On Virtualization, Blended Learning, On-line Learning, and the "Greater Differentiation" of Ontario Universities

[Proposed Draft Section for Queen's Academic Plan]

Mark Jones

28 July 2011; revised 30 Sept. 2011

> *What I cherish most from my university experience is the interaction, in class and outside of class, with the professors. The classes were small enough that there could be a dialogue and office hours were adequate to accommodate any interested student. Often it was not necessary for the professors to post explicit hours.*
> *Without the teacher-student interaction we might as well switch over to e-learning and save a lot of money. E-learning certainly has a place, but I sure hope it does not become the substitute for an interactive learning environment.*[1]

> *On-line learning, resisted strenuously in the past, was forced upon institutions in cookie-cutter ways that many found abhorrent.*[2]

> *Opposition is true Friendship.*[3]

Virtualization and online learning have become controversial topics in discussions of post-secondary education, and some of this controversy has entered into Queen's planning process. Our view is that no modern university can afford to ignore the rapidly evolving potentials of learning technology, but that on an issue about which there are such deep investments and strong feelings on all sides, in which the University's own investments and commitments (financial and otherwise) are potentially so large, and for which the long-term "market" is so uncertain, one must proceed with particularly careful academic consideration. This is a competitive area of rapid and sometimes volatile expansion in which Queen's is, to be frank, neither a leader nor poised to become one, and in this area we therefore endorse a plan of some prudence, of observing and learning from others' mistakes, of adopting best practices once their success has been tested and established elsewhere, of discriminating rigorously between academically appropriate and inappropriate applications, and above all of privileging an organic, ground-up model of development. If Queen's is to focus on areas of established strength, this is an area where it can afford to let others lead. That is not to say it can stand still.

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[1] Don Drummond, "It Can't Be Easy to be a University President." D.C. Smith Lecture to COU, 21 Oct. 2010, p. 6.
[2] Daniel Woolf, "Two Retrospective Histories: History A," in Where Next?, p. 18.
[3] William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790), pl. 20.

This discussion begins with a critical survey of recent developments at Queen's and at the provincial level, then discusses major considerations on both sides of the issue.[4] It concludes with recommendations for Queen's.

1.   The Development of Virtualization at Queen's

In 2008, Queen's struck a Virtualization Task Force, which was "charged with examining the potential for use of information technology and electronic media in reducing costs of instruction, alleviating space constraints associated with growing enrolment, and enhancing the quality of the teaching and learning environment at Queen's."[5] The Task Force promoted trials of video lecture-capture for 2009-10 in BIOL 102, POLS 110, and FILM 240, all large courses, and called for further "pilot projects."[6] Issuing reports in December 2008 and August 2009, it recommended that Queen's "arrive at an agreed-upon framework for dealing with" intellectual property issues related to lecture-capture. More generally, it advised that "it will be important for Queen's to consider the role that technology might play" vis-à-vis "our current models of teaching based on continuous physical presence of students and faculty on the Queen's campus and regularly scheduled classes and assignments" (ibid).

Beyond the pilot courses of 2009-10, there has already been considerable activity in exploration and development of the use of learning technology on Queen's campus, much of it funded by the Principal's Innovation Fund,[7] which promotes innovations that aim "to help . . . generate revenue and reduce costs."[8] Among this activity are pilots for

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[4] Noted supporters of online learning include the New Media Consortium (NMC) (http://www.nmc.org/), of which "Queen's University is a proud member" (http://www.queensu.ca/its/etc/nmc.html; see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Media_Consortium), and the Sloan Consortium (http://sloanconsortium.org/), "an institutional and professional leadership organization dedicated to integrating online education into the mainstream of higher education. The goal of the Sloan Consortium is to 'help institutions and individual educators improve the quality, scale, and breadth of online education'" (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sloan_Consortium, 5 July 2011). Noted critics include the late historian of technology David F. Noble, author of *Digital Diploma Mills* (Toronto, 2002; individual essays contributing to this book available online at http://communication.ucsd.edu/dl/). "Degree.net," a website belonging to John Bear that advertises itself as "Exposing Diploma Mills: Your Ultimate Source for Accredited Degrees" (http://www.degree.net/, 16 July 2011), offers critiques of online programs but advertises others, including the University of Phoenix, which has a history of shady enrolment and funding practices (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Phoenix) and was under federal investigation in 2010 for mismanagement of financial aid (Bates p. 7). See also Lisa Guernsey, "Is the Internet Becoming a Bonanza for Diploma Mills?" *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 19 Dec. 1997, http://chronicle.com/article/Is-the-Internet-Becoming-a/101045/.
[5] Virtualization Task Force, Final Report, Aug. 2009, http://www.queensu.ca/financialupdate/taskforces/virtualization/finalreport.html, 8 June 2011.
[6] ibid. On these pilot projects, see also the Arts and Science Response to *Where Next?* (15 April 2010), pp. 19-20. As explained there, the lecture-capture was generally used to supplement conventional lecture attendance, but in BIOL 102, "one section became a pilot preparing for an entirely online experience." For an account of lecture-capture as used at Queen's, see http://www.queensu.ca/ctl/lecturecapture/system.html and "Videotaped lectures get high marks," *Queen's News Centre*, 19 July 2010, http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/videotaped-lectures-get-high-marks, 11 July 2011.
[7] Arts and Science Response to *Where Next?* (15 April 2010), p. 19.
[8] "Principal announces Innovation Fund," *Queen's News Centre*, 17 April 2009, http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/principal-announces-innovation-fund.

lecture-capture and hybrid or blended learning in large-enrolment courses in 2010-11, with still others being developed for coming years (e.g., GPHY 101[9], ApSci 100[10], PSYC 100[11]).[12] The Centre for Teaching and Learning has worked with Information Technology Services, Queen's Libraries, the Learning Technology Unit, and the Learning Technology Faculty Associates to assist faculty and departments in the development and use of learning technology.[13]

Of late, the most important locus for this activity has been the Office of Continuing and Distance Studies (CDS). By February 2010, and perhaps earlier, the Provost had "granted funding to Arts and Science to develop a business case for the

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[9] See http://www.queensu.ca/ctl/lecturecapture/projects/geography101.html and http://geog.queensu.ca/undergrad_courses/programNotice.asp.

[10] See http://www.queensu.ca/ctl/lecturecapture/projects/apsci100.html.

[11] See http://www.queensu.ca/psychology/news/newsletter/undergrad.html.

[12] For definitions of hybrid and blended learning, see n. [18] below. The unit responses to *Where Next?* include myriad references to proposed or ongoing initiatives in course virtualization and other uses of learning technology. For instance, the School of Nursing cites "Queen's High Performance Computing Virtual Laboratory" (p. 4). The School of Business notes its "extensive expertise in videoconferencing, team facilitation and technology-assisted communications through portals and social media. We can build on our expertise and help Queen's be a true leader in this domain" (sec. 8b). The School of Computing cites its undergraduate Biomedical Computing program, Cognitive Science program, and Computing and the Creative Arts as world or North American firsts, and notes continued innovation "through the proposed introduction of novel courses in Computing and Business Administration and Computer Game Development." It offers courses such as "Computer-Assisted Surgery" and is working on a project to "offer its Cognitive Science program on line." It currently uses "on-line teaching methods" including recorded lectures, and has campus partnerships with "biology, medicine, psychology, music, film, drama and art" (pp. 2, 9-10). The Faculty of Education cites "online and virtual classrooms" among its "innovative program features and services" (p. 1). It "has introduced Second Life" as "a venue for virtualization of instruction" for undergraduates, is "using Elluminate Live!, Second Life, and Desire2Learn" in graduate teaching, and has "created a cutting-edge videoconferencing classroom [. . .] to connect [. . .] with experts around the world" (p. 3). The Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science [FEAS] has considered "webcasting for courses and undertook a small pilot" in 2009-10, but "is waiting to implement this delivery mechanism more fully until the results from the Biology Virtualization initiative are available" (p. 31). It has "initiated discussions" with DEVS to develop "on-line courses to promote access for undergraduate engineering students" whose timetables are "constrained by core program requirements" (p. 19). For the development of "bridging programs" with Ontario community colleges, it is considering "virtualization of key courses such as APSC172 and 174" (p. 54). More generally, it observes that "Many areas of excellence across the University are enhanced by the [. . .] High Performance Computing Virtual Laboratory (HPCVL)," a "multi University and multi Faculty initiative" based at Queen's that is "initiated and driven" by FEAS members and "used by scientists and engineers across the country" (p. 33). The School of Medicine envisions increased use of "elearning" and "virtual classrooms" among other innovations, to "deliver the scientific core of our educational programs" (15-16) and is investigating Development of on-line certificate course in Drug Development and Human Toxicology (p. 21). The Department of History "is developing a fully bilingual online course entitled 'Culture and Religion in Canadian Francophone Communities,' to be offered in concert with [. . .] Religious Studies" (p. 8).
   It should also be noted that the use of the course management systems, formerly WebCT and now Moodle, has long been widespread on Queen's campus. The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) trains and assists faculty in connection with these, and managed the transition from WebCT to Moodle between 2009 and 2011.

[13] See http://www.queensu.ca/ctl/about/history.html; ITS, "Learning Resources" (http://www.queensu.ca/its/learning.html) and "Emerging Technology Centre" (http://www.queensu.ca/its/etc.html); Queen's University Library, Response to *Where Next?*, passim.

expansion of Continuing and Distance Studies," to be completed in June 2011.[14] But in anticipation of this "business case," the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS) initiated the expansion with two memos (February and May 2011) inviting departments and faculty to propose blended and/or online courses and /or programs.[15] The first memo's account of this initiative is worth quoting in detail:

> The Faculty of Arts and Science is exploring the possibility of growing enrolments through increasing the number of students studying online through Continuing and Distance Studies (CDS). Although CDS already offers 50 fully online courses each year, about 85% of the enrolments are current on-campus Queen's students. [. . . .]
> According to "2011 Outlook for Online Learning and Distance Education," a report produced by Contact North, Ontario's Distance Education and Training Network, there is "plenty of opportunity for growth and development in online learning" in Canada.[[16]]
> ***In order to attract new distance students to Queen's, the Faculty of Arts and Science needs to be competitive, offering high-demand programs in niche markets, with quality online courses using current best practices in online learning.***

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[14] "Continuing and Distance Studies is Reaching Out to the World," *OnQ*, Mar. 2011, p. 8, http://www.queensu.ca/news/sites/default/files/assets/onq/onq-2011-03.pdf. See also "New Initiatives," p. 1. According to Brenda Ravenscroft, Associate Dean (Studies) in the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS), the business case has been delayed (personal email, 9 July 2011).

The FAS webpage on "Current Practices and Initiatives," http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/technology-in-teaching-and-learning/current-practices-and-initiatives, 3 June 2011, notes that its "initiatives are consistent with the recommendations made by the AMS Academic Affairs Commission in their report Virtualization at Queen's: Directions for the Future (April 2011), and will be aligned appropriately with new directions suggested in the forthcoming University Academic Plan" (http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/technology-in-teaching-and-learning/current-practices-and-initiatives, 3 June 2011). But Chris Rudnicki, APTF member and outgoing AMS VP-University Affairs, reports that "a volunteer in our teaching issues committee under the academic affairs commission wrote the paper. The paper was meant as exploratory, and should not be read as representing the views of the undergraduate student body" (personal email of 8 July 2011).

[15] See "New Initiatives in Online Learning in Arts and Science Information for Departments and Instructors" (February 2011) and "Faculty of Arts and Science Call for Proposals for Course Re-Design" (2 May 2011). More recently (ca. May 2011) FAS established a series of webpages promoting "Technology in Teaching and Learning" (http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/technology-in-teaching-and-learning/current-practices-and-initiatives).

[16] The Study referred to is Tony Bates' *2011 Outlook For Online Learning And Distance Education,* Jan. 2011, http://search.contactnorth.ca/en/data/files/download/Jan2011/2011%20Outlook.pdf, 8 July 2011. It is true that Bates notes expansion of the online market in the U.S. and Canada (6-7), but he also sounds cautions about long-term prospects: "Although the growth of fully online learning will continue over the next few years, the rate of growth of fully online courses is likely to decline as market saturation is reached [. . . .] **in the short term** we will see continued growth in fully online distance education" (5, emphasis added); "in Canada [. . .] online learning continues to expand rapidly, and is likely to continue to do so for the next few years at least, although as the market for online learning nears saturation, the rate of growth will inevitably decline" (7). **He notes that online growth at Athabasca University (37% of whose enrolments are from Ontario) "has slowed considerably in the last year or so": "From 2009 to 2010, [Athabasca] increased enrolments by 1.5%," following 415% growth in 1997-2007 (p. 8).**

Online Programs: Degrees and Certificates

CDS currently offers enough online courses for students to complete a BA General in Psychology, English or History. We are currently developing courses to offer a BA General in Global Development Studies and a BSC General in Life Sciences, and are developing a new program, BA General in Liberal Studies.

The main focus for new programs to grow distance enrolments is on certificate programs: 30-unit university-credit programs offered independently of a degree program at undergraduate or post-graduate level. Ideas for undergraduate certificates include: medical sciences (already under development), writing, communication and new media, liberal studies, health and nutrition, health management, social justice.

We are also soliciting ideas for "professional" certificate programs (non-university credit, unregulated tuition) and for online Master's degrees. Global Development Studies is partnering with CDS to offer a professional certificate in the upcoming year. Programs will be offered primarily online, with a summer on-campus component.[17]

In sum, CDS's long experience in distance education and its existing wealth in resources (with "50 fully online courses" and three fully online programs) have made it seem a natural centre for the further development of online teaching at Queen's, as well as for "related developments" including "blended learning" and "hybrid courses."[18] And as of spring 2011 it was already "developing" many new online courses and several new online programs. The "Priorities for Development" within Arts and Science include the development of "certificate programs that draw on strengths within the Faculty and can be offered online" and the development of blended courses that can also be offered fully online (p. 2). Departments are urged "to develop a good departmental incentive for sustaining online programs for distance students" (p. 2).

The second FAS memo (dated 2 May 2011) more specifically promotes conversions of existing on-campus courses to blended and online formats. "As part of the Faculty's strategic plan to incorporate technology in teaching and learning," it specifies "three goals": (1) to reproduce "large 100-level courses" on "a blended model" (as defined in note [18]); (2) to "Accommodate more students" in these "than are currently accommodated"; and (3) to "Use the online materials developed for the blended course to create a fully online course."[19] "A development stipend of $10,000 per 3-unit

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[17] FAS, "New Initiatives" (Feb. 2011), p. 1.

