

Vice-Chancellor's Review



2009 has seen the momentum of development gather further pace. There was substantial growth in student and staff numbers, in the enhancement and recognition of research capacity, in the awards and acknowledgements for outstanding teaching, in the success rate of the Innovation Centre in generating business, in growing numbers of international students, and in the University's influence generally on regional development issues.

The University has become a major catalyst for the advancement of the Sunshine Coast and is widely recognised and supported to continue that role, evidenced by the recent successful \$5 million fundraising campaign. The University and the community are symbiotically linked.

Sectorally, too, the University is gaining wider recognition for its remarkable progress across its early years, and is clearly emerging as one of the strongest regional universities of the 21st Century, with growth in excess of 10 percent every year since opening in 1996.

Despite the pace of growth there is overwhelming evidence of quality, for example, in the level of personal and academic support extended to students, who subsequently register high satisfaction on their experiences at USC.

The University has also catalysed the physical growth of the surrounding Sippy Downs community, and a new contiguous town centre will soon emerge to provide new social, cultural and economic opportunities. It has the potential to become a world-class university town, strongly supported by governments, and will provide overdue nearby infrastructure for staff and students.

The greatest challenge for USC is unquestionably gaining support funding for capital development. As one of Australia's fastest-growing universities, it is also the youngest public university, and remains highly reliant on Federal Government funding. The University needs further major buildings to house its increasingly complex range of research and teaching, and considerable attention was paid to seeking major capital grants in 2009.

If the Government's 'social inclusion' agenda is to be realised, then securing major grants to house the continuing expansion will be an imperative. It is at universities like USC where the Government has the greatest opportunities for expanding the numbers of socially disadvantaged students participating in higher education.

It will be important to see new government sources of funds for regions directed to high growth universities like USC, where demand for 2010, for example, is projected to increase beyond 20 percent on 2009 numbers. Further capital funding for buildings of scale is becoming an urgent priority.

As the courses in health and nursing are expanded to meet the demands of Queensland Health's Sunshine Coast University Hospital, then the pressures for physical growth will further intensify.

So much that is of qualitative value on the Sunshine Coast, economically, culturally, intellectually and environmentally, is dependent on the continued growth and development of this University, as it steers a course to play a major part in the new sectoral environment which transitions in 2011 and becomes fully operational in 2012.

Professor Paul Thomas AM
Vice-Chancellor and President
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INSTITUTIONAL FORWARD PLANNING FOR 2010

- Continue the growth in undergraduate and postgraduate domestic students, as well as moving forward toward 25% international students as a proportion of total load.
- Build research centres to hub status.
- Concertedly advance strategies that address the national social inclusion and quality agendas.
- Finalise strategies to obtain monies for key capital infrastructure projects.
- Progress, in cooperation with Sunshine Coast Regional Council, the complementary development of the Innovation Centre with the technology precinct within the Sippy Downs Town Centre, to create a unique University Town with a strong emphasis on new economy jobs.
- Contribute to evolving plans for Sunshine Coast University Hospital.