

Getting There: Assessing threats and opportunities facing Ontario universities



FINANCING HIGHER EDUCATION
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Universities have been stuck 'here' for a long time



- **Where is here?**
 - System in crisis
 - Declining government support
 - Too much cost burden on students
 - Extraordinary pressures on limited resources
 - Urgent need for action
- **So what do we do and who is going to do it?**

Where is there?



- A funding benchmark?
- National average funding (per capita / per student)?
- Provincial grants as 60% of institutional revenue?

- Useful as a departure point, but not a useful definition of “there”

- The broader policy answer to “Where is there?” opens up across all postsecondary stakeholders – and not just universities

Who or What decides where “there” is?



- Easy answer is government
- More complicated answer is:
 - Government financial health
 - Demographics
 - Participation rates
 - Structural economic pressures
 - Government ideology
 - Political calculus
 - Institutional aspirations
 - And on and on...

What's so great about growth?



- Growth is ‘good’ politics
 - Social imperative of access to higher education
 - Tangible accomplishment
 - Immediate results
- Politically, growth trumps all

“We’re getting the knowledge workers ready today for the economy of tomorrow.”

What are some of the threats?



- Government expenditure controls
- Enrolment growth (esp. GTA demand)
- McGuinty's 70% participation rate target
- Expanded degree-granting authority for colleges
- New institutions
- Mandated differentiation among universities
- Many more threats exist...

What won't get us there?



- Shaming – “10 out of 10.”
- Exceptionalism – “They can’t cut us – we’re too important.”
- Paranoia – “The Philistines are in charge.”
- Isolationism – “We have a college in this town?”

What are some of the opportunities?



- Find solutions for long-term, sustained demand
- Envision and articulate what postsecondary education should look like
- Build policies that sustain and reward university differentiation – as chosen by the university
- Define and drive the research agenda
- Tell the story of the social, cultural and economic value of ALL aspects of what universities do