[18] FAS, "New Initiatives," p. 2. "Blended learning involves the purposeful and complementary combination of online and in-class learning in a single course" (p. 2). But the second FAS memo (May 2011) significantly expands upon this definition: "blended model generally includes online materials that replace lecture-style delivery of fundamental content, fewer contact hours, [and] in-class activities that promote active and collaborative learning." "Hybrid courses" are defined, according to "the Faculty's use of the term," as being "offered simultaneously on campus in a blended model . . . and fully online" ("New Initiatives," p. 2).

[19] FAS, "Call for Proposals for Course Re-Design," 2 May 2011.

course" is offered as incentive. As a result, five on-campus courses will be redesigned in double (blended and online) formats during the 2011-12 academic year.[20]

A key context for these initiatives is given by the Preliminary Report of the Enrolment Planning Task Force (19 Jan. 2011).[21] As it explains, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) has called for a 70% postsecondary attainment rate and estimates an average 2% growth in post-secondary education over the next decade, "from about 320,000 full-time students in 2008-09 to approximately 400,000 undergraduate students in 2010-11" (p. 1). But Queen's will have difficulty accommodating more students (and hence in increasing its BIU funding) due to constraints on residential, program, and teaching capacities and infrastructure (pp. 3-4). "With the incremental increase to the Commerce entering class, the existing residence capacity will be full" (p. 3), and "The current faculty complement inhibits the University's ability to add additional programs or course sections" or "smaller seminar or lab sections" (p. 4). "Limitations also exist" in the form of "inadequate large and small lecture and seminar spaces" (p. 4). The Preliminary Report therefore suggests, among other remedies, that "engag[ing] in more virtualization and on-line delivery may provide capacity to expand access outside of the traditional classroom models and fall-winter academic cycle" (p. 4). Accordingly, its long-term recommendations include "Expansion of Continuing and Distance Studies" and "Blended learning models" (p. 7).

Discussion of "virtualization" was active on campus in connection with the early stages of Academic planning (spring 2010). Principal Woolf's initiating document, *Where Next?* (15 Jan. 2010), lists "Virtualization, Size and Flexibility" as third among "Ten Proposals for Consideration," commenting:

> Instead of generally trying to keep classes small—and signally failing— could faculties explore, where feasible, offering more students a variety of class sizes and teaching frameworks? For example: one small (full year) class per year, two larger format classes, one offered virtually (through a combination of real-time and asynchronous discussions and lectures), and one as a research component that could be used to double up a credit? (p. 8)

But the only other mention of virtual classrooms in *Where Next?* occurs in its concluding alternate histories. In "History A" (a dystopic vision of a Queen's that has not planned wisely), "On-line learning, resisted strenuously in the past, was forced upon institutions in cookie-cutter ways that many found abhorrent" (p. 18). We second the recognition implicit in this vision—that virtualization goes wrong when imposed from above.

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[20] Brenda Ravenscroft, personal email, 15 July 2011. The courses to be converted are General Chemistry (CHEM 112/6.0), Ancient Humour (CLST 205/3.0), Women, Gender, Difference (GNDS 120/3.0), Differential and Integral Calculus (MATH 121/6.0), and Introduction to Sociology (SOCY 122/6.0).
[21] Bob Silverman et al., "Enrolment Planning 2010-20: Preliminary Report," 19 Jan. 2011, http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/senate/agendasminutes/021711/Enrolpln.pdf, 2 Mar. 2011. The final report had not been completed as of 28 April 2011: "The Enrolment Planning Task Force [. . .] will be submitting its report and recommendations to the Principal shortly" (Queen's University Senate Minutes, 28 April 2011, p. 3).

Among the academic unit responses to *Where Next?,* submitted between January and April 2010*,* many units make positive reports on successes with teaching technology and on ongoing or proposed developments (see note [12] above).   But in a number of cases virtualization is promoted in a primarily financial framework, as a potential solution to expanding student numbers, to a flat-lined faculty complement, and to straitened resources in general. Political Studies, for instance, reports:

> We will likely use 'lecture capture' in our first year course next year and are exploring how this might facilitate *servicing more students with few additional resources*. There is potential for a virtual section of our course, which would *address resource constraints* and the challenges of room size and timetabling. We currently have to put on two sections of this course because we lack a sufficiently large teaching room to accommodate 650 students. Our introductory course is extremely popular. Provided we have sufficient resources for marking, *virtualization would allow a very cost-effective way of servicing a large number of students both in and beyond our Department*.[22]

Similarly, the first draft of the Arts and Science Response (11 Mar. 2010) proposes that, to handle the "upward trajectory" of enrolments, Queen's might concentrate its "senior teaching and research faculty at the upper levels" while "virtualizing the classroom at the first- and second-year levels":

> A model of virtualization like that being suggested in the Psychology Department in its first-year program seems ideal for Queen's: an online course package with weekly readings and computer-based assignments and testing, coupled with a single high-quality lecture hour a week and tutorial sessions led by graduate students who are themselves evaluated and mentored in their teaching skills as part of a simultaneous graduate course in communication and research methods.[23]

> By following the precepts outlined above – course reweightings, virtualization projects, curriculum change and inter-departmental collaboration in delivering undergraduate programs – the Faculty should be in a position to absorb increased undergraduate enrolments.[24]

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[22] Political Studies Response to *Where Next?*, pp. 5-6, emphases added.

[23] FAS, "Draft Response to Principal's Vision Statement" [March 11, 2010], p. 3.

[24] Ibid., p. 5. These passages are unchanged in draft 2 (Mar. 17). In draft 3 (Mar. 25), the beginning of the first quoted paragraph is slightly qualified: "Particular challenges are often faced at the first and second year level. Many departments have either adopted or are considering adopting approaches which make use of modern students familiarity with web-based or other technological approaches, sometimes collectively referred to as virtualization. While not a universal solution it is one that should be considered as a possibility, particularly by departments with large course enrolments" (p. 15). By Draft 4 (April 5), the FAS had adopted a more positive spin emphasizing quality, which appears in its final Report (April 15). See also Mark Jones, "Queen's 'Academic Planning' Exercises, 2009-10: A Critical History with Documents," 8 September 2010, http://realacademicplanning.wordpress.com/2010/09/08/queen's-"academic-planning"-exercises-2009-10-a-critical-history-with-documents-8-september-2010/, 8 July 2011.

The rationale of cost-effectiveness is similarly foregrounded in the recommendation of the Academic Writing Team's *Imagining the Future* (Aug. 2010): "information technology (IT) has the potential to cost-effectively support innovation in learning, e.g., via virtualization, e-learning, distance learning, and the provision of online resources."[25]

But in responses on campus there has been massive resistance to virtualization as a financial or resources expedient. Among the unit responses to *Where Next?*, one unit writes: "there is no evidence that virtualization methods requires less time of instructors than more traditional methods of course delivery."[26] Another writes:

> From the point of view of the geography department, virtualization is of limited interest. The distance between faculty and student has already grown to unacceptable levels in this university. CDS may be financially successful. We are less convinced of its pedagogic value, so far.[27]

The emerging recommendations for virtualizing first- and second-year courses were the main focus of a town-hall meeting organized by students in March 2010. And as one student reported: "Based on the feedback from the town hall … there's just a lot of doubt that virtualization has any merit from a student perspective, from a faculty perspective, from a fiscal perspective."[28] In April-May 2010, over 900 students signed a petition to the Board of Trustees that read, in part:

> The "improvements" so far proposed by Queen's Administration include: larger class sizes, virtualized teaching, and less contact with professors during the first and second years of undergraduate degrees. We believe that these changes would cause irreparable injury to the quality of the University, and, more importantly, that they are not necessary.[29]

Such objections had some apparent effect. The final draft of the Arts and Science response to *Where Next?* acknowledges that "some [. . .] objected to the possible

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[25] "*Goal 5.7:* To use information technology strategically to advance the university's goals in the face of resource constraints" (Michael Adams et al., *Imagining the Future* (Aug. 2010)*, p. 36).

[26] Department of Religious Studies, [Response to *Where Next?*] (Feb. 2010), p. 2.

[27] Geography Response to *Where Next?*, p. 1. The Department of Philosophy responds similarly: "We do not believe that philosophy lends itself to 'virtual courses' and 'e-learning'. It is important that the University recognizes that the key element it provides in a humanities education is the opportunity for informed face-to-face discourse and dialogue" (Response to *Where Next?,* p. 3).

[28] See Holly Tousignant, "Talking hybrid learning models," *Queen's Journal*, 26 Mar. 2010, http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2010-03-26/news/talking-hybrid-learning-models/, 4 July 2011.

[29] Queen's Students for Real Academic Planning, "Petition" to Queen's University Board of Trustees, 1 May 2010, http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/queensstudentsforrealacademicplanning/, 3 Mar. 2011. A similar petition was presented with over 200 Queen's employee (mostly faculty) signatures, bearing the text: "several specific proposals being presented at the administrative level as summaries of staff, student and faculty proposals—e.g. for increasing class sizes, expanding virtualization, diminishing student-faculty contact, and pursuing administrative centralization—do not reflect staff, student, and faculty wishes, and are not shaped by collectively determined scholarly principles and objectives, but reflect an administrative preoccupation with cost cutting" (Queen's Employees for Real Academic Planning, Petition to the Queen's University Board of Trustees, 1 May 2010, http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/queensemployeesforrealacademicplanning/, 3 Mar. 2011).

developments in virtualization [. . .] and the possibility of enrolment increases."[30] Its recommendations for virtualization are not therefore retracted, but in place of the former resource-based rationales, the final draft emphasizes pedagogical potentials, referring to the pilot projects of 2009-10:

> Assessment of the outcomes of the pilot projects in Biology 102 and Politics 110 was undertaken through surveys [. . . .] 87% of those in Biology 102 and 83% of those in [sic] thought the availability of streamed lectures was extremely useful or useful. Students further observed that the video lectures improved their understanding [. . . .] The results generally indicated that students saw the video-captured lectures as an asset to the course, but there is still room for improvement on the technological side. The instructors involved in this pilot all agreed that they would like to continue this exercise. It is clear, however, that this supplement to technology is appropriate for only some instructors and works where there is sufficient support for the instructor in adding this kind of element to an existing course. (p. 20)

The Dean of Arts and Science personally acknowledged, as reported by *Queen's Journal*, that virtualization had been "proposed in response to both fiscal pressures and advancements in technology," and that

> Decisions to apply classroom technology in teaching need to be made individually by teachers on the basis of its fitness for specific contexts, materials, and intellectual and pedagogical purposes, rather than being imposed uniformly from above for cost-cutting or other administrative purposes. Moreover, virtualization of teaching has not been proven to increase efficiency—many reports indicate the contrary.[31]

These latter points should be underscored. We take seriously the pedagogical potentials of educational technology where it is driven from the grass-roots upward, and we welcome the University's adoption of pedagogical and qualitative rationales in its considerations for virtualization. But there is reason to believe that the recent proposals at Queen's are still really driven by financial and resource concerns. Online learning is still proposed as a way of "growing enrolments" in view of "limitations" in "faculty complement" and "teaching infrastructure."[32] The Principal's "Innovation Fund," meant to support innovations that will "generate revenue and reduce costs," has been used to fund virtualization pilot programs,[33] and the Principal himself has commented, as late as

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[30] FAS, "Response to the Principal's Vision Statement, *Where Next? Toward a University Academic Plan* (April 15, 2010), p. 7.
[31] Tousignant, "Talking hybrid learning models."
[32] FAS, "New Initiatives," p. 1; Silverman et al., "Enrolment Planning," p. 4.
[33] "Principal announces Innovation Fund," *Queen's News Centre*, 17 April 2009, http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/principal-announces-innovation-fund. "According to Brenda Ravenscroft, Associate Dean (Studies) the move to expand online and distance course offerings stemmed from Principal Daniel Woolf 's Innovation Fund set up in 2009, **to provide seed funding for the best revenue generation or cost reduction ideas** emanating from the Queen's community" ("Continuing and Distance Studies is Reaching Out to the World," *OnQ*, Mar. 2011, p. 8, emphasis added).

February 2011, that lecture-capture might reduce costs in "instructor time."[34] It is troubling to find that Arts and Science is already constructing a "business case" to see if online learning "will be profitable" before the *academic* planning process has been given a chance to conclude its consideration of academic merits and priorities. But we note with particular concern this statement of the *Queen's University Budget Report 2011-12*:

> As part of its planning exercises (in the face of the need to balance the budget), Queen's has been exploring various revenue-generating ideas. For example, we have begun major initiatives with Blyth Enterprises to facilitate educating Queen's students abroad, and we have explored the feasibility of offering Queen's degrees and certificates through distance on-line learning. In the coming year, business cases for a number of such initiatives will be generated.[35]

This makes the primacy of budgetary and "revenue generating" motives clear, and points to important ways in which the University has allowed financial considerations to pre-empt the conclusion of its academic planning processes. The Principal has repeatedly assured the community that the academic planning process will have priority over financial cost-cutting because the academic planning process is supposed to *set* the priorities, thus:

> The academic planning process that we will be embarking on in the new year will help us prioritize what we do and how we do it. I think it's very important that our academic values drive our financial decisions, including capital planning, budgets and human resources strategies.[36]

But meanwhile the University has "begun major initiatives" on financial rather than academic grounds, and has apparently already formulated its "strategic plan to

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[34] Commenting on lecture-capture used in a blended-learning experiment in Australia, the Principal's blog notes: "This was not a cost-saving measure, and indeed the up-front costs of it are not inconsiderable. The real cost-saving is in instructor time as once done a lecture doesn't need to be repeated for a few years (apart from routine updating of material)" ("Australia Tour 2011 – Monday, Feb. 7," http://www.queensu.ca/principal/apps/blog/?paged=3, 10 July 2011).

[35] *Queen's University Budget Report, 2011-12* (n.d.; ca 2011), http://www.queensu.ca/financialservices/reports/budget/Budget_Report_2011-12.pdf, p. 7. The phrasing that views these initiatives "as part of [Queen's] planning exercises" is matter for some debate, for this *Budget Report* was completed, as were the negotiations for the Blyth initiative and the business case for "distance on-line learning," before the completion of the plan. As the *Budget Report* immediately continues: "In the coming months the Academic Plan will be completed. This plan will provide guidelines to promote the reconceptualization of instructional and curricular norms" (p. 7).

