

At Laurentian, this model has taken on a specific meaning. Each University contributes to the whole its distinctive programme and community in the form of a college. **Colleges can provide "homes" for designated university departments, and departmental faculty and students make up a college as a whole.** Through small classes, residences, personalized counselling and teaching as well as the hiring of faculty, interdisciplinary seminars and projects, the collaborative college model here provides distinctive intellectual communities of learning which promote disciplinary and interdisciplinary thinking amongst both faculty and students. The overall programme of a college is intended for off-campus as well as residential students.

Affiliated with The United Church of Canada, Huntington University College, offers academic programming in the areas of Gerontology, Music and Religious Studies. A residence for one hundred and seventy-one students offers peer and administrative, as well as academic and personal support. It also provides chaplaincy services, and a library which responds to both programme resource and residence study needs.

Thorneloe College brings the Anglican tradition's respect for the classical heritage of culture (Classics), as well as contemporary creative reflection and critique of Theatre Arts. It contributes with the other church-related colleges to the study of Religion in the university, and hosts the interdisciplinary field of Women's Studies. It also contributes a residence for fifty-four students and a Chapel to the campus community.

The University of Sudbury College is Roman Catholic and bilingual, and operates within the Jesuit tradition in education. Its programmes are in Religious Studies, Philosophy, Native Studies, and Franco-Ontarian folklore, while its large residence offers regular academic and personal counselling. It is home to the Roman Catholic University Parish.

University College is Laurentian's non-denominational bilingual college, home to the University's Language and Literature departments of English, French and Modern Languages, and to the Canadian Studies and Cinéma programmes. Attending classes in the Parker Tower and the Arts Building, students are close to the new Desmarais Library, the book store, the dining hall and the Student Centre, which includes student services and organizations, as well as lounge and recreational facilities.

While the colleges teach primarily within the fields of humanities, **faculty and students from other parts of the university are welcome to become involved in the intellectual and community life of the colleges, by membership or cross-appointment.**

In all the colleges, **Faculty and students remain under the academic governance of the Senate of Laurentian University, which has the responsibility for maintaining the overall standards of the various college communities within the Federation.**

COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMMES

The various communities of the Laurentian federation share the same commitment to academic excellence in programming, teaching and research. The federated colleges also collectively contribute a large share of the humanities component, not only in the programmes in Arts and Social Science, but also in the professional schools. The Laurentian B.A. itself recognizes this intellectual cooperation by having the degree certificate signed by the President of each individual student's home University) Huntington, Laurentian, Sudbury, Thorneloe.

Given this collaborative programme, especially in the Faculty of Humanities where most of the teaching of the federated universities currently occurs, **an important responsibility must rest with the Dean of Humanities. In close cooperation with the Presidents of the federated universities (colleges), the Dean must ensure that consistent and rigorous standards apply throughout all programmes in the Humanities, including curriculum, hiring standards, faculty workloads, research expectations, and criteria for promotion.**

The Commission recommends that the primary medium for this collaboration in academic planning be a new Federation Academic Committee, normally composed of the Presidents of the three federated universities (Huntington, Sudbury, Thorneloe) as well as the Dean and two Vice-Deans of Humanities of Laurentian University . This Committee should meet regularly to coordinate the overseeing and improvement of existing programmes, the development of new programmes, resource allocations, priorities and changes of existing budgets and faculty. It should make its recommendations to the Laurentian Humanities Council, and through it to the Laurentian Senate.

The Commission also recommends that further collaboration of this nature be a goal for the joint departments of Philosophy and Religious Studies. Such collaboration should enable each joint department to provide a more effective use of faculty resources and a more comprehensive style of academic planning . The Commission encourages the joint Department of Religious Studies to pursue within its own administrative structure the internal issues it raised in its submission to this Commission.

COLLABORATIVE FACULTY

Essential to the excellence of any academic programme is the quality of its faculty. In a collaborative model such as Laurentian's, collaboration and consultation are all the more necessary to inform the common goals and standards, as well as the interpersonal relationships by which **the intellectual integrity of the university is sustained. The collaboration of the Laurentian Vice-President Academic, the Dean of Humanities and the presidents of the universities of the federation, are essential to realize this integrity.**

The process of selecting new faculty represents an important way in which college communities enhance their particular identity. While these initiatives rest with each university president, the Commission recommends that the Laurentian Vice-President Academic should be called upon to give assent to each.

