Review of Activities

Priority Objectives

The University's Strategic Plan 2001-2005 identifies four priority objectives designed to provide a framework for planning. These Priority Objectives are:

- Distinctiveness;
- Growth and development;
- Quality; and
- Flexibility and innovation.

This section of the Report will review activities carried out during 2004 relating to actions listed as part of the Strategic Priorities.

Distinctiveness

Since its establishment the University has sought to develop its academic profile in a focused and distinctive way to address regional needs, to create separation from metropolitan universities and to reflect realistically its resource base.

Accentuating the University's distinctiveness remains the University's major priority, balancing a need for innovation whilst also preserving international and traditional high standards.

The University will identify its distinctive features and promote them through the region, across Australia and to targeted overseas locations, by:

Academically

Concentrating on a gradually increasing but focused range of academic specialisations with strong regional connections and of international significance supported by government and private funding:

- In total, nine new programs were established in 2004 to meet specific demands in employment markets. New programs have been established in areas such as secondary school teaching, exercise therapy, health promotion, regional and urban planning, financial planning and human resource management.
- The University has developed three new combined education programs – the first time education has been taught on the Coast.

- The Bachelor of Regional and Urban Planning evolved directly from an identified Australia-wide shortage of qualified planners. Students studying this course will have access to practical planning experience in one of Australia's fastest growing areas with opportunities to further their study in the USA or Korea.
- Four dual Diploma/Degree programs offered in conjunction with Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE (CSIT) continued to be well supported by students. A Diploma of Fitness/ Bachelor of Science was developed in conjunction with CSIT for delivery in 2005.

Emphasising an interdisciplinary approach to issues central to regional development:

Internally funded research projects:

- Environmental Attitudes and Action: A Case Study of the Queensland Horticulture Industry;
- The Food Markets of Brisbane 1824–2001;
- Are Anti-Science Attitudes Responsible for Poor Uptake of Business Systems for Environmental Management and Food Safety on Australian Farms?;
- Characterisation of the *myrmecofauna* of Fraser Island, Queensland, Australia: with attention to biodiversity, community structure and habitat complexity relationships;
- An artistic and creative exhibition about local macro and micro environments which communicates awareness about the environment in our community;
- GIS modelling of raptor habitat: a scoping study on the Sunshine Coast;
- Survey of small to medium enterprises in the Sunshine Coast Region measuring their attitudes and experiences toward adoption and non-adoption of English-commerce technologies;
- Comparative Analysis of Determinants of Healthy Weight in Children 0–12 years on the Sunshine Coast;
- Programming for Global Television; and
- An Experimental Investigation of the Interaction Effect of Knowledge Structure and Performance-based Rewards on Creativity.

Externally funded research projects:

- Rethinking Reconciliation and Pedagogy in Unsettling Times;

- Biting Midge in Hervey Bay;
- Community Engagement of Women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds;
- The Dragon Planet – Giving the First Global Generation its Voice in New Media;
- Working Against Violence Support Services;
- Multicultural Youth Leadership Development Project; and
- Commonwealth Multicultural Family and Community Building Project

Pursuing strong connections with international universities of similar scale or with similar interests:

- An inaugural International Partners Conference was held; additional agreements signed with universities internationally and the GO (Global Opportunities) Program was developed (refer Goal 2, page 16).

Continuing to emphasise the significance of a student–focused supportive environment of human scale:

- The University is committed to providing small classes—the goal is to have tutorial classes of 25 students or less;
- A First Year Experience Officer was appointed and a First Year Experience Reference Group established. Academic skills workshops were held and an additional Academic Skills Adviser was employed. (refer Goal 2, page 15); and
- Scholarships increased and Graduate Attributes were embedded into programs and courses (refer Goal 2, page 15).

First Year Experience Officer, Tilly Hinton, was appointed to assist first year students settle into university life, ensuring they have the resources and support to successfully study.