[36] Daniel Woolf, "Principal's Financial Update" (26 Nov. 2009), http://www.queensu.ca/financialupdate/background/2009/nov-26.html, 11 July 2011. In *Where Next?* the Principal writes: "My hope is that the Academic Planning exercise, which I am initiating with this document, will guide not only our curriculum, research focus, and teaching and learning goals, but also our decision-making regarding financial strategies, our size, capital development, human resources and fundraising." (p. 2). See also Silverman et al., "Enrolment Planning" (19 Jan. 2011): "Principal Woolf has commissioned an academic planning exercise for Queen's University, which is currently under discussion by a Senate Task Force. The academic planning process' purpose is to guide the University with academic considerations that, in turn, will help to guide financial decision-making. It will guide revitalization, identify areas for collaboration and highlight Queen's strengths" (p. 3).

incorporate technology in teaching and learning."[37] One thing to be emphasized here is that proper *academic* consideration of the prospects of virtualization and online education will be critical even for any proper evaluation of their *financial* advisability. This becomes clearer in consideration of the provincial context.

2.   Context: Ontario

In its recent initiatives to expand virtualization and blended and online learning, Queen's is well in sync with the interests and recent plans of the provincial government. In both cases there is a range or mixture of stated motives—from the frankly budgetary to the enhancement of access, flexibility, and quality—and in both there is a pronounced movement toward greater coordination and centralization of online initiatives.

The throne speech for 2010 promised the creation of an "Ontario Online Institute" (OOI).[38] Exactly what it would be was not clear at the time, but through consultation with stakeholders a vision has emerged of a governmental body that will not be a degree-granting institute in its own right but a "hub" coordinating and providing access to online offerings from all participating post-secondary institutions in Ontario. Maxim Jean-Louis was engaged as Special Advisor to the Minister, and submitted his "Final Report" on 29 April 2011. This Report recommends a three-year budget of $25m, "immediate implementation," and a launch date of September 2011.[39] Most of the stake-holder reports on the OOI (written previous to and informing Jean-Louis's Report) are strongly supportive,[40] and the advantages they most frequently and explicitly cite in support are

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[37] "Call for Proposals," 2 May 2011, as cited above.

[38] "Your government will create the new Ontario Online Institute, bringing the best professors in the top programs at Ontario universities to the homes of those who want to pursue this new option for higher learning." "Speech From The Throne - Open Ontario Plan - March 8, 2010," http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/event.php?ItemID=11282&Lang=EN, 11 July 2011.

[39] Maxim Jean-Louis, *Final Report, Engagement Process for an Ontario Online Institute* (29 April 2011), http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/ooi_may2011.pdf, 11 July 2011, p. 7. Jean-Louis is President and Chief Executive Officer of Contact North. Contact North (http://www.contactnorth.ca/) is "Ontario's most extensive distance education network"; primarily funded by the MTCU and headquartered in Thunder Bay and Sudbury, it spans 94 access centres in remote rural areas, providing access to online resources at thirteen participating Ontario colleges and universities, mostly in northern Ontario (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contact_North, 11 July 2011).

[40] See especially Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), *The Ontario Online Institute: Students' Vision for Opening Ontario's Classrooms*, Aug. 2010, http://www.ousa.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/OOI-Submission.pdf, 8 May 2011; two reports from the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), "The Ontario Online Institute: Achieving The Transformation" (August 2010) and *Implementation of the Ontario Online Institute: Recommendations of the Online Learning Working Group* (April 2011) (http://www.cou.on.ca/issues-resources/key-issues/online.aspx provides links to both); and the joint response by CFS-Ontario, OCUFA, OPSEU, and CUPE-Ontario, "Opening Ontario for Whom?: A Sectoral Vision for Integrating Online Learning into the Classroom" (Dec. 2010), http://www.opseu.org/caat/caat_ac/pdf/2010%2012-onlineinstitute-en(web).pdf, 18 July 2011. Among these, OUSA is strongly supportive for reasons of access but voices concerns about quality assurance and the government's use of online options to cut costs (pp. 4-7). It advocates a strongly centralized consortium model, based upon Open Universities Australia, in which "fee collection, admissions, administration, quality assurance and student services are integrated and placed in the hands of the institute" but degrees are issued by the participating institutions (pp. 10-11). The COU argues for a less centralized consortium model, in which admissions, advising, curricula, and quality assurance are handled

flexibility and access, particularly for Francophones and "underserved groups," defined by Jean-Louis as Aboriginal students, first-generation learners, new Canadians, persons with disabilities, and "Ontarians in small, rural and remote areas."[41] As Jean-Louis makes clear, the OOI's agenda is thus tied to another promise of the 2010 Ontario throne speech: that the "Open Ontario Plan will raise Ontario's postsecondary rate to 70 per cent."[42] To government, online learning is an especially attractive means to this end not only because it opens access to new "market" sectors (the hitherto "underserved groups and students who are not currently engaged"), but also because it has potential for "quick" expansion without "undue capital infrastructure costs"[43]—such as building more buildings and hiring more faculty. The OOI, according to Jean-Louis, "should seek to leverage existing assets" (p. 5; the term "leverage" occurs 61 times in his Report to the Minister).[44] Queen's interest in using blended learning and online registrations as a way to boost enrolments despite "limitations" in faculty complement and physical infrastructure is thus in step with thinking at the provincial level.

But if the "leveraging" of "existing assets" to increase access is the OOI's most explicit purpose, it is not the only one. Most proponents of the OOI emphasize the need for something that OUSA describes as "already a long-term priority for the Government," the development of a "credit transfer framework" among Ontario's PSE institutions "to increase student mobility and allow institutions to pool resources."[45] More than coincidentally, enhancement of credit transfer is also a key recommendation in the HEQCO Report of October 2010 on "The Benefits of Greater Differentiation of Ontario's University Sector."[46] (See Appendix for fuller discussion.) As its authors write,

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by the participating institutions, and the OOI has only "a coordinating role" (pp. 4, 6, 8). CFS-Ontario et al. are more critical, voicing concerns that using online learning is insufficient in itself to solve access problems and may "create a two-tiered system of education" (p. 4). Jean-Louis lists other responses, p. 26.

[41] Jean-Louis, p. 6. The list varies somewhat from place to place in Jean-Louis's report, e.g., elsewhere it includes "older workers" and "youth at risk" (p. 16).

[42] Ontario Office of the Premier, "Speech from the Throne," 8 Mar. 2010. The attainment rate when the policy was announced was 62%. As Jean-Louis puts it: "If Ontario is to achieve the ambitious target of a 70% attainment rate for its workforce, an Ontario Online Institute should target [. . .] underserved groups and students who are not currently engaged in Ontario's education and training sector" (p. 6).

[43] Jean-Louis, pp. 6, 116.

[44] OUSA cautions: "students are adamant that online learning should not be viewed by government or by institutions as a mechanism to realize cost-savings" (p. 5). While Jean-Louis lists many points on which OUSA is supportive (pp. 116-17), he omits to mention this caveat. And he later offers, as the first among "a variety of reasons for the widespread adoption of online learning amongst post-secondary institutions globally": "Cost savings and efficiency – seeking to increase institutional capacity by adopting different models for teaching and learning [. . .]. There are many examples of substantial cost savings through the adoption of flexible learning" (pp. 83-84). He also states, as third of three relevant "metrics," "Enabling the most efficient use of resources by measuring cost effectiveness and efficiency. An OOI can facilitate the most effective use of scarce resources" (p. 18; the first and second are "The number of students enrolled in and completing online courses" and "Continuous improvement in student engagement and learning outcomes in online learning courses as a measure of their involvement, satisfaction and utilization of learning resources").

[45] OUSA, p. 4. See also pp. 6, 14, and especially 21; COU, "The Ontario Online Institute," pp. 1-2, and "Implementation," pp. 2, 7; and Jean-Louis, pp. 31-32.

[46] Harvey P. Weingarten and Fiona Deller, "The Benefits of Greater Differentiation of Ontario's University Sector: Final Report." Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), Oct. 2010, http://www.heqco.ca/siteCollectionDocuments/DifferentiationENG.pdf, 18 Feb. 2011, p. 10; see also pp. 4,

"improving Ontario's credit transfer system should precede or accompany more system differentiation."[47] It is not difficult to see how credit transfer and an online institute would both be needed to accelerate such "differentiation": with those pieces in place, each campus would be far more free to concentrate in (and receive extra funding for) particular specializations without "squandering [. . .] resources on programs not appropriate for them."[48] More bluntly, they would be more free to wither or close departments and programs that are unremunerative, or that simply have stronger counterparts at other institutions, and to grow in their own designated areas of strength. Given online programs and credit transfer, Queen's students could then go online to other institutions for courses in subjects not offered on their own campus.[49] "Differentiation" is, in other words, another aspect of the "leveraging" strategy that subtends the proposals for the OOI, and it is one that Principal Woolf anticipates in his proposal for "doing 'less with less'" at Queen's: "the challenge is," he explains, "to recognize that we cannot be all things to all people. This will entail hard choices. There will be some things we will want to emphasize; there will be others we will no longer be able to do.[50] With an online institute, arguably, we would no longer need to; but we would see a significant rise in the number of credits completed online for a university degree.

Yet a third, longer-range goal of the OOI that emerges in Jean-Louis's Report is to advance Ontario as a "leader" in online learning, and thus not only to "leverage" the province's educational resources for domestic use, but also to package them as economic "exports."[51] Jean-Louis's stair-stepping series of envisioned "Opportunities" should be contemplated in some detail:

- We can provide Ontario's students with greater access to more flexible, high quality education and training opportunities through the innovative use of technology.
- We can do more and lead North America in the development of quality online programs and courses (from content delivered fully online to hybrid or blended delivery to delivery by videoconferencing or correspondence), thereby increasing access to and success in post-secondary education and

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6-7, 13, 19. The same report also suggests, incidentally, that "One of the goals of government might be to reduce the incremental per-student cost [of education] by greater use of on-Line learning" (23n4).

[47] Weingarten and Deller, p. 11.

[48] Weingarten and Deller, p.10.

[49] Thus the Hon. John Milloy, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, calls for more "co-operation and collaboration between institutions so that the student who's at Western can easily access a course online at Waterloo and that there aren't the hoops to go through. [. . .] we're working very closely with the institutions to see how we can build that collaboration [. . .] and how we can put it under the umbrella of an online institute" (27 Oct. 2011; qtd. Jean-Louis, p. 61).

[50] Daniel Woolf, *Where Next?*, pp. 5-6.

[51] In this, Jean-Louis closely follows the lead of MTCU Minister John Milloy, whom he quotes: "Ontario has a chance to be a leader. [. . .] because it's online, if we can get it right here in Ontario, it also becomes exportable, where students around the world can access what's happening in Ontario" (qtd. Jean-Louis 8; see also 61-62). In his sketch of the "Global Context for Online Learning," Jean-Louis lists the "tangible benefits" to institutions "from their investments in online learning," and puts "Cost savings and efficiency" first on the list; he also cites unspecified "analysts" who estimate the "fast growing global market" in online learning at "$27 billion" and project a value of over "$50 billion in 2014" (pp. 82-84).

> enhancing the competitiveness of Ontarians in the knowledge economy. We can establish Ontario as the hub for online learning growth and development in North America.
> - We can use these online courses and programs to create an attractive suite of learning opportunities and services which Ontario can "export", either directly or in partnership with others, world-wide.
> - We can be a global leader in leveraging the development of mobile learning technologies from Ontario-based technology companies – Research in Motion's PlayBook and Desire2Learn's mobile learning platform 2GO – as a basis for building a vibrant and effective mobile learning industry sector with its home in Ontario. More companies will engage in this work as online learning grows in Ontario – focused investments can stimulate the growth of this emerging economic sector.[52]

Here the laudable pedagogical ambition to serve Ontario's domestic population, and especially the "underserved," with "flexible, high-quality education" morphs gradually but distinctly, via the concept of the "knowledge economy," into a baldly commercial ambition for "global leader[ship]" in "this emerging economic sector." Moreover, the conceptualization of Ontario as "basis" and "home" for this global venturing begins to put the priority of motives in question. Further on, in his "Roadmap" of "strategic initiatives," Jean-Louis specifies "**Improving the quality of courses and programs and increasing registrations in Ontario—building the solid home base that is a pre-requisite for a global reputation**."[53] The apposition means that increasing access and "registrations" in Ontario is not the OOI's end, but its beginning—not its purpose, but a means for commercial conquests. Registering Francophone, Aboriginal, and other "underserved" markets will be useful in the global marketing of what is treated no longer as education but with increasing explicitness as a commodity. In his report on consultations, Jean-Louis does record a caveat that "The primary focus of an OOI must be to meet the needs of Ontarians first before pursuing the world."[54] But even here the motivational priority is backward; "primary focus" has a merely sequential force. Under the rubric of "issues worth looking at," Jean-Louis includes:

> **Building an Export Market** – Open Ontario is a major thrust of the Government of Ontario. The idea is to leverage excellence in products and services developed in Ontario **so as to grow our ability to export these to others** [. . . .] One stakeholder was very clear, however, that an OOI should serve Ontario first and that success in doing so would lead the world to come to us.[55]

Plainly, the possible overconfidence about "our" ability to capture the world market is not the greatest cause for concern here. There are serious pedagogical questions about how true educational ends will survive such a commercial agenda. And there are ethical

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[52] Jean-Louis, pp. 8-9.
[53] Jean-Louis, p. 17, emphasis added.
[54] Jean-Louis, p. 32.
[55] Jean-Louis, p. 36, emphasis added. On the issue of the global "export market," see, further, pp. 71, 154, 155.

concerns about treating those members of our society who are already "underserved" and thus most in need of genuine educational opportunity as instruments, as the "base" to be created and maintained for ulterior commercial ends.[56]

In these connections it should be noted that it is not clear whether, in Jean-Louis' framework, existing PSE institutions will be allowed to maintain their distance. Whether the OOI will have a "voluntary membership" is a question that is not answered,[57] but Jean-Louis does appear to recommend that participation be required, since the OOI is to "Work with the [. . .] universities" in its second year "to position online learning as a core strategic component of their plans for the future, ensuring that *all* institutions [. . .] see the role of online learning as a critical part of their work."[58] In any case, it is our view that Queen's should distance itself from any such treatment of online learning as a marketable commodity, and focus instead on subordinating technological developments to strictly educational priorities. And beyond merely distancing itself, Queen's has a social obligation, as one of Canada's preeminent post-secondary institutions, to advise the government from its *academic* viewpoint concerning the critical oversights of this project. Some relevant considerations are discussed in the following section.