Most decisions to re-contract, promote and award tenure to faculty are made following recommendations of academic colleagues. While overseeing these initiatives is the responsibility of each president, the Dean of Humanities should be consulted in this process, as should the Laurentian Vice-President Academic who should be called upon to give assent to each.

In order to achieve consistent recommendations for faculty in all universities of the federation, the Commission envisions the creation of a Humanities-wide Personnel Committee to develop and maintain a consistent set of common goals and standards for all four universities while still respectful of the distinctive identities and differences of each. Until such time as this committee can become operative, the Commission recommends that an interim Standards Committee, composed of administrative and faculty personnel from the several universities, be struck to coordinate and develop convergent standards and criteria. A further goal of The Standards Committee should be to facilitate progress towards overall harmonization of faculty workloads and compensation. During this interim, the Standards Committee should make regular progress reports to the Federation Relations Committee.

If differences arise on new appointments, re-contracting, promotion, or the granting of tenure, a consensus decision should be sought through the Federation Academic Committee. The Commission also recommends that the Federation Academic Committee review, on an annual basis, all renewals of appointment, and promotional decisions to ensure comprehensiveness and consistency.

Overseeing of teaching and academic performance is a responsibility undertaken by all senior academic administrators within the federation, but is a particular responsibility of the Dean of Humanities. The Dean advises the president of each university on commendation and discipline of academic personnel.

COLLABORATIVE CAMPUS

Laurentian was founded as one university by means of a federation of four autonomous universities. As a bilingual and non-denominational university composed of various unilingual and denominational founding groups, Laurentian should have an active ongoing means of mediating the common goals of the whole university while still encouraging and respecting the different identities and traditions of its constituents. The Commission therefore recommends that a new Federation Relations Committee be struck to maintain the overall focus of the Federation, while ensuring that each of its component parts be adequately sustained. Comprised of members of the Board of Governors of each university, and the respective Presidents of each, the Federation Relations Committee should meet regularly on matters which reflect the unity and diversity of the federation. Current policy issues now in need of discussion at The Federation Relations Committee, for example, and of overall agreement are : i) bilingualism, ii) harassment, iii) academic advisement of students, iv) campus-wide college association of students, v) associate status of campus faculty for the college community of their choice, vi) reinforcement of the academic atmosphere of all the residences on campus to improve the general academic atmosphere of the campus.

The equitable distribution of the financial resources of the whole Laurentian federation should remain a fundamental responsibility of the Federation Relations Committee, as should the maintenance of the financial and community health of each federated university. Coordinating the search for income and support for the whole federation community should also be the responsibility of the Federations Relations Committee.

CONCLUSION

The implementation, or regular overseeing of all these policies, requires the collaboration on an ongoing basis, of the President and Vice-Presidents of Laurentian, as well as of the Presidents of the federated universities. The Committee recommends that a Federation Management Committee be the medium by which the overall policies of the university federation be implemented into the day-to-day life of the campus and the university.

There should be an annual reporting of all committees of the federation (Federation Academic Committee, Personnel/or/Standards Committee, Federation Management Committee) to the Federation Relations Committee.

If any committee created by the federation for collaboration is unable to reach a collectively acceptable decision following its own internal procedures, it can refer the matter for resolution to the next level collaborative committee of the federation (i.e. : Federation Academic Committee > Federation Management Committee; Federation Personnel/Standards Committee > Federation Management Committee; Federation Management Committee > Federation Relations Committee).

IMPLEMENTATION

The Laurentian federation of Universities is a collaboration of distinctive, broadly-based traditions of North-Eastern Ontario. All of the foregoing is designed to strengthen and renew its power to serve this diverse community. And the Commission makes its own the spirit expressed in the original founding documents of the Federation: both Laurentian University and the Federated Universities declare and express the firm hope and conviction that the relationship between them be a permanent one, and that they will work together to build a great institution of learning which shall forever be bilingual and non denominational in its character. They all fully realize that the success of this great task, which they have set themselves will depend more on mutual understanding, goodwill and cooperation between them than upon any formal agreements.

Approved by Senate: November 18, 1993