Review of Activities

Culturally

Partnering with the range of local organisations with different interests to ensure a vibrant and stimulating environment locally and regionally:

- *Voices on the Coast*, a literary festival held annually, is a partnership between the University and Immanuel Lutheran College—6,393 tickets were sold in 2004 to approximately 3000 school students from 42 primary and 28 secondary schools;

- *Voices Plus*, a literary event for adults, was incorporated into Courses for Careers Day. Presenters were drawn from Sunshine Coast, Brisbane and south-east Queensland. Nine sessions were held involving 160 people;

- For details of *Headstart* program refer to page 24; and

- Summer schools were subsidised by the University to increase local students' access to the programs and the university environment; 31 students participated in 2004. The Aquaculture session was delivered in partnership with Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Bribie Island.

Exploiting opportunities to attract government and private support for cultural and leisure infrastructure for university and regional benefits:

- Over half a million dollars was raised from business and community donations for the construction of a new Art Gallery (refer Goal 3, page 18). Coastline BMW sponsored the 2004 Gallery Program.

Initiating a program of cultural events to appeal to a broad spectrum of the regional population:

- *Schools Excellence Expo* allows high school students to showcase original research and project work in a university environment; 90 students from eight local schools competed in 2004—an increase from 72 students from 6 schools in 2003;

- The University assumed planning responsibility for *Voices Plus*— an adult literary Festival to be expanded in 2005;

- Bahasa Indonesia was offered as part of the University's Summer Schools Program. The session involved local native speakers who immersed students in the language and culture of Indonesia;

- The Australian String Quartet returned to the University for the third consecutive year; and

- The University hosted eight art exhibitions in 2004, including the popular *Minister's Awards for Art Excellence* which highlights the work of talented secondary school students from Noosa to Caboolture.

Economically

Developing a regional business incubator and technology park in partnership with governments and business:

- The Innovation Centre doubled its space in July 2004 to accommodate additional small to medium sized businesses and University-linked research centres (refer Goal 3, page 17).

Expanding the number of memoranda of understanding with shire councils and other organisations in pursuit of joint projects and to increase local graduate employment opportunities:
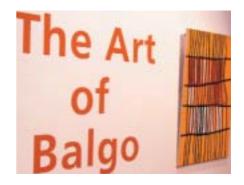
- There were no new agreements signed in 2004.

Environmentally

Promoting environmentally significant course and campus-related initiatives:

- A range of projects involving habitat; transport and water management are listed under Goal 4, page 19.

Ensuring the campus is developed in ways that minimise an adverse impact on the natural environment and nearby Mooloolah River National Park:

- A range of projects relating to roads works, bird habitat, water management and wallum heath habitat are listed under Goal 4, page 19.

- An investigation into the wetlands, established in 2003, found native self-propagating plant species around the waterways.

The Australian String Quartet returned to the University for the third consecutive year.

Review of Activities

Growth and Development

The University has annually argued for greater Commonwealth-funded growth quotas to meet soaring regional demand, to correct historical disadvantage and to accelerate economies of scale.

The target set in the 1994 Campus Master Plan of 15,000 students in 25 years remains the University's target, with internationalisation becoming an increasingly important component of that growth trajectory.

In the uncertain regulatory environment there is little basis for other than highly speculative annual targets.

There is no intention at present to increase the number of faculties in this planning period. Additional disciplines can be accommodated within the current framework, offerings within which are reviewed annually.

Of greater significance is the need to increase research activity and recruit leaders at professorial level.

Increasing the already extensive list of 'partners' locally and internationally, as well as the number of private sponsors, will also help diversify academic activity, and these links are stressed in the strategies.