3.   Considerations about Virtualization in General

[**Academic advantages.**] From a purely academic perspective, blended and online learning offers many potential advantages. As almost all proponents of the OOI have argued, it has potential to "advance access, especially for traditionally underrepresented groups facing financial, physical, social, cultural, and geographical barriers which prevent them from attending a traditional post-secondary institution."[59] It can also mean significantly "greater choice" in course and program availability if students can choose among offerings at a range of institutions,[60] and it can improve flexibility for students in ways that can enhance learning.[61] The greater flexibility of online programming can also improve access even for those to whom conventional post-secondary education might technically be available. For instance, OUSA suggests using "monthly start dates" in place of the "traditional semester model," since "more and more students are unwilling to

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[56] Jean-Louis, pp. 6-7. "In particular, first generation learners, aboriginal learners, learners in communities distant from a college or university, those seeking essential skills and apprentices will be a major focus for investment in the initial stages of the work of an OOI" (p. 8).

[57] Jean-Louis, p. 35.

[58] Jean-Louis, p. 13, emphasis added. The same page refers to making online learning "a component in *each* publicly-assisted institution's strategic intent" (emphasis added).

[59] OUSA, p. 4. See also OUSA's fuller account of the groups that need improved access, p. 6.

[60] Jean-Louis, p. 71.

[61] Flexibility is a one of the most frequently used terms in support of online learning and of the OOI in particular (it occurs 88 times in Jean-Louis's Report). But it can mean very different things. Online programming gives administrators flexibility in scheduling, especially by obviating the need for room scheduling, and, as noted above, it can lend "flexibility" for "differentiating" or specializing campuses. But the kind of flexibility that it provides for students has more direct pedagogical relevance, e.g.: "Transmitting material online allows students to go at their own pace, at their own time of day and to review complex concepts and theories as many times as needed" (Jill Atkinson, "PSYC 100 redesign project," n.d., http://www.queensu.ca/psychology/news/newsletter/undergrad.html, 19 July 2011).

wait" to begin school in September, "especially when they have just lost their job."[62]
This is clearly a demand that conventional classroom teaching cannot accommodate but
that online media can.

In terms of actual pedagogy, there are ways in which blended and online methods
can "enhance student engagement," especially by making learning "more learner centred"
or giving students more initiative in the process.[63] Certainly where the presentation of
mere disciplinary "content" such as information and data is concerned, electronic media
have advantages over live instructors in their 24/7 availability and limitless patience for
drilling and review.[64] Lecture-capture, when used in a Queen's pilot to supplement rather
than replace class-room teaching, was valued by students who liked "being able to start,
stop and fast-forward the lecture and being able to watch the lecture repeatedly." And it
was even found to change class dynamics in positive ways: as Jonathan Rose reports,
"Instead of furiously writing down everything that was said," his students "had the
opportunity to listen, absorb and take fewer notes."[65] Telecommunications have
tremendous potential in relation to language acquisition and internationalization. A
campus member comments, for instance, that "Japanese Relations at Queen's (JRQ)
club" can pair a Queen's student "with a person of similar level to practice conversational
Japanese language skills" online, and proposes that "a similar program of a larger scale"
for other languages would enable students to "integrate a language into their schedule" by
skype or other means. "It would also encourage students to interact more with
international students who have these language skills."[66]

In these examples, electronic technology is used to *extend* what is possible in
conventional classroom pedagogy. It is worth stressing that it is best when used for this
supplemental purpose rather than in efforts to displace or replicate what occurs in the
classroom.

[**Qualitative claims and comparisons**.] Quality is a major and perennial issue of
contention in discussions of virtualization, blended, and online learning. It is important,
therefore, for the academic consideration of these matters to distinguish reasonable and

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[62] OUSA, p. 12.
[63] FAS, *Technology in Teaching and Learning*, ca. May 2011,
http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/technology-in-teaching-and-learning, 3 June 2011.
[64] Hence the long history of educational technology in language training, beginning with the tape recorder.
On the rising interest in online language training, see Steve Kolowich, "Expanding Language by (Online)
Degree." *Inside Higher Ed*, April 25, 2011,
http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/04/25/pennsylvania_public_higher_education_system_will_off
er_fully_online_degrees_in_arabic_and_other_languages, 2 May 2011. A member of Queen's Biomedical
and Molecular Sciences suggested that Queen's could make more use of resources like "Kahn Academy
videos, which cost nothing and cover many areas," for drilling on the basics of science ("Response to
Consultative Town-Hall Meeting on Disciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity," 11 April 2011,
http://www.queensu.ca/saptf/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/APTFApr11_11takeaway.pdf, 18 July 2011).
On the Khan Academy, see http://www.khanacademy.org/about.
[65] Jonathan Rose, qtd. in "Videotaped lectures get high marks," *Queen's News Centre*, 19 July 2010,
http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/videotaped-lectures-get-high-marks, 11 July 2011.
[66] Misato, response to "III. Global Citizenship," 22 Mar. 2011, http://www.queensu.ca/saptf/?page_id=779,
24 July 2011.

demonstrated claims of quality from the rhetoric of quality. In the institutional context, even resource-based proposals for greater use of electronic media usually express some concern for quality; Queen's Virtualization Task Force, for instance, was "charged with examining the potential for use of [. . .] electronic media in reducing costs of instruction, alleviating space constraints [. . .], and enhancing the quality of the teaching."[67] Little is specifically said in most such formulae, however, about how or in what sense quality is or might be enhanced by electronic media; the claims often appear as mere leavening to the resource-related motivations. It is well known that for many years now instructors at Queen's and elsewhere have routinely sought to enhance the quality of their otherwise conventional lecture and seminar courses with supplemental use of electronic media— email, video projection, Powerpoint, video conferencing, WebCT, Moodle, lecture-capture, and more—and have had much success in doing so. But it has to be observed that these enhancements have all been at the cost of additional time, effort, and other resources. In the virtual world as in the real one, enhancing quality rarely walks hand-in-hand with cost-cutting.

In the vast literature on e-learning, however, one frequently finds more direct and elaborate arguments for its contributions to educational quality. There has been so much contention on both sides of the thesis that there is "no significant difference" in outcomes between online and classroom learning that "no significant difference" has become a kind of pro-online advertising banner in titles of books, articles, and websites. Jean-Louis's section on "Quality Assurance" concludes by simply asserting one side of this argument: "In general, research indicates that provided best practices are followed, online learning is as effective, if not more effective, than classroom-based teachings."[68] This sounds authoritative, but the claim is misleading: in evidence, Jean-Louis cites only a "nosignificantdifference" website that purports to list studies on both sides but that makes no mention of the most significant critiques of "no significant difference" arguments.[69] Similarly, at Queen's, the Faculty of Arts and Science webpage on "Technology in Teaching and Learning" claims:

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[67] Virtualization Task Force, Final Report, Aug. 2009, as cited above. The OOI proposals make many claims with similar qualitative riders, E.g.: "We can provide Ontario's students with greater access to more flexible, high quality education"; "Leveraging partnerships with the private sector to enable innovation in quality online learning"; "There is a consensus amongst the stakeholders [about] wider choice, increased access, and greater flexibility – with quality as an overriding driver" (Jean-Louis, p. 8, 14, 26; see also pp. 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, etc.) For a summary of students' concerns about quality, see Jean Louis, p. 27, point 3.

[68] Jean-Louis, p. 66.

[69] The website (http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/) began as a supplement to *The No Significant Difference Phenomenon* (1998), by Thomas L. Russell, a self-proclaimed advocate of online learning (see http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/about_tom.asp). It lists scores of studies claiming "n.s.d." or "better results with technology," and just a token few arguing the contrary, but does not cite a single one of the trenchant critiques by Goodyear and Ellis, Joy and Garcia, Stahl, Selwyn, or Oblinger and Hawkins (see below, notes [72-74]). Similarly, in reporting his consultations, Jean-Louis mentions that some "stakeholders" were concerned with the "Lack of evidence of efficacy of online learning," and adds: "many are unaware of the substantial body of research on the efficacy of online learning" (p. 31). But he does not cite any or otherwise engage the argument.

> A 2010 meta-analysis of online learning studies found that students who took all of [sic] part of their course online performed better, on average, than those taking the same course through traditional face-to-face instruction.[70]

That is a misleadingly selective and simplified representation of the source, whose conclusions are, in fact, elaborately nuanced and qualified:

> When used by itself, online learning appears to be as effective as conventional classroom instruction, but not more so.
> However, several caveats are in order: Despite what appears to be strong support for blended learning applications, the studies in this meta-analysis do not demonstrate that online learning is superior as a medium. In many of the studies showing an advantage for blended learning, the online and classroom conditions differed in terms of time spent, curriculum and pedagogy. It was the combination of elements in the treatment conditions (which was likely to have included additional learning time and materials as well as additional opportunities for collaboration) that produced the observed learning advantages.[71]

These multiple qualifications point to the apples-and-oranges nature of the "no significant difference" dispute: the problem is not only that apples and oranges may be good in different ways and for different things, but also that good apples are better than rotten oranges, and vice versa: the teaching process is so complex, with so much variation between particular classes, conditions, teachers, students, and student numbers, that to offer a *categorical* judgment about the relative quality of online vs. classroom teaching *in general* is essentially nonsensical.

[**Advocacy vs. critical appraisal**.] The larger point to be drawn from the claims cited above, however, is that in appraisals of virtualization and online learning, there is a high level of advocacy, sometimes known as "technology push" or "cyber hype," that often sidelines balanced critical assessment; so even the claims of what appear to be scholarly sources must be assessed with caution. Bernd Carsten Stahl writes that "Despite [. . .] (potential) problems of e-teaching," one hears "relatively little of them in public discourses. Strengths of e-teaching are emphasized, often without any sort of evidence, whereas weaknesses are systematically blended out."[72] Stahl suggests that this

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[70] FAS, "Technology in Teaching and Learning," ca. May 2011, http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/technology-in-teaching-and-learning, 3 June 2011.
[71] Barbara Means, et al., *Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: a Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies* (U.S. Department of Education, rev. ed. Sept. 2010) (http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf), p. xviii, from the Executive Summary. The authors proceed to observe that "although the types of research designs used by the studies in the meta-analysis were strong (i.e., experimental or controlled quasi-experimental), many of the studies suffered from weaknesses such as small sample sizes; failure to report retention rates for students in the conditions being contrasted; and, in many cases, potential bias stemming from the authors' dual roles as experimenters and instructors" (ibid).
[72] "E-teaching—the Economic Threat to the Ethical Legitimacy of Education?" *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 15.2 (2004), p. 157. Stahl also cites discourse analyses showing "that published statements are one-sided and in favor of e-teaching" (p. 157); see also Wendy Cukier et al., "A critical

is due to the "domination of education by economic interests" and the consideration of "E-teaching as a market" (pp. 157-58)—a thesis that Jean-Louis's aspirations for the OOI go some distance to illustrate. Similarly noting a tendency toward "technology push" and specifying the "recent history of exaggerated claims for e-learning,"[73] Peter Goodyear and R.A. Ellis specify a broader array of the "forces" that impel advocacy: "First, there are the economic concerns of government; second, the commercial interests of information technology (IT) vendors; and third, the managerial preoccupations of university administrations":

> Governments, concerned with national economic competitiveness in a globalizing knowledge economy, see IT as a valuable component of university infrastructures. But their concerns tend to be rendered as an interest in employability [. . .] rather than as something with a more forward-looking or open pedagogical foundation.
> The major IT vendors see universities as important sites within which future consumers can get a publicly subsidized taste for their products, whether tools or content. Their products are not neutral. Irrespective of evidence about pedagogical benefit, the dominant tools of the IT vendors (presentation software, learning management systems) position [. . .] good study as successful navigation through a carefully demarcated and structured online space (Selwyn, 2007).
> University administrations, working in contexts already shaped by government and industry, struggling to find sustainable competitive advantage in a system of mass higher education and declining public resources, also find their own uses for e-learning. Again, their strategies are largely unencumbered by evidence of pedagogical benefit, or even by concerns for improvements in the quality of educational outcomes. Rather, their promotion of IT is best seen as a branding tool—'bestowing a high-tech veneer onto . . . low-tech practices'.[74]

In the present fiscal environment, it would be surprising if prospects, or even faint hopes, of financial savings and profits did not tilt campus discourse about e-learning away from

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analysis of media discourse on information technology: preliminary results of a proposed method for critical discourse analysis." *Info Systems J* 19 (2009), 175-96.

[73] Peter Goodyear and R.A. Ellis, "University Students' Approaches to Learning: Rethinking the Place of Technology." Distance Education 29:2 (Aug. 2008), 141. Similarly, Ernest H. Joy, II, and Federico Garcia survey scholarly literature that "purports to have found no significant difference in learning effectiveness between technology-based and conventional delivery media," and find that "much of the research in this field is seriously flawed," with the bias consistently in favour of the technology ("Measuring Learning Outcomes: A New Look at No-Significant-Difference Findings," *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks* 4: 1 (June 2000), p. 33). See also Diana Oblinger and Brian L. Hawkins, "The Myth about No Significant Difference," *Educause*, Nov.-Dec. 2006, 14-15.

[74] Goodyear and Ellis, pp. 144-45, citing N. Selwyn, "The Use of Computer Technology in University Teaching and Learning: A Critical Perspective," *Journal of Computer and Assisted Learning*, 23.2 (2007), 83-94 (see especially pp. 84-88). On connections between online education and big business, see also David F. Noble, *Digital Diploma Mills* (2002), especially chs. 2-3. Jean-Louis's report on the OOI recommends strong ties with the private sector, and includes advice from private-sector consultants. "An OOI should also engage private sector providers of technology platforms, services, and infrastructure as there are opportunities for mutual benefit in collaboration and partnership with the education and training sector" (p. 5); "an OOI must create an environment that is inclusive of many vendors" (p. 53); see also pp. 3, 13, 14, 22, 26, 31, 35, 38, 50-55, 66-67.

due critical and academic consideration and toward advocacy. But claiming that it is good will not make it so; where quality is a genuine end, critical appraisal is essential.

