

President's message to University of Ottawa students

Dear students,

I was 16 in 1966 when I first registered at the University of Ottawa as a student in pre-science (equivalent to Grade 13). Like most students who start university studies, I must admit that the first few weeks were very difficult. At one point I even wondered if I had made the right choice. Luckily, things soon fell into place. In fact, the years I spent at the University of Ottawa as a student were some of the best and most enriching years of my life.

How could I have ever imagined that one day, I would have the honour of leading this great institution? After four years as dean of the Faculty of Engineering and another four as vice-president, academic, I readily agreed to become president — a most formidable and exciting challenge. In a few weeks, my term as president will come to an end. The last seven years have been, without a doubt, most extraordinary and memorable.

During the past few months, I have been asked several times how I would sum up my years as president. It is certainly not up to me to assess what we have accomplished during this period. I say “we” as it is clear that all, in a university is accomplished collectively and that a president is supported in his or her multiple tasks by the entire university community: students, professors and staff. I can however attempt to provide a brief summary of our main accomplishments.

Our student population has increased from 24,500 in 2000-2001 to 35,500 in 2007-2008. During this same period, we hired 750 professors and more than 900 staff. We have introduced an impressive number of undergraduate and graduate programs. We

reflected on the state of the University and developed an ambitious strategic plan — *Vision 2010*. This exercise gave us the opportunity to re-examine the University's mission, define a new vision, identify the values that characterize our institution and establish a strategy to achieve our goals. Personally, two principles that are central to our strategic plan inspire me daily: a) students must be at the core of our strategy — our daily actions must serve to improve the quality of your university experience; and b) the University of Ottawa is unique among Canadian universities — accordingly, we must develop and strengthen our competitive advantages. In my view, most of the other objectives in our strategic plan flow from these two key principles.

Over the course of the past seven years, the campus has changed considerably. We opened the Hyman-Soloway Residence, the School of Information Technology and Engineering, the Biosciences Complex, the research wing of Roger-Guindon Hall and the Desmarais Building. We also acquired 200 Lees (the former Algonquin College campus) and the Life Sciences Complex at Alta Vista (OLSC). Finally, in February 2007, the Board of Governors approved a \$150-million five-year facilities renewal and expansion plan. As part of this plan, the Board authorized on March 31, 2008 the construction of a new 15-storey/22,000 m² building to be located between Vanier Hall and Stanton Residence. This building will serve the needs of the Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty Arts, and regroup academic units that are presently dispersed across campus.

As part of *Vision 2010*, the University set out to increase research activities with the goal of becoming one of the top five research-intensive universities in Canada. The research activities of our professors enrich our academic programs and the quality of our teaching. Today, we can all be proud of the fact that the

University of Ottawa ranks unequivocally among Canada's top research-intensive universities.

One of my main goals upon assuming the presidency was to ensure that the University's reputation truly reflected the significant accomplishments taking place at our institution. I am confident that we are heading in this direction with determination.

Throughout my mandate as president, I have been impressed by the large number of students who excel in academics, sports, research or community involvement and whose achievements are celebrated internally and externally.

In May 2007, the University announced that it had surpassed the \$200 million goal set out in its fundraising campaign — one year ahead of schedule. As students, you will directly benefit from the generosity of our alumni. The \$236 million raised to date will serve to improve the quality of your university experience through the creation of scholarships, new academic facilities and the support of exciting research initiatives.

In a few weeks, I will have the pleasure of congratulating the graduates of the Class of 2008 during spring convocation. Today, however, I pay homage to all University of Ottawa students. Thank you for making my time at the University of Ottawa such a memorable experience.

I hope that, like me, you will hold on to the wonderful memories of your journey at the University of Ottawa. And who knows, perhaps one day, some of you may also have the privilege of leading the future of this great University.

My best wishes for success in your studies and future endeavours.

Gilles G. Patry
President and Vice-Chancellor