The aim is to continue rapid growth and development despite the system-wide lack of funded growth, by:

Student Enrolments

Pursuing the case for further Commonwealth growth places consistent with regional growth and historical disadvantage:

- The University, in conjunction with local politicians and community leaders, successfully lobbied government for additional student places. In 2004 the University was awarded 1,080 new Commonwealth places over the next four years—the largest allocation of growth places to a single, non-metropolitan campus in Australia. This equates to 49 percent growth in student numbers at the University between 2005 and 2008;
- The increase in the number of funded places led to the development of an additional nine undergraduate degrees, including Education with an allocation of 120 places; and

- Thirty of the 120 new nursing places funded by the Federal Government were allocated to the joint program between the University and Central Queensland University (CQU).

Identifying the sources and markets for targeted recruitment:

- Three strategic planning sessions were held in 2004 to reassess target markets and key messages;
- Discussion was informed by five market research projects conducted from 2001 to 2004. Additional information was acquired from an analysis of:

  - statistics indicating the geographic location of first year enrolled students;
  - the number of students from Brisbane and interstate who applied through the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) for entry into USC and subsequently enrolled; and
  - the number of students from Sunshine Coast schools that applied for a place at USC as opposed to those who applied to attend competitor institutions.

- The primary target market was reconfirmed as high school students in years 11 and 12 who are residents of the Sunshine Coast.

Reviewing University policy on the recruitment of Australian fee-paying students:

- Australian students are entitled to enrol at the University as fee-paying students. Fees were increased in 2004.

Achieving the research outcomes needed to accrue research-training resources:

- In 2004 the University increased the value of its research contracts and maintained its level of research publications. While these findings were achieved against a relatively low base (the University has only been formally involved in research since 1999/2000), the University's 2004 allocation from the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS) increased by eight percent, from the Research Training Scheme (RTS) by 30 percent and from the Research Infrastructure Block Grant scheme (RIBG) by 800 percent.

Programs

Refining the range of available courses and programs annually including through cooperation with other universities:

- Information on programs developed in 2004 is available on page 7.

Developing innovative flexible delivery strategies:

- Three programs were delivered online with the support of the University's learning management system, Blackboard, in 2004. Programs and courses were chosen on the basis of student demand and the nature of the content.

Institutional Linkages

Liaising with education providers, both private and public, nationally and internationally to increase sectoral and cross-sectoral efficiencies:

- The University signed an agreement to provide University of the Third Age (U3A) with office and tutorial space for a further five years;
- Information on the University's liaison with Queensland Education and Chancellor State College is under Goal 3, page 17;
- Information on International partners is under Goal 2, page 16, and on page 26.

Developing alliances with local education providers to diversify the range of experiences of and pathways to university education:

- Headstart is a program run by the University in conjunction with schools in the region – applicant numbers increased from 58 in 2003, to 94 in 2004. Headstart students who successfully complete two University courses while still at school receive automatic entry into the University. Of the Headstart students who graduated from high school in 2004, 89 percent applied for tertiary study indicting that the Program's goal of assisting students in their transition from high school to university had been successful.
- Four dual Diploma/Degree programs offered in conjunction with Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE (CSIT) continued to be well supported by students. A Diploma of Fitness/ Bachelor of Science was developed in conjunction with CSIT.

Review of Activities

Increasing the opportunities for students to interchange and study at other universities, especially internationally:

- Information on the GO Program and international partners is under Goal 2, page 16.

Formalising links with national and international universities to facilitate exchanges of research knowledge, staff and students:

- Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) were signed with 18 international institutions in 2004 bringing the total number of partner institutions to 68 (refer page 26).

Infrastructure

Seeking ways to enhance the communication bandwidth available to the campus:

- The University, as part of a consortium of Queensland universities, successfully negotiated an upgrade to the Internet bandwidth from 4Mb to 70Mb to be implemented in 2005; and
- The commissioning of the new state-of-the-art data centre has improved power management and risk mitigation with regard to the University's network communications and server infrastructure. A network upgrade also increased inter-building network capacities to 1Gb and has provided 100Mb to all desktop computers.

Staff

Enhancing the performance and work satisfaction of staff through staff development opportunities:

- Information relating to this item is under Goal 5, page 21.