It is therefore unfortunate to find that there is also a tendency on the part of online advocates to dismiss criticism out of hand as "faculty resistance," as some kind of meaningless noise or friction that is endemic to the system and needs to be calculated out. In his *2011 Outlook*, Tony Bates cautions that "The main systemic barrier to online learning and distance education remains faculty resistance." In evidence, he cites only a survey in which most respondents agreed that this "was a factor that impeded the institution in moving to online learning."[75] "One of the key reasons for faculty resistance," he adds, "is their lack of knowledge or understanding of pedagogy and theories of teaching and learning."[76] To dismiss critique out of hand as "resistance" can be disastrous, of course. But the same assumption underlies Jean-Louis's airy dismissal of his "stakeholders'" concerns about "Lack of evidence of efficacy of online learning." He only responds: "many are unaware of the substantial body of research on the efficacy" (p. 31). He does not reproduce or engage their arguments, any more than he cites or discusses the "substantial body of research" on his own side, though his Report to the Minister is almost 58,000 words long.[77]

All of this is not, of course, to dismiss real arguments in favour of online learning or for its uses in particular contexts; it is only to say that we need to keep our critical balance. If vendors and other advocates are apt to dismiss faculty concerns as mere "resistance," educational institutions must resist the advocates and cultivate this critical role within themselves. They have the most obvious interest in knowing the critical truth about online learning, since they are centrally involved in its use and development, in the costs it incurs, and in any gains or tradeoffs it may bring. And they also have the capacity to hear this critical truth, having faculty who generally do, whatever Bates may say, know something about teaching and learning. The climate of cyber hype that surrounds online learning is one reason why its implementation is best ordered from the ground up, by those who see how it works, rather than from the top down, by those who simply wish it to work or to cut costs.

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[75] Tony Bates, *2011 Outlook for Online and Distance Education*. Contact North/elearnnetwork, Jan. 2011, p. 9.

[76] Bates, p. 9.

[77] Though he is Special Advisor to the Minister, Jean-Louis explicitly assumes an advocacy role for the OOI, and implicitly for himself: "An Ontario Online Institute should focus its branding efforts on *promoting* online learning from across the post-secondary sector *as equal to traditional campus-based learning and equally linked to excellence and innovation*" (p. 8, emphasis added). Again: "in acting as an advocate for online learning to institutions, government, employers and communities, an OOI should be careful not to try and 'boil the ocean'" (p. 32). See also p. 2: "An OOI also needs to be an advocate with government for online learning as a strategic investment and as a focal point for innovation and development." Jean-Louis formerly authored an editorial titled "If it is Good Enough for Nobel Prize Winner Nelson Mandela, New Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Shaun Atleo, and Former Premier of Alberta, Ralph Klein . . . It is Also Good Enough for You!" (*Algoma News*, 26 Aug. 2009), http://www.thealgomanews.ca/News/Editorial/If+It+Is+Good+Enough+For+Nobel+Prize+Winner+Nelson +Mandela,+New+Chief+Of+The+Assembly+Of+First+Nations,+Shaun+Atleo+And+Former+Premier+Of +Alberta,+Ralph+Klein....str?4940.

[**Financial Benefits.]** While financial benefits (both cost-cutting and revenue-generating) are often in the forefront of both governmental and institutional considerations for e-learning, they are strongly rejected by students (see n. [44] above). There is, moreover, as Stahl has argued, "very little evidence" that educational technology "reduces cost."[78] Beyond this, cost-effectiveness is, like comparative "quality," a question on which categorical claims are of dubious validity: online learning can be either more costly or more cost-effective than conventional classrooms, depending on a multitude of factors. But in general, "you get what you pay for": options that improve learning are likely to be additional costs, while those that save on resources are likely to have a downside in quality.[79]

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With these general considerations in mind, the province's plans for the OOI raise more particular concerns. Especially if the participation of all PSE institutions in Ontario is to be obligatory, the institutions need take these and related concerns seriously, to directly involve the affected students and faculty on their own campuses in the consultation, and to advise the Ministry on this basis.[80]

[Commercialization / commodification of teaching]. As we have seen, Jean-Louis envisions the OOI as developing Ontario as a "home-base" market in order to develop a "global leader[ship]" in "this emerging economic sector."[81] This ambition raises concerns both about the sincerity of the concomitant claims to seek "quality" in the provision of domestic online learning, and about the ethical propriety of treating the "underserved" Ontario "market" as an instrument in a commercial quest for global markets. But the proposition for commercialization raises concerns in itself, since education is a fundamentally "interpersonal" process that suffers, if it survives at all, in online commodification.[82]

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[78] Stahl, p. 157.

[79] Tony Bates notes the common "[f]ailure to develop appropriate methods for costing online learning; the costs are often unknown, as are the costs of face-to-face teaching, but generally technology is an added cost rather than used to replace less effective activities" (p. 3). Uncertainty on this issue arises repeatedly in campus discussions. In the Arts and Science Committee of Departments, for instance, "a member cited experiments in Psychology with blended learning, fewer lectures, and more virtualization as showing a possible route for extending present resources. Another member observed that the experiments in Psychology are [. . .] resource-intensive in different ways, and won't help the university make do with less" (APTF Consultation with Arts and Science Committee of Departments, March 25, 2011, http://www.queensu.ca/saptf/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/APTFMar25_11Takeaway.pdf).

[80] Jean-Louis refers to reports by representative bodies such as COU, OUSA, and (jointly) CFS-Ontario, OCUFA, OPSEU, and CUPE-Ontario, and to consultations with online experts and private-sector interests, but there has been no grass-roots consultation on the OOI on Queen's campus, that we are aware of, and in fact most faculty and students at Queen's are entirely unaware of the proposals. The case is similar with the related HEQCO recommendations for "greater differentiation" (see p. [32], below).

[81] Jean-Louis, pp. 8-9. The description of the OOI "learning portal" as "a one stop, 24x7, multi-dimensional portal" (p. 9) appears to be modeled on an all-night grocery. See also note [84], below.

[82] As David Noble puts it: "Education is a process that necessarily entails an interpersonal (not merely interactive) relationship between people—student and teacher (and student and student) that aims at individual and collective self-knowledge. (Whenever people recall their educational experiences they tend to remember above all not courses or subjects or the information imparted but people, people who changed

[**Conflation of curricular "needs" with "market" "demand."**] Jean-Louis repeatedly refers to "gap analysis and market study on program and courses needs [sic] to identify gaps in current program offerings"; again, "a gap analysis and market study on the need for new online learning programs and courses."[83] The concern raised by such formulations, which identify "need" with "demand," and which therefore suppose that it may be discovered by "market study," is about curricular standards and educational quality: curricula cannot be properly determined by student demand, since the students are not the experts, and the learning of a discipline requires coverage of matters that may not be in "demand," in some cases because the students who need them do not even know about them yet.

[**Over-confidence concerning the extent and accessibility of "markets."**] It is exciting to propose that the OOI "Expand opportunities to market Ontario-based learning materials to other markets worldwide," and to speak of "the vast market for non-credit courses online."[84] But Jean-Louis' only foray into market analysis is a vague paragraph claiming, e.g., and without sources, that "Analysts' review of the industry suggests that the market globally is $27 billion and is expected to surpass $50 billion in 2014."[85]

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their minds or their lives [. . .])" (*Digital* p. 2). Jerry Farber argues, similarly, that "peer interaction is a centrally important part of the college experience [. . . .] 'A large part of the impact of college is determined by the extent and content of one's interactions with major agents of socialization on campus, namely, faculty members and student peers' [. . . .] if we want education, we need to recognize its dependence upon a student's interaction with and immersion in a live and located community of students and faculty, and we need to stop pretending that we can deliver the university experience on a screen" ("The Third Circle: On Education and Distance Learning," *Sociological Perspectives* 41.4 (1998), pp. 800, 801, 807). Farber's quotation is from Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini's *How College Affects Students* (San Francisco, 1991), p. 620.

[83] Jean-Louis, pp. 10, 12; see also pp. 11 ("conduct market surveys and gap analysis to determine what programs and courses current and potential students are searching for…"), 21 ("a clear assessment of needs from a market or student perspective").

[84] Jean-Louis, pp. 10, 36. See also p. 42, quoting an unnamed online expert: "If we understand the value of online and distance learning in this way – as **the creation of the essential service that makes possible a commercial marketplace** of enhanced products and services – then it becomes clear that **the greatest opportunity for online and distance education today is the possibility of the creation of that marketplace, not only in Canada but globally**. There is a clear link between educational attainment and economic activity generally. **Increasing our capacity as an education provider increases markets not only nationally but also globally**.

"Though the provision of accessible online and distance learning is often depicted as though it were a charity **it is in fact an efficient and effective economic development strategy**. The development of expertise, **the growth of target markets, and the preparation of a recipient population** all flow from the provision of basic and fundamental learning services and products. **The first jurisdiction that successfully leverages its capacity to deliver an effective and low-cost online learning model to its own population will be in a position to offer a wide range of goods and services globally**" (p. 42, emphases added).

[85] Jean-Louis, p. 84. In quoting the Sloan Consortium report by Elaine Allen and Jeff Seaman, *Class Differences: Online Education in the United States, 2010* (Nov. 2010), http://sloanconsortium.org/publications/survey/pdf/class_differences.pdf, Jean-Louis does things like improve its "*Nearly* thirty percent of higher education students now take at least one course online" (p. 2, emphasis added) to "*Over* thirty percent" (Jean-Louis, p. 82). In the same place he adds two more bullet points that don't appear in the source document, making points that can't be sourced elsewhere in that document. The Sloan Consortium is not a neutral body in the first place (see n. [4] above), and what Jean-

(What analysts? exactly what market? and "expected" by whom?) The truth is that competition in online learning is fierce, that others are far ahead of Ontario and Queen's in development, and that there are doubts about the long-term growth of the relevant markets.[86] Thus, even if one were to accept the proposition to market education as an economic "export" via online technology, Jean-Louis's vision of Ontario's becoming "a global leader" (p. 9) and capturing "global markets" in this area (p. 17) may be optimistic and will at the very least require analysis.[87]

[Totalization.] The model proposed by Jean-Louis is totalizing in several respects: he recommends pressing all Ontario postsecondary institutions to participate,[88] he envisions making the OOI's curricular offerings seamless via "gap analysis," and he even seconds the recommendation of a private-sector consultant for a unified "K through Grey" (i.e., kindergarten through elderly) online learning system, commenting: "There are clear commercial benefits from a single platform approach at a jurisdictional level but, as New Mexico has found, there are also substantial cost savings from reduced duplication of licenses and less complexity."[89] In all of these respects the totalization is unnecessary, and would serve "commercial" ends and private-sector vendors more than PSE institutions and students. The government would be better advised to offer online learning where and only where it proves necessary and advantageous from a learning standpoint.

[Redundancy. The major (and best) argument for the OOI is that it will facilitate access, particularly to "underserved groups," and among these particularly to Aboriginal students.[90] For instance, it will "expand online learning opportunities in Ontario, particularly for Francophone, Aboriginal, first generation learners, and apprentices" (p.

Louis presents as hard data from this report are figures based on questionnaires. For instance, when Allen and Seaman present comparative % data under the question, "Are Learning Outcomes in Online Comparable to Face-to-Face?" their data quantifies yes/no responses by unspecified "academic leaders" "from more than 2,500 colleges and universities" (pp. 2-3). The precise questions posed to the respondents are not given. Thus, "Over three-quarters of academic leaders at public institutions report that online is as good as or better than face-to-face instruction…" (Allen and Seaman, p. 3). But "good or better" for what, or in what way, is not stated; it could be in profitability or administrative convenience. (See also "Survey Methodology," Allen and Seaman, p. 22).

[86] Tony Bates provides a better overview of the competitive context and "markets" in his *2011 Outlook* (see n [16] above). "In the short term," he writes, "we will continue to see continued growth in fully online distance education" (p. 5), and he notes a sharp decline in growth at Athabasca University. For a sobering glance at the competitive context in the U.S., see http://www.degree.net/; in Britain, see http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/index.htm.

[87] It is relevant that even in what Queen's terms "distance" learning, 85% of enrolments are by students on campus ("New Initiatives," p. 1). This would seem to suggest that the genuine distance market for university courses is weak.

[88] As noted above, Jean-Louis urges that the OOI "Work with the colleges, universities and training providers to position online learning as a core strategic component of their plans for the future, ensuring that *all* institutions [. . .] see the role of online learning as a critical part of their work" (p. 13, emphasis added).

[89] Jean-Louis, p. 52.

[90] Jean-Louis, pp. 8-9. "Access" and its cognates occur 186 times in Jean-Louis's Report, "Aboriginal" 51 times. The strongest case for the OOI as enhancing access to previously excluded groups appears in OUSA's Report (Aug. 2010), pp. 4-7.

10). This is a worthy objective, and yet Ontario already has Contact North, the elearnnetwork,[91] and several other consortia to serve this mandate insofar as it can be served by means of online learning. And as a joint submission to the Ministry from CFS-Ontario, OCUFA, OPSEU, and CUPE-Ontario argues, "While it is critical to eliminate barriers to post-secondary education, expanding online education would not necessarily serve this purpose on its own. A new online entity should not be created as the solution for people who currently cannot access post-secondary education." Instead, they "recommend that the government make targeted investments to improve access."[92]

[**The potential for two-tiering of PSE**.] As CFS-Ontario et al. also eloquently argue, "Expanding online education with the underlying intention of 'improving access' has the potential instead to create a two-tiered system of education. For example, students who complete their degrees largely or entirely online could be learning without the same student-teacher/student-student interaction, support services, quality assurance and academic standards throughout their degree if adequate resources are not available to support these programmes. These students – who are often most in need of accessing a high quality post-secondary education – would likely be offered a different education that would seem sub-standard compared to those who aren't completing their degrees online if it is a cheaper and convenient alternative to attending a college or university in person."[93]

[**Partitioning of the teaching process as "resources" and "administration."**] This is a perennial concern, or set of concerns, with online course delivery. Discussing the process by which the OOI should issue proposals for new online "resources," Jean-Louis stipulates "agreement that the learning resources developed can be shared either through an OOI's learning resource library or through a Commons License."[94] Putting aside questions of how intellectual property can be protected under contracts to share materials across the OOI,[95] there are prior *pedagogical* concerns to be noted about the

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[91] OUSA provides an excellent overview of these, also including OntarioLearn, "a consortium of 22 colleges," and Canadian Virtual University, an association of ten universities including Ontario's Carleton, Laurentian, Nippissing, and RMC ("The Ontario Online Institute," pp. 7-9). See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contact_North and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elearnnetwork.ca. OUSA does not find the idea of the OOI redundant, because OUSA envisions it as a more centralized consortium than Contact North and elearnnetwork, a "one stop shop" modeled on Open Universities Australia, and integrating "fee collection, admissions, quality assurance and student services" in one institution (pp. 9-11).
[92] CFS-Ontario, OCUFA, OPSEU, and CUPE-Ontario, "Opening Ontario For Whom? A Sectoral Vision for Integrating Online Learning into the Classroom," Dec. 2010, http://www.opseu.org/caat/caat_ac/pdf/2010%2012-onlineinstitute-en(web).pdf, 18 July 2011, pp. 4, 5.
[93] CFS-Ontario, et al., p. 4. This important concern is scarcely recognizable in Jean-Louis's one brief reference to it: "there is a perceived 'underclass' sentiment about online learning amongst some" (p. 31). But David Noble predicted the same consequence: "Quality higher education will not disappear entirely, but it is bound to become the exclusive preserve of the privileged, available only to children of the rich and powerful" (*Digital*, p. 36). OCUFA foresees similar consequences from HEQCO's proposals for "greater differentiation" of universities ("OCUFA Response—HEQCO Differentiation Report," 26 Oct. 2010, http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa/OCUFAResponse-HEQCODifferentiation-Oct.26,2010.pdf, 24 July 2011, p. 2.)
[94] Jean-Louis, pp. 6, 22.
[95] Jean-Louis allows that "the intellectual property rights of faculty members and others who developed courses will be fully respected with existing collective agreements" (p. 22; see also p. 32).

essential division between the online course materials (or "resources") and the teaching process. The COU refers to "**faculty *and staff* who are creating *and administering* online course [sic] and programs**."[96] This suggests not only that courses and programs are to be "administered" rather than taught, but that such "administering" might be done by "staff" as well as by faculty. Both implications reflect a significant degradation of teaching and learning environments and processes.[97]

This is not exhaustive either as a list of concerns or as discussion of any of them; but it is enough to suggest that if Queen's cares about preserving academic standards and values on campus and in Ontario, it needs to adopt a role of critical vigilance and leadership rather than of resigned compliance with regard to the OOI, as well as to its sister initiative for "greater differentiation."

But so far Queen's has appeared to be more in sync with these provincial directives than in opposition. Just as the Principal's proposal for "doing 'less with less'" and making "hard choices" at Queen's meshes with the HEQCO plan for "greater differentiation," so the Provost's commissioning of a "business case" for expanding CDS aligns Queen's with the province's rapidly developing (one might even say rushed)[98] plans for an OOI. At Queen's, as in Jean-Louis's Final Report, imaginary prospects of financial benefits have resulted in advocacy where there should be more dispassionate critical exploration, and in top-down direction where there should be more facilitation of developments coming from the ground up.

We therefore offer the following recommendations for the development of blended and online learning and other learning technology specifically at Queens.

1. **Queen's Administration should avoid "technology push" and concentrate instead on facilitation**. (a) It should avoid promoting technology as a means for cost-cutting or revenue generation, since this is an area of great uncertainty and since such claims may raise suspicions of trade-offs in quality. (b) It should likewise avoid claiming that online is as good as or better than classroom learning, since this is a matter of controversy,[99] and since the qualitative comparison is not logically subject to categorical claims. But the Administration should be open-minded and welcoming to technological initiatives from faculty, students, and departments and facilitate them appropriately, as per recommendation 2.

2. **Development should be from the ground up, not from the top down**. Rather than making a "business case" for expanding CDS, soliciting proposals, and

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[96] COU, "Implementation of the Ontario Online Institute: Recommendations of the Online Learning Working Group" (April 2011), p. 6, emphasis added; qtd. Jean-Louis, p. 34.

[97] See note [82], above.

[98] Jean-Louis recommends "immediate implementation of [his] recommendations" with a launch date of Sept. 2011 (p. 7), and urges the Ministry: "We need to move quickly to harness this commitment and begin the work that will make a difference" (p. 15); "There is general agreement [among the "stakeholders"] on the need for one or two 'quick wins' that can be launched immediately" (p. 26). The sense of hurry is probably owing to the possibility of a change in administration with the upcoming election.

[99] See pp. [16-18], above.

offering incentives, the Administration should simply make resources (especially technical support) available to instructors in support of (a) ongoing practice and (b) worthy initiatives upon application (and depending on successful vetting by a capable body).

3. **Development of technologically assisted or mediated teaching should be selective and seek appropriate fits** (if rec. 2 is observed, this will follow as a matter of course). Some areas of learning are more suited to blended or online approaches than others, as some of the unit responses reflect (e.g., Philosophy, Geography).[100]

4. **Avoid the misrepresentative billing of on-campus online learning as "distance."** "Continuing and Distance Studies" should be Continuing and Distance Studies, or it should become something like "Blended and Online Studies," as a matter of truth in advertising. CDS has a long history, and as technology has developed, the media for distance courses have evolved from paper and post-office to WebCT or Moodle. Some of its old distance courses are therefore now being referred to as "online" courses.[101] This is a matter of more than semantics, for (a) there should be more to an online course than mounting an old-style correspondence course on a website and applying an "online" label (see "design for online," below). And (b) **"about 85% of the enrolments" in CDS courses "are current on-campus Queen's students."**[102] Thus the "distance" label has become (if it wasn't always) misleading.[103] Intentionally or not, "distance studies" now has a deceptive, euphemistic effect, since teachers who might be willing to create a distance course to provide access for students beyond geographical reach might hesitate to create an online course for students who *could* be taking the course on campus.[104]

Similarly, when CDS is offering whole online programs (see rec. 6, below) "continuing" has become something of a misnomer. "Continuing education" connotes adult education for "life-long learners," such as non-credit courses taken for their intrinsic interest; an online degree in Psychology or History has no necessary relation to "continuing studies" in this sense. In sum, Queen's needs to ensure both that old labels fit evolved entities (by renaming CDS) and that old entities (such as old distance courses) evolve to fit their new "online" labels.

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[100] See note [27], above.

[101] ENGL 250S, for instance, created in 1998 and formerly known as a "distance" or "correspondence course," is now referred to by the Administration as "ENGL 250 (online)." Nothing has been changed aside from routine updating and mounting on Moodle. The FAS "New Initiatives" memo says that "CDS currently offers enough online courses for students to complete a BA General in Psychology, English, or History." But all of the ENGL courses that make up the BA in ENGL (with the exception of ENGL 100, which is being designed to replace the old ENGL 110S) were designed as correspondence courses.

[102] FAS, "New Initiatives," p. 1, emphasis added.

[103] It is not clear whether the majority of "distance" students were always on-campus Queen's students, or whether this is a recent development.

[104] David Noble writes: "for all the democratic rhetoric about extending educational access to those unable to get to the campus, the campus remains the real market for these products, where students outnumber their distance learning counterparts six-to-one" (*Digital*, p. 29). He calls extension programs "the testing grounds for online instruction and the beachheads, so to speak, for the commercialization of modern education" (p. 39; see also p. 49).

5. **Beware of letting demand for online courses displace demand (or conceal the need) for on-campus courses**. In illustration, CDS has long administered the teaching of on-campus summer courses at Queen's. Over the past three years it has phased them out; 2011 is their last year.[105] The summer courses were premium teaching and learning experiences by virtue of their anomalous scheduling (full or half courses in six or twelve weeks, with more frequent and/or longer-than-usual meetings) and their concentration (students ordinarily took only one or at most two at a time).[106] It is understandable that *demand* for them has declined as more "distance" or online options became available, since the "distance" or online courses are more "flexible" and convenient for students and can be fitted around work schedules. But even in Queen's online summer courses, the majority of enrolments are actually resident in Kingston.[107] This disappearance of the on-campus summer courses in the shadow of online options is a harbinger of effects upon on-campus course attendance generally as more online options become available, or will be if preventive measures are not taken: student "demand" will go for the convenience of online courses, even when the in-class courses offer better learning opportunities. It is worth remembering, in this connection, that "demand" is not the same as "need," since we can effectively create "demand" for pedagogical options (good or bad) simply by making them attractive—just as "car manufacturers produce simultaneously both cars and the demand for cars."[108]

Therefore, in its preparations for the "expansion of Continuing and Distance Studies,"[109] Queen's may also need to take care that it not expand too much. One measure to consider here might be to restrict on-campus students' access to online courses when on-campus versions are available; another might be to establish for on-campus students a maximum number of online credits, on the model of the present limits for off-campus credits.

6. **Fully online courses are one thing, fully online programs another**. The FAS "New Initiatives" announces: "CDS currently offers enough online courses for students to complete a BA General in Psychology, English, or History. We are currently developing courses to offer a BA General in Global Development Studies and a BSC General in Life Sciences, and are developing a new program, BA General in Liberal Studies." It is not clear what the academic rationale for these fully online programs is.

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[105] Personal email from Bev King, 8 June 2011: "Full-time students are preferring to leave Kingston in the summer and take on campus courses at their hometown university or through distance studies, so we are consolidating our (limited) resources into the distance program."

[106] The summer courses were thus the closest thing at Queen's to the experience of "block programming," which is used at Quest University, in Squamish, B.C. Students there take "just one course at a time for 18 class days" and by "concentrat[ing] on one topic at a time [. . .] build strong social interaction skills during project work and seminar classes." "In 2009, Quest University had the highest NSSE scores in North America" (Pierre Zundel and Patrick Deane, "It's time to transform undergraduate education," University Affairs, 6 Dec. 2010, http://www.universityaffairs.ca/its-time-to-transform-undergraduate-education.aspx, 30 June 2011).

[107] In "ENGL 250 (online)" (summer 2011), for instance, 48 of the 61 students were in Kingston, and several more were in areas nearby; only four were out of the province (with one in China).

[108] Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (Penguin, 1974), p. 63.

[109] "Continuing and Distance Studies is Reaching Out to the World," *OnQ*, Mar. 2011, p. 8.

No one currently working in the English Department knows when or by whom the online BA General in English was created; most are surprised to learn that it exists. While it is one thing for students to take a course or two online, it is hard to conceive that an English degree taken entirely online, without seminars or class discussion, could be remotely equivalent to the on-campus program. It is conceivable that there are subjects where it makes no difference, or even where online programs are superior, but if Queen's is creating fully online programs they should have clearly stated academic rationales for the online medium. And if 85% of CDS enrolments are by "current on-campus Queen's students," a rationale of improved access seems less than persuasive.

7. **Beware of effects on the teaching of communication skills**. Elsewhere, we recommend "That Queen's make the teaching and learning of communication skills, and especially writing skills (both general and discipline-specific), a high priority." If Queen's is expanding its offerings of online or distance learning, it needs to consider seriously how communication will be taught in these courses and programs. How will development of oral communication (including listening) skills be emphasized in courses or entire programs where students lack the regular, direct interpersonal relationship with an instructor and fellow students? And how may the development of writing skills be affected by the online medium? There is a tendency in online or distance courses for the teaching role to be more dispersed: whereas in-class instructors mark assignments themselves or supervise TAs who contribute to marking, in distance and online courses the markers are more independent: they are paid a per-essay rate specifically to mark, and Moodle architecture normalizes online marking and posting of results directly to the student. As a result, the student-instructor relation is inclined to be more fully mediated by the marker, and student writing to be less supervised by the instructor. This is not to say that writing cannot be taught by distance or online; at Queen's, WRIT 125* (formerly 075*), 195*, and 295* are taught only by distance. The Writing Centre, which offers these, may therefore be able to advise on how to accommodate an emphasis on writing instruction in other courses. In any case, Queen's needs to ensure that the priority of communications training is taken into account in online or distance learning as well.

8. **Use technological methods to expand in-class discussion time and enhance interpersonal teaching**. The Arts and Science model of "blended learning," as described on the "Technology in Teaching and Learning" website, involves "Having fewer contact hours" and "changing the nature of contact time to make it more interactive."[110] This formulation essentially promises "more interactive" contact time in exchange for less total time, more intensity for less duration, more quality for less quantity. This may not be the best formulation. It seems to suggest that the status quo is a classroom in which there is so little interactivity, intensity, or quality, that it is possible to redouble it. It is probably not true that there is so little going on in most classrooms at Queen's that one could easily redouble it on any given day—and if there were, it doesn't make sense that one should need to meet one or two days less each week in order to achieve that redoubling. It seems more likely that one could improve interactivity by

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[110] FAS, "Blended Learning," ca. May 2011, http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/technology-in-teaching-and-learning/blended-learning, 22 June 2011.

meeting more frequently, than that one could improve it by meeting less frequently. We suggest, therefore, that the blended model maintain the usual contact hours and conceive of the added online component as taking the place, not of student-instructor contact hours, but of outside reading.

Having presented its model of "blended learning" as a trade-off in terms of teaching quality (students get less, but more intensive, time), or even as an improvement (more "active and collaborative learning," less "passive transmission of information"), FAS then adds a note on costs. This note suggests that the model was actually conceived as way to save resources: "Re-designing a course as a blended model is not seen as a cost-saving model, but can be a cost-effective way of increasing enrolment in courses without having to add additional sections."[111] Of course, a "cost-effective way of increasing enrolment . . . without having to add additional sections" *is* "a cost-saving model." In short, in this model of blended learning, FAS has chosen between adding the online component as an extra, to enhance quality, and adding it as a recompense for faculty time that is taken away, in order to save resources. As a matter of academic as opposed to resource planning, we suggest that the "blending" go the other way, and be used to enhance quality rather than to save resources.

9. **Design for online**. Experts in online learning caution that online courses should not seek to replicate in-class experience: one cannot "take what is done in a classroom and make it available online rather than redesigning the experience from first principles of pedagogy. That is, the task of design isn't one of 'conversion' but is one of creation, taking full account of the intended outcomes."[112] In Jean-Louis's summation, "Several suggested that a team approach with a faculty member and other subject matter experts who had received some training in pedagogy, a technology advisor who fully understood the potential of the learning platforms and resources available, and an instructional designer makes the ideal team."[113] This appears to be good advice, and processes for "course re-design" presently underway in CDS do appear to heed it, e.g., in ruling out the use of "lecture-capture" as "as the primary material for online courses."[114] But it also suggests that the casual redesignation of old-style "distance" courses as "online" courses is inadequate.

10. **Don't assume that Queen's students want or need online options—even if individuals choose them**. When the Faculty of Arts and Science announces its new "initiative" for "[e]xpansion of fully online course offerings through Continuing and Distance Studies," it cites distance learning as its rationale: "to attract new distance

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[111] ibid.

[112] Anonymous online learning consultant, qtd. Jean-Louis, p. 41. Describing "poor quality offerings," Tony Bates similarly warns: "in the rush to get online, many public institutions, at least in the USA, have not followed best practice, hiring adjunct faculty without training in online teaching, setting up classes with large student to instructor ratios, and using poor online course design (such as using lecture capture, PDFs and PowerPoint slides, instead of creating interactive online materials and adapting classroom methods to the needs of online learners)" (*2011 Outlook*, p. 11).