Building on the high standards of teachers and researchers by raising the level of support for outstanding staff:

- The Office of Learning, Teaching and Research established new systems for candidate and grant management and developed a new Research and Research Teaching Plan;
- Research facilities iSHaRE (Institute of Sustainability, Health and Regional Engagement) and CHASE (Centre for Health Activities, Sport and Exercise) were formally approved; and
- Research facility infrastructure at Kingfisher Bay Resort and Village and Dilli Village on Fraser Island was improved.

In 2004 the University was awarded 1,080 new Commonwealth places over the next four years. Thirty of the 120 new nursing places funded by the Federal Government were allocated to the joint program between the University and Central Queensland University (CQU).

Review of Activities

Quality

As a new organisation intent on establishing high credentials, the University has been unswerving in its concern with quality. University of the Sunshine Coast has used external experts extensively from the outset and continues to use a wide range and large number of adjunct appointments to augment internal expertise for a range of purposes.

The University has already taken steps to engage international expertise to address the emerging Commonwealth agenda on 'Quality', to pursue efficiencies through the Enterprise Bargaining process, and to benchmark internationally, especially with similar institutions at similar stages of development.

The University aims to enhance further the quality of its work, especially in teaching and research, by:

Quality Assurance

Actively seeking and responding to the expressed academic needs of students:

- In 2004 the University fully implemented its Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) system, which entailed a standard feedback instrument that staff were required to use at least once during the year. The SFT system, a confidential, anonymous and secure process for gathering and reporting data, was implemented after a successful three-year trial;
- During 2004 the University successfully trialed a project entitled Student Feedback on Courses (SFC) to gather information on course content and teaching methods. SFC will be implemented in 2005; and
- Student feedback data is used to guide the continuous improvement of teaching, thus directly addressing expressed academic needs.

Monitoring student application rates, reasons for attrition, success at degree level, and graduate employment rates in order to improve institutional responsiveness:

- Student applications to QTAC were monitored against the previous year from 31 September until QTAC closed on January 2005.
- A study of first year students in 2003 indicated that 26 percent were intending to transfer to another institution after two semesters of study at University of the Sunshine Coast. Eight percent of first year students had transferred from another institution to University of the Sunshine Coast. Attrition rate for 2003 was 30.68 percent. There was no investigation into the reasons for students transferring; and
- Graduates who completed their studies at the end of 2004 have been surveyed. Results will be collated in early 2005.

Developing alliances with other new universities across the globe with a view to:

(a) **facilitating the exchange of information between institutions;**

(b) **positioning the University internationally as part of an active higher education network;**

(c) **increasing opportunities for staff exchanges and various collaborative endeavours; and**

(d) **benchmarking.**

- In 2004, eighteen new Memoranda of Understanding were signed with:

    United States of America
    - Clemson University
    - Grand Valley State University
    - Queens University of Charlotte
    - University of New Mexico

    Mexico
    - Tec de Monterey, Mexico (Queretaro campus)

    Peru
    - Fujian Normal University

    Japan
    - Dokkyo University

Korea
- Sungkyunkwan University

Thailand
- Chulalongkorn University

France
- ECS Chambery Savoie
- Negocia

Germany
- Fachhochschule Frankfurt am Main (University of Applied Sciences)
- Fachhochschule Gelsenkirchen (University of Applied Sciences),

Italy
- Libera Università di Lingue e Comunicazione IULM
- Università Carlo Cattaneo (LIUC)

Switzerland
- Fachhochschule Solothurn (University of Applied Sciences)
- Fachhochschule beider Basel (University of Applied Sciences)

United Kingdom
- University of Glamorgan

Learning and Teaching

Developing and implementing a Learning and Teaching Plan, with strong emphases on:

(a) **flexible delivery;**

(b) **assessment of learning;**

(c) **systematic feedback on teaching;**

(d) **faculty quality assurance systems for learning and teaching ensuring the curriculum is appropriate for international students as well as local students;**

(e) **alliances with other comparable higher education centres across Australia and internationally on learning/teaching matters;**

(f) **providing appropriate staff development opportunities; and**

(g) **graduate employability issues, including self-employment.**

- The process of review of the existing Plan and consultative development of the next three-year plan commenced in October 2004 and will culminate in the presentation to the University Council of a new plan at its June meeting in 2005 (refer Goal 1, page 13).