[113] Jean-Louis, p. 41.

[114] FAS, "Current Practices and Initiatives."

students to Arts and Science."[115] Here again we find the slippage between "online" and "distance" as descriptors.[116] Whatever the ambitions for "distance" marketing may be, 85% of CDS enrolments are "current on-campus Queen's students," and its new online courses will likely be taken predominantly on-campus, where they will compete with on-campus offerings (see points 4-5, above). If Queen's is seeking "to attract new distance students," it is worth asking whether it is responding to existing demand off-campus, or seeking to create or displace demand on-campus. In any case, its efforts to attract new distance students (which is essentially a resource issue, the need to expand enrolments and BIU funding without increasing physical infrastructure) may have serious effects on the nature and quality of on-campus learning.

As noted above in connection with summer courses, an individual student will often choose the convenience and flexibility of an online course over on-campus equivalents. But this individual demand, which universities can create simply by creating more convenient options, is not the same as a reflective and principled choice. It is, significantly, contradicted by Queen's students' more collective and reflective responses to planning proposals for virtualization. As noted above, in the early consultations on Queen's academic plan, students were vociferous in rejection of the early proposals for virtualizing first and second-year classrooms (see p. [8], above). As students in the School of Business more recently advised the planning Task Force, "Online (virtual) teaching is not a good substitute for the face-to-face experience of real classrooms. The APTF should not recommend it."[117]

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[115] FAS, "Current Practices and Initiatives."

[116] Compare FAS, "New Initiatives": "there is 'plenty of opportunity for growth and development in online learning' in Canada. In order to attract new distance students to Queen's, the Faculty of Arts and Science needs to be competitive. . ." (p. 1, emphases added).

[117] "Consultation with the Queen's School of Business (QSB) Faculty Board, 2:30 p.m. March 15, 2011," http://www.queensu.ca/saptf/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/APTFMar15_11takeaway.pdf, p. 3. While the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance firmly supports the idea of an OOI for purposes of increasing access, it expresses strong reservations on the issue of quality: "One of undergraduate students' chief concerns with the Institute is that, for a variety of reasons, the quality of education may be lower than what is found in a traditional university setting" (OUSA, p. 4). For recent reports of disappointing results from online options, see also Sarah Boesveld, "Students give e-learning a grade of incomplete," *National Post*, 8 Sept. 2011 (http://news.nationalpost.com/2011/09/08/students-give-e-learning-a-grade-of-incomplete/), and Matt Richtel, "Grading the Digital School," *New York Times*, 3 September 2011 (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/04/technology/technology-in-schools-faces-questions-on-value.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=all).

**Appendix: A Critique of the HEQCO Report on
"The Benefits of Greater Differentiation of Ontario's University Sector"
from a Queen's University Perspective**

In October 2010, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) issued a report on "The Benefits of Greater Differentiation of Ontario's University Sector."[118] The HEQCO recommendations envision an Ontario in which each PSE institution specializes in and receives supplementary funding for particular areas (their "strategic strengths") without "squandering [. . .] resources on programs not appropriate for them."[119] That's to say that the authors also envision, without daring to state it explicitly, withering and/or closing certain programs at certain institutions. The HEQCO recommendations are closely tied to, again without explicitly mentioning it, the Ontario government's contemporaneous proposal for an "Ontario Online Institute," or OOI, as announced in the 2010 Ontario Throne Speech.[120] Given an online institute and a well developed credit transfer system (which is recommended in both the HEQCO Report and in several key proposals for the OOI),[121] students could readily go online to other institutions for courses in subjects no longer offered on their own campuses. In the long-run this would significantly increase the proportion of credits that PSE students complete online. The HEQCO Report recognizes that there is already a naturally occurring or "organic diversity in the Ontario university system."[122] What it specifically recommends is that "the government [. . .] advance the [. . .] system to a more differentiated one,"[123] since "[g]reater differentiation of the postsecondary sector is one of the most powerful levers available to government, especially in resource constrained times, to achieve its goals of greater quality, competitiveness, accountability and sustainability."[124]

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[118] Harvey P. Weingarten and Fiona Deller, "The Benefits of Greater Differentiation of Ontario's University Sector: Final Report." Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO), Oct. 2010. See also OCUFA, "OCUFA Response—HEQCO Differentiation Report," 26 Oct. 2010, http://www.mcmaster.ca/mufa/OCUFAResponse-HEQCODifferentiation-Oct.26,2010.pdf, 24 July 2011; OCUFA, "Council's vision for university differentiation just won't work," Press Release, 27 Oct. 2011, http://www.newswire.ca/en/releases/archive/October2010/27/c6273.html, 24 July 2011; and Labiba Haque, "Specializing Ontario schools," *Queen's Journal*, 29 Oct. 2010, http://www.queensjournal.ca/story/2010-10-29/news/specializing-ontario-schools/, 24 July 2011.

[119] Weingarten and Deller, pp, 16, 10.

[120] "Your government will create the new Ontario Online Institute, bringing the best professors in the top programs at Ontario universities to the homes of those who want to pursue this new option for higher learning" (Ontario Office of the Premier," "Speech from the Throne - Open Ontario Plan - March 8, 2010," http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/event.php?ItemID=11282&Lang=EN, 11 July 2011.

[121] See: Weingarten and Deller, pp. 4, 6-7, 10, 13, 19; Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), *The Ontario Online Institute: Students' Vision for Opening Ontario's Classrooms*, Aug. 2010 (http://www.ousa.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/OOI-Submission.pdf), p. 4; Council of Ontario Universities (COU), "The Ontario Online Institute: Achieving the Transformation" (August 2010), pp. 1-2; COU, *Implementation of the Ontario Online Institute: Recommendations of the Online Learning Working Group* (April 2011), pp. 2, 7; and Maxim Jean-Louis, *Final Report, Engagement Process for an Ontario Online Institute* (29 April 2011), http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/ooi_may2011.pdf, 11 July 2011, pp. 31-32.

[122] Weingarten and Deller, p. 9.

[123] Weingarten and Deller, p. 4.

[124] Weingarten and Deller, p. 9.

Although Daniel Woolf's *Where Next?* was published ten months before the HEQCO Report, it closely anticipated the agenda of the latter in its imperative for "doing 'less with less'" at Queen's:

> the challenge is [. . .] to recognize that we cannot be all things to all people. This will entail hard choices. There will be some things we will want to emphasize; there will be others we will no longer be able to do.[125]

Harvey Weingarten, co-author of the HEQCO Report, confirmed in an interview in late October that "Queen's in particular" was "responding positively" to the Report, adding that "Queen's has been consistent with differentiation by already implementing it in the academic planning process."[126] The latter remark is curious. On the one hand, it implies a certain predetermination in Queen's academic planning process, which was not yet close to completion; on the other hand, the term "differentiation" and its variants are, in the sense in which Weingarten and Deller use them, almost entirely absent from the Queen's planning documents of 2010.[127]

But Weingarten was right about "responding positively." Soon after the HEQCO Report appeared, the *Queen's News Centre* reported: "Principal Daniel Woolf will be working with his provincial counterparts, Queen's Park and the College [sic] of Ontario Universities on how universities can differentiate themselves and focus on their strengths."[128] When challenged on this in Senate—"are you open to sponsoring discussion in the Queen's community about *whether* Ontario universities should follow this agenda for differentiation, before you promote discussion about *how* they should differentiate?"—Principal Woolf replied that "the Academic Planning process is the ideal venue for this discussion."[129] In keeping with this advice, we offer the following considerations.

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[125] Daniel Woolf, *Where Next?*, pp. 5-6. Compare Weingarten and Deller: "greater differentiation will require all institutions to make some hard choices and to explain the rational [sic] for them" (p. 12); "greater differentiation requires tough choices" (p. 13); "This can be painful, but it is unavoidable and required" (p. 14).

[126] Qtd. in Haque, "Specializing Ontario Schools" (29 Oct. 2010).

[127] The only unit response that uses "differentiation" (or variants) in HEQCO's sense is the School of Graduate Studies' "Input to the Queen's Academic Plan," April 2010, at p. 2. The Academic Writing Team's *Imagining the Future* includes ch. 2, "Differentiating Queen's," but the "goal" enunciated there— "To develop a niche position as Canada's only research-intensive university that offers both high-quality graduate degrees in selected fields and a rich undergraduate educational experience" (Michael Adams et al., p. 8)—bears little resemblance to "differentiation" in HEQCO's sense. A niche is a specialization, but the niche described here is to do well in a broad range of things—which is what Queen's has striven to do for most of its life. If our "niche" is to persist as the full-service undergraduate and research university in a province where everyone else has specialized, that sort of differentiation may be recommended. On the other hand, see the FAS Response (15 April 2010), sec. 7b, Goal 2: "Maintain strong undergraduate programs while being selective in the maintenance of low-demand or under-resourced programs" (p. 16).

[128] "Principal welcomes discussion on university specialization," *Queen's News Centre*, 27 Oct. 2010, http://www.queensu.ca/news/articles/principal-welcomes-discussion-university-specialization, 4 Nov. 2010.

[129] Queen's University Senate Minutes, 25 Nov. 2010, p. 5, emphases added.

First, while the HEQCO plan is ostensibly for increasing "horizontal" rather "vertical" differentiation,[130] it envisions greater specialization not only by fields, or subject areas, but also between research and teaching: "the intention is to have institutions bias their further growth preferentially towards teaching, research, or some other desired public objective."[131] This runs up against the principle of synergy between teaching and research that is central to the success of the modern university.[132] It also runs up against Principal Woolf's own stated ideal of a "balanced academy," which has received strong support in the Queen's community.[133]

Second, it must be noted that the HEQCO plan *also* envisions greater specialization by fields than already exists within Ontario's postsecondary sector, as Principal Woolf clearly appreciates.[134] But it needs to be recognized that an increase in specialization within a "resource constrained" context entails a decrease in diversity in more than one sense of the term. With increased specialization at the level of the campus, campuses would become less diverse; students of microbiology would be less likely to rub elbows with students of political science, music, or Italian literature.[135] At another level, there would be loss of diversity in Ontario's community of scholars. The 2010 Ontario Throne Speech envisions the OOI as "bringing the best professors in the top programs at Ontario universities to the homes" of students. Disseminating lectures from the "best professors" and "top programs" sounds positive, but when put together with initiatives for an online institute and "greater differentiation" among universities it probably means starving or cutting a program on one campus if there is a stronger one in that area elsewhere, thus reducing total numbers working in any given field, at the risk of compromising the intellectual diversity essential for exchange and for growth. Both the attractions and the dangers of this more "differentiated" approach to education are

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[130] Weingarten and Deller, pp. 7-8.

[131] Weingarten and Deller, p. 13. The authors' position on this point is inconsistent: they acknowledge that "a strict 'teaching versus research' dichotomy may not be a useful differentiator" (p. 20; see pp. 19-20, 24) but go on to recommend specially funding "excellence in teaching" for institutions whose funding is "based more on teaching excellence than research intensity" (p. 20). And, as noted below, they describe California's "three tiers" of research universities, teaching universities, and community colleges as "an effective way of differentiating" (p. 42).

[132] See, for instance, Edward F. Ahnert, "The Partnership of Teaching and Research," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 22 Mar. 1996; Paula Krebs, "Colleges Focused on Teaching Too Often Neglect Research, " *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 September 2005.

[133] See "Principal Woolf Discusses the Balanced Academy," *onQ*, March 2011, http://www.queensu.ca/news/sites/default/files/assets/onq/onq-2011-03.pdf, p. 5. The informal discussion of the "balanced academy" in the Queen's Senate in Mar. 2011 revealed strong support for balance as opposed to specialization. "Principal Woolf said that he wrote about finding the proper balance between teaching and research," given "Queen's […] reputation for teaching and research." Sen. Cordy noted the University's "need to […] adjust the balance between education and specialization. […] there has been a push towards specialization," but "the broader the person, the more helpful they could be to society." Sen Remenda observed that "Increased specialization lessens the chances of survival." Etc. (Queen's University Senate Minutes, 24 Mar. 2011, pp. 6-7).

[134] "Principal welcomes discussion on university specialization," *Queen's News Centre*, 27 Oct. 2010, as cited above.

[135] In the Senate discussion of the "balanced academy" (Mar. 2011), student Senator R. Chaudhry stresses students' need for "Exposure to many types of individuals: e.g. residence experience meeting students from different programs; opportunity to attend a public lecture by an expert or specialist in a discipline" (Queen's University Senate Minutes, 24 Mar. 2011, p. 6).

analogous to those of monoculture in biology. On the one hand it is tempting to maximize one's most fruitful specimens by sacrificing variety. But even supposing that "the best" might be agreed upon for broadcasting purposes (and one must always ask, "best" according to whom, in which qualities, and for what purposes?), one has to distinguish between "best" in the sense of best specimens, and "best" in the sense of best practices and conditions for the ecology and long-term prospects of the system. In the latter perspective, diversity is of critical and preeminent importance. For the future of an educational system, it is healthier to have a critical mass of moderately productive teacher-scholars to cross-fertilize and oppose one another's views—and, of course, to teach students—than a teaching or research superstar, or even a stellar department, in each field.[136]

Third, the idea of facilitating "greater differentiation" of Ontario's universities by way of online education and credit transfer could have very negative implications for the historical ideal of Queen's in particular, as an institution of unique and independent character. HEQCO's vision of Ontario universities' autonomy under its proposals is, as we shall shortly see, highly constrained (see p. [36] below). Principal Woolf's *Where Next?* concludes with two imaginary histories, and the dystopic "History A," envisioning the fate of a Queen's that has not planned wisely, concludes: "The former Queen's University became a feeder campus of the University of Ontario in 2020."[137] Ironically, it is the "greater differentiation of Ontario's university sector," which Principal Woolf "will be working with his provincial counterparts, Queen's Park and the [COU]" to support,[138] that most plainly promises such an event. Weingarten and Deller cite several possible models for "greater differentiation," including "Campus Alberta," in which all post-secondary institutions are governmentally coordinated by the central Campus Alberta Quality Council,[139] and the California system, whose division into "three tiers of PSE provision" (research universities, teaching universities, and community colleges) Weingarten and Deller deem to be "an effective way of differentiating."[140] But they never seek to demonstrate that more differentiated systems are superior to Ontario's system, nor do they consider the possibility that any specific superiorities in such systems

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[136] See Patricia Rae et al., "Failed by the 'Star' System," *CAUT Bulletin*, June 2010, http://www.cautbulletin.ca/en_article.asp?SectionID=1256&SectionName=Commentary&VolID=304&VolumeName=No%206&VolumeStartDate=6/11/2010&EditionID=32&EditionName=Vol%2057&EditionStartDate=1/14/2010&ArticleID=3085. In this connection we dispute the claim of Weingarten and Deller that "focusing of institutional resources on things they do best and that are consistent with public goals is one element of creating a more sustainable system" (p. 11). Concentrating existing strengths on preconceived "public goals" may produce short-term gains, but sustaining the system is precisely what it won't do.

[137] Daniel Woolf, *Where Next?*, p. 18.

[138] "Principal welcomes discussion on university specialization," as cited above. "'This is an excellent starting point for a discussion among universities and their communities about how we can all identify our particular place in Ontario's post-secondary education landscape," says Principal Woolf. 'The themes resonate with our ongoing academic planning process at Queen's in terms of some of the elements in my vision document, *Where Next?* and the Academic Writing Team's report, *Imagining the Future*. We certainly will have to make some choices about areas of emphasis upon which to focus, especially on the research and graduate education side, while continuing to ensure that we can offer a comprehensive range of undergraduate programs'" (ibid.).

[139] Weingarten and Deller, p. 28; see 28-30.

[140] Weingarten and Deller, p. 42; see 39-42.

(not that they ever actually identify any)[141] could well be functions of superior size or superior funding rather than of superior specialization or central coordination. As HEQCO's own 2008-09 Annual Report observes, "per capita funding [. . .] of Ontario universities appears to lag behind that of peer institutions in other provinces and particularly that of counterparts in the United States" (p. 6).[142] In point of fact, Ontario has long been dead last among the ten provinces in per capita funding of post-secondary education.[143]

It is a central weakness of the HEQCO report on "The Benefits of Greater Differentiation" that it assumes and (as its very title reflects) advocates what needs to be demonstrated and impartially and critically examined.[144] HEQCO was asked by the MTCU to explore both "*whether* a more strongly differentiated set of universities would help improve [. . .] the system" and "*how* to operationalize a differentiation policy, should government be interested in pursuing this as a strategic objective."[145] But like Principal Woolf, the authors do not consider "whether" (the affirmative is taken for granted), only "how." Even their boldest and most central claims, e.g., that "Greater differentiation [. . .] is one of the most powerful levers available to government [. . .] to achieve its goals of greater quality, competitiveness, accountability, and sustainability," or that it "elevates the quality of the programs and experiences enjoyed by students," are asserted without evidence.[146] And they acknowledge that increasing the differentiation of universities "is not current government policy," but then write as though it were: "A move towards greater differentiation requires tough choices by institutions and government. This can be painful, but it is unavoidable and required."[147]

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[141] See note [146], below.

[142] HEQCO, Annual Report, 2008-2009, http://www.heqco.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/HEQCO%20Annual%20Report%202008-09%20Online%20Version.pdf, 12 July 2011, p. 6;. See also Ken Boessenkool, "Does Alberta have a Spending Problem?" *SPP Communique* 2.2, School of Public Policy, U Calgary, February, 2010, http://policyschool.ucalgary.ca/files/publicpolicy/albsp2.pdf, 12 July 2011. Using 2008-09 figures, Boessenkool notes that "Ontario has the lowest [provincial per capita spending on social services in Canada], with total expenditures just shy of $8,000 per person"; he gives the ratio of Ontario's per capita spending on education to Alberta's for 2008-09 as .58 to 1 (pp. 4-5). According to Stats Canada figures for 2008-09, Ontario universities received only 54.3% of their revenues from government, whereas Alberta universities received 71.6% (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-599-x/2011007/c-g/desc/desc002-eng.htm, 12 July 2011).

[143] "Ontario [. . .] invests a smaller proportion of its wealth in post-secondary education than other Canadian jurisdictions, devoting 4.7 per cent of its spending to post-secondary education, or 0.9 per cent of the province's GDP. The other provinces, most fiscally poorer than Ontario, on average spend 5.1 per cent of their budget on higher education, or about 1.2 per cent of their GDP" (OCUFA, "The Decline of Quality at Ontario Universities: Shortchanging a Generation," 10 Mar. 2010, p. 7; http://www.ocufa.on.ca/OCUFA/docs/trends_in_higher_education/Trends%20in%20Higher%20Education-The%20Decline%20of%20Quality%20at%20Ontario%20Universities-Mar%202010.pdf, 12 July 2011).

[144] Cf. OCUFA: "HEQCO starts from the assumption that more differentiation is needed, without providing any real evidence why this is the case" ("OCUFA Response," p. 1).

[145] Weingarten and Deller, p. 6, emphases added.

[146] Weingarten and Deller, pp. 9, 15. The only external authority cited by Weingarten and Deller is "the most recent Academic Ranking of World Universities," which lists U of T and several California campuses "in the top 100" (p. 25n6).

[147] Weingarten and Deller, pp. 6, 13-14.

Particularly revealing of these failings is the Report's view of public consultation: **"Step 1: Government consults with the postsecondary sector and public to present the benefits and need for more differentiation."**[148] One could not ask for a better picture of false consultation, of pretending to consult in order actually to promote what is plainly a foregone conclusion. True consultation would seek public viewpoints on a plan's possible benefits and shortcomings; to "present the benefits" *to* the public is not to consult. Weingarten and Deller never consider views of actual stakeholders, and on the rare occasion that they anticipate an objection it is only to override it:

> **Greater differentiation may elicit claims that the government is constraining or squashing institutional aspirations.**
> Such claims can come from the institutions themselves or from political and/or community leaders from the regions they are in. However, the mechanism proposed for differentiation (see below) starts by asking the postsecondary institutions to articulate their priority or growth areas. Since the institutions will identify these, it is hardly reasonable for someone to then claim that the government is forcing or constraining the institution.[149]

It later becomes clear, moreover, that their vision is precisely one of "constraining the institutions," and indeed of rendering them servile to government, by tying their funding to compliance:

> **Funding should be tied to desired outcomes.**
> Incentive funding is the major mechanism by which governments achieve desired goals. Put simply, universities will do what you fund them to do. If you don't tell them what you want them to do, they do what they want. This may, or may not, be consistent with public goals.[150]

But what are those putatively "*public* goals"? Where consultation is a matter of "presenting the benefits" of predetermined programs *to* the public, there will be a serious gap between the "desired goals" of government and genuinely "public goals." Under the rubric of "Operational Issues," Weingarten and Deller describe their program's relation to "the public" in more revealing detail:

> The second possibility is **to realize the benefits** to the public and learners of greater differentiation and, therefore, **to adopt a policy** to differentiate the system **as rapidly as possible and then to go bold**. What does going bold mean? It means **accepting the argument** that Ontario's university sector must change, that

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[148] Weingarten and Deller, p. 18.

[149] Weingarten and Deller, p. 12. The constraint, of course, would be in the government's making the institutions specify their "priorities," which they would have to do in order to receive their funding.

[150] Weingarten and Deller, p. 19. As the "OCUFA Response" says, the HEQCO Report "reads as a roadmap for the quickest and most efficient way to make universities the minions of government" (p. 2). As it goes on to explain, this is "problematic," not for partisan reasons, but for practical reasons: because "government is notoriously bad at planning the university system"; because tying funding to competitions will waste resources, lead to "tiering," and "undermine the sustainability of programs in the long term"; and so on (pp. 2-3).

differentiation is an important element of the change needed and that government, through its influence and funding levers will use this policy and consequent strategies to move the system towards greater quality, competitiveness, accountability and sustainability. It means investing preferentially in higher education **and explaining to the public, in an unabashed and persuasive way,** why this investment is so critical to their futures, the future of their children and the future of the province.[151]

In sum, rather than open up public discussion on the merits and demerits of greater differentiation, the government could take its merits for granted ("realize the benefits," "accepting the argument"), "adopt" it "as rapidly as possible," and *then* explain it, ex post facto, "*to* the public, in an unabashed and persuasive way." The crying problem, of course, is that "the benefits" still have not been demonstrated, and "the argument" has not been made.[152] This is not a vision for achieving genuine "public goals," but one for foisting a program and a rationale for it upon the public.

It is because HEQCO has formulated its recommendations for greater differentiation in this spirit of advocacy rather than of dispassionate inquiry, because it advises forcing these recommendations on the public and its post-secondary institutions via government "influence and funding levers," and because the recommendations themselves are designed to render perpetual the universities' subjection to such dictation, that the universities themselves crucially need to consider the "whether" of differentiation before discussing the "how." *Would* "a more strongly differentiated set of universities [. . .] help improve overall performance"?[153] Surely a question with such far-reaching intellectual, political, and material implications needs a more searching academic answer than a list of loosely described "models" (some of them relevant, some not) in use in other jurisdictions. For the mere fact that other jurisdictions have more governmentally differentiated systems does not in itself establish that that is what Ontario needs. So we recommend that when the Principal of Queen's discusses this matter "with his provincial counterparts, Queen's Park and the [COU]," he raise some of the above reservations concerning the HEQCO Report, its procedures, and its recommendations, and demand a process of genuine public consultation and inquiry.

We have considered the issue of "greater differentiation" at length here because it is, though never explicitly mentioned in the earlier stages of the academic planning process, central to Queen's academic planning in multiple ways. On the one hand, the HEQCO Report illustrates how readily a financial cost-cutting agenda may drive policy solutions into a mode of advocacy that overrides due critical consideration, and into a

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[151] Weingarten and Deller, p. 26, emphases added.

[152] Weingarten and Deller defer demonstration to their appendices, which describe "models of differentiation" in Canada and elsewhere: "as shown in the Appendices that follow, many governments have positioned higher education as a key plank of their future economic and social strategies and are using a policy of differentiation to advance their postsecondary sector to *greater competitiveness, higher quality and world-class status*" (p. 26, emphasis added). But in fact, the appendices' descriptions are only descriptions, and do not "show" in a single case that or how differentiation has served these ends.

[153] The question posed by Deborah Newman, Deputy Minister, MTCU, July 2010, qtd. Weingarten and Deller, p. 6.

top-down mode of implementation that perverts democratic consultation.[154] As one of the country's pre-eminent intellectual institutions with strong departments or schools of sociology, economics, education, and policy studies, Queen's is surely well positioned to supply the counterbalancing academic perspectives on what a university is, does, and needs, as well as scholarly considerations of the options—considerations that are frequently wanting in the provincial briefs for online learning, differentiation of post-secondary education, "performance management,"[155] and so on. But more than being well positioned to do so, Queen's needs to respond in this critical and academic spirit to initiatives that so closely affect its own future, and it has a social and moral obligation to do so on behalf of post-secondary education and students in general. The need to put genuine academic planning ahead of financial policy decisions applies not only to Queen's,[156] but to provincial PSE policy at large, and in the latter Queen's must begin assuming a role of leadership rather than of compliance or resignation.

On the other hand, the issue of "greater differentiation" is relevant to Queen's planning process because it will impinge upon the University practically. It is, presumably, what "doing 'less with less'" and making "hard choices" are all about.[157] We do not say that the idea of increasing differentiation should be rejected out of hand. But as noted above, some differentiation is "organic" to the development of university systems, the result of contingencies such as "history, geography, regional development, innovation."[158] "Organic diversity," as Weingarten and Deller call it, has evolved from the ground up, in response to needs, ideas, and opportunities, which means that one is in touch with these contingencies and able to exploit them with a sensitive intelligence. We advise that Queen's continue to differentiate by continuing to respond freely to such conditions as they emerge—as it has done in creating a Cultural Studies program or a Gender Studies program, or in beginning to offer Arabic language courses. We advise that Queen's prepare to remain the fully functioning organism, not the organ—not a mere part of a larger entity, incomplete in itself. And we advise that Queen's not expect the practice to follow the money, but the money to follow the practice. The latter is admittedly a "hard choice," but a wise one for a university, and especially for one like Queen's that trades on its traditional character. If Queen's has a small program in Italian language and literature, for instance, with effective and devoted teachers, steadily rising program enrolments, and initiatives in place for interdisciplinary expansion and

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[154] Weingarten and Deller's most explicit avowal of their cost-cutting agenda is in the opening of the "Operational Issues" section: "One government goal, particularly in these economic times, is to reduce the cost of higher education or, more rightfully, to mitigate the increased costs of expanding the postsecondary system. [. . .] Increasing the differentiation of the university system by itself will not solve the financial sustainability problem, but it will help in several ways" (p. 22). And they constantly allow the financial to override the academic considerations. For instance, "More economic impact of university-based research" (p. 18) is the Report's only formulation of their program's "benefits" for the conduct of research. Similarly, the authors complain that, "as now funded, research is actually a losing financial proposition" (p. 13). The idea that research may naturally have a financial cost and be worth it—i.e., that there are other registers of value—doesn't enter the discussion.

[155] Weingarten and Deller, p. 14: "A move to greater differentiation means a move to more accountability and performance management of the postsecondary system."

[156] See p. [10] and note [36] above.

[157] See note [50] above.

[158] Weingarten and Deller, p. 9.

international partnerships, *that* is an organically emerging differentiation that may distinguish Queen's, given time and administrative encouragement, from other universities. Even if the program is currently "a losing financial proposition," it is small and cannot be costing much; the University is not a for-profit business, but a publicly funded provider of education; and this kind of program may profit Queen's even financially in collateral ways, e.g., by contributing to the aura of cultural richness and diversity and of intellectual vitality that impresses donors and attracts students to both regulated and deregulated programs. The point is that Queen's may best differentiate itself precisely by *not* seeking a heqcovian "greater differentiation" as the specialized organ of a system rationally coordinated by a funding committee in Toronto.

These recommendations have implications for the related initiatives now underway in Ontario and at Queen's for virtualization and online learning. For with these initiatives, too, academic consideration needs to have priority over financial motivations to "reduc[e] costs of instruction,"[159] be "profitable in terms of additional tuition revenue," or find "cost-effective way[s] of managing enrolment."[160] And here, too, the best mode of development will be organic, ground-upward initiatives that respond to local contingencies—the personnel on the ground, emerging needs and opportunities, and the appropriateness of particular media to particular academic subject matters. When financially grounded advocacy anticipates academically grounded consideration, it poses serious dangers to the university, both academic and financial.

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[159] Virtualization Task Force, Final Report, Aug. 2009.
[160] FAS, "New Initiatives" (Feb. 2011), pp. 1-2.

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