Review of Activities

Research

Developing and implementing a Research and Research Training Plan, including:

(a) clarifying regional needs

(b) research priorities

(c) research centre guidelines

(d) internal competitive grants

(e) guidelines for developing external grant applications

(f) postgraduate supervision guidelines

(g) postgraduate scholarships/assistance

(h) graduate infrastructure

(i) developing international research links and opportunities

(j) continuing staff development opportunities

Refer Goal 1, page 13.

Research partnerships: developing alliances with key industry and business partners, and other research agencies in the region nationally and internationally, to further collaborative research endeavours.

Refer Goals 1 and 2, pages 13-15.

Information Technology

Developing and implementing an Information Technology strategy, including:

(a) identifying forms of flexible delivery to be given institutional support

(b) gauging infrastructure needs for off campus and overseas delivery of courses

(c) providing staff development opportunities

(d) defining levels of student access and support

(e) balancing the resources required for progressive implementation of the strategy

- An Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Board, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, was established to provide strategic direction to the University in relation to ICT;

- The ICT Operational Plan was reviewed for 2004 implementation;

- A number of ICT Support Groups were established to ensure engagement with the University community on all aspects of ICT;

- The Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) framework was implemented to deliver best practice in IT service management;

- The University received commendation for the current level of electronic support for students. The current student/computer ratio of 8:1 provides a sound level of student access to ICT services;

- The development of flexible delivery continued and the University hosted technical conferences for both Blackboard and PeopleSoft users during the year; and

- In late 2004, six tutorial rooms, with equipment to support audiovisual dependent tutorials, were developed in preparation for the start of the 2005 academic year.

One of Australia's leading sports identities Robert de Castella with Dr Brendan Burkett at the CHASE opening.

Vegetation and Plant Ecology senior lecturer Alison Shapcott inspects coastal heath in preparation for the establishment of 15 hectares of wallum heath habitat on campus.

Review of Activities

Flexibility and Innovation

In its early years the opportunities in the operating environment of the University have been unpredictable, and some of the most significant partnerships and initiatives have arisen with little or no prior notice.

University of the Sunshine Coast has capitalised on those opportunities of greatest benefit, and will continue to do so in an environment that is becoming increasingly unpredictable. Many national commentators have emphasised the policy vacuum that currently exists nationally, in research, quality, student funding frameworks, growth targets, capital projects and staff salary supplementation.

It is possible to set targets but they have little or no value in the way that proved feasible up to the early 1990s.
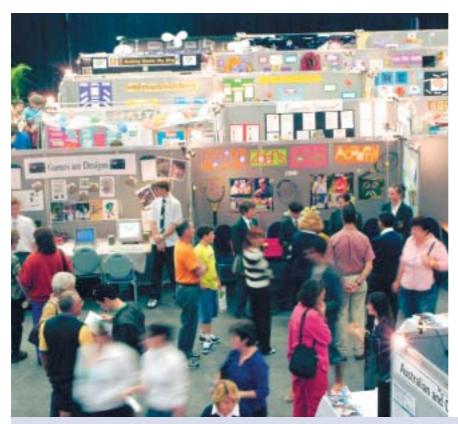
Thus the University aims to cultivate and enhance, wherever possible, its capacity to respond flexibly, swiftly and innovatively to opportunities that advance its Mission, by:

Externally

Communicating consistently, through marketing and other means, the University's commitment to its academic, cultural, economic and environmental mission, as well as its values, goals and strategic priorities to all stakeholders and interested parties:

- Fifty-three individual schools received 114 visits during the year;
- Courses for Careers Day, held in August, was attended by 2,348 people;
- Staff and current student Ambassadors attended the two-day Tertiary Studies Expo (TSXPO) in Brisbane in July;
- Student Administration and Marketing staff attended 10 Career Markets in Queensland and northern New South Wales;
- The KEEP PACE Program, a series of free information sessions and workshops for students, parents and community members was launched in 2004;

- On average nine media releases were distributed each month resulting in approximately 105 media clips per month – an average of 1260 media clips for the year;
- The redeveloped University website went live in May. The new site is more easily navigated, the information has been written for the Web and, as all material is contained within a content management system, it is easily updated;
- A large number of booklets, brochures, fliers, posters, banners, invitations and programs were proof read, graphically designed and distributed on behalf of a range of internal University clients;
- *Community* – the University's newsletter was published twice during the year;
- A number of external publications were updated throughout the year on request from the publishers;
- An advertising campaign highlighting the University's key messages and new program developments ran between July and December; and
- The graduation ceremony was attended by over 2,000 people.

Courses for Careers Day, held in August, was attended by 2,348 people. The redeveloped website went live in May and the KEEP PACE Program was launched for students, parents and community members.

Review of Activities

Encouraging further regional and offshore initiatives which are economically, culturally and academically desirable:

- Refer Goal 2, page 15; and
- Various research projects, such as the research into biting midges, had a positive impact on regional communities (refer Goal 4, page 19).

Progressing the Sippy Downs Urban Design Master Plan, and in particular developing a small business incubator and technology park on or near the University:

- Information relating to this topic can be found under Goals 3 and 4, pages 17 - 19).

Implementing a strategy for the introduction and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives:

- The Indigenous Services Officer maintained community relations, including a program of school visits and campus tours for indigenous school students;
- Indigenous students had access to dedicated facilities for study and ATAS tutoring;
- Cross Cultural Training was run for University staff and Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme tutors; and

- A new indigenous studies course was introduced in Semester 2, 2004. Introduction to Indigenous Australia (SCS130) is a cross-disciplinary course that was developed to provide students with an opportunity to gain a basic understanding of Australian Indigenous history and contemporary lives.

Launching and developing the Foundation to pursue private funding that accelerates the University's development and capacity to respond to a changing, competitive sectoral environment:

- Over $0.5M was raised for the opening of the new Art Gallery. Coastline BMW sponsored the Gallery exhibitions; and
- The number of scholarships, bursaries and prizes offered to students from community donations increased to more than 70 with a dollar value of more than $90,000.

Developing an alumni relations program so that alumni have opportunities to continue their relationships with the University as well as each other:

- A Plan for an Alumni Relations Program was developed for implementation in 2005.

Internally

Linking the triennial University budget and strategic priorities in a way that enhances long term planning without compromising the need for change and flexibility if circumstances alter:

- Changes in the higher education environment prevented the University from developing a triennial budget, however, there is a long-term focus on infrastructure to allow for growth; and
- The University's *Strategic Plan 2001-2005* strongly influenced the 2004 budget and the Capital Management Plan projects well into the future with, for example, budgetary development in 2004 addressing projected space requirements into 2007–2008.

Completing the second Enterprise Bargaining Agreement consistent with the University's strategic plan:

- Negotiations on the next Enterprise Bargaining Agreement continued through 2004, and by the end of the year there was significant progress. Matters on which agreement was reached extended to the inclusion of the strategic framework from the University's revised Strategic Plan.

Reviewing the Campus Master Plan to maximise physical flexibility to respond to opportunities as they arise.

- The Campus Master Plan was not formally reviewed in 2004. The requirement is for the Plan to be reviewed every five years. A major review was carried out in November 2001 and will be done again in 2006.

A successful fund raising campaign raised over half a million dollars for the construction of a new Art Gallery. During 2004, visitors to the Gallery increased by 23 percent to 7,295.