



“THE NEXT STEP”

STRATEGIC PLAN

2007-2010

David H. Johnson

PART ONE MISSION

Providence is a Christian academic community in the evangelical tradition that teaches people to grow in knowledge and character for leadership and service.

The first part of the mission statement, a **Christian academic community in the evangelical tradition**, describes our core values. The **evangelical tradition** understands that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that he died for our sins, that he rose bodily from the grave, and that he is coming again; that Holy Scripture is the Word of God written; that people need an active faith commitment to Jesus Christ; and that the church is God's agency for God's presence in the world today. As an educational institution we value **academics**. We study, teach, and learn with an attitude of free and open inquiry. Truth is our main academic pursuit. With Saint Anselm we believe that a Christian education is *fides quarerens intellectum*, "faith seeking understanding." Providence is a **community** of learners exploring the relationship of Christian faith and life. We have the joyful responsibility to function *together* in achieving our mission. Our togetherness implies mutual respect, care, and service. Our interdenominational position enables students, staff, and faculty to mutually benefit from those that differ from them.

The last part of the statement, **knowledge and character for leadership and service**, defines our goals. We enable people to grow in **knowledge**. When people leave Providence they will know more than when they entered. More than that they will have the desires and the skills to continue to learn after they leave. Therefore the Learning Resource Centre is central to Providence's pursuit of knowledge. But knowledge is not enough. We also enable people to grow in **character**. We believe that virtue is as important as knowledge. We believe that there is no higher virtue than the imitation of Christ, so as Christians we encourage a Christ-like character of love. Christian love is seen in a spiritual life of devotion, faith and hope; in a community life in pursuit of justice and peace; and in a personal life of honesty, generosity, gratitude, and diligence. The ultimate ends of a Providence education are leadership and service. **Leadership** is determinative for the church and society. The best leaders are virtuous and knowledgeable. They are also committed to **service**. They put others ahead of themselves. They do not seek personal greatness. They seek and do the best for the community, organization, or society of which they are a part. Servant leadership and Christian love are exhibited as people give themselves to global humanitarian purposes.

The operative words in the mission statement define our task, to **teach people to grow**. We are a learning and teaching community. Our task is to provide an intellectual and moral foundation by which people can mature as individuals in community so that they become life-long learners. We teach process as well as content. To do this we weave together theory and practice. Through the curricular and co-curricular processes we facilitate the personal formation of students, faculty, and staff to reflect the image of God in Christ. Staff, board, and faculty together engage in the teaching process through modeling, as well as in the classroom. Teaching is what we do.

PART TWO ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

External environment

- **Spirituality**

People in society are recognizing the spiritual dimensions of life more than in the recent past, although they eschew religion. Most students who enter Providence have some contact with a Christian church. Although they have heard the gospel, there is a noticeable decline in the biblical/ theological literacy of incoming students at both the graduate and under-graduate level. While the complexities of life are increasing, church people are finding it difficult to use their Christian understanding to deal with ethical dilemmas. Society tolerates all value systems and moral positions. It is difficult to adopt Christian morality, which by its nature is exclusive and more or less absolute. The differences between Anglicans, Catholics, and Protestants are shifting dramatically. The differences between “evangelical” and “non-evangelical” within these denominations are greater than the traditional lines that have divided them from each other. At the same time, fundamentalisms are on the rise as a reaction to the pluralism that dominates our world.

- **Technology and Education**

Technological advances create opportunities and problems. One problem is ethical. Medical ethics, addictions that are fostered by private internet usage, and genetic manipulation are a sample of these problems. A second problem is the gap created between the generations, with communication expectations on either side of the gap being quite different, often leading to misunderstanding. At the same time, technology opens new avenues of communication, increases the availability and value of knowledge, and allows for more efficient use of time and space. Distance is bridged by the use of technology. Courses that use the Internet are multiplying. In addition, modern research points to the existence of multiple intelligences and varied learning styles among students. Technology needs to be used to enhance education, not detract from it. Students want to have relationships with teachers not just computers. But most teachers have been trained in settings where technology is utilitarian, while for students it is relational.

- **Demographics, Economics, and Politics**

The world across the ocean is now the world next door. The shrinking world means that markets for goods and services are expanding. This is also true for education. The shrinking world and consequent population shifts mean that people today need to be able to function across cultural, racial, and social barriers. Education has the capacity to help people negotiate these barriers and learn to use diversity to enhance their life.

Until 2010 the number of eighteen- to twenty-year-olds will grow slightly, after which time this group will decline. The only groups in which this number will grow after 2010 are First Nations and New Canadians. The growth of Canada’s population is almost entirely in urban areas. International demographics (that might affect Providence) are not clear due to changing economic circumstances, although it has become clear that the number of Christians south of the equator has exceeded or will soon exceed that north of the equator.

There is a general talent redistribution looming on the horizon. The competition for the best workers is getting more intense. Companies are finding that they must hire less skilled, qualified,

and capable workers to fill the jobs of those who are retiring. So while the potential student pool may be smaller, the number of those wanting higher education may be on the rise. Although competition for the best incoming students is steep, schools that show that their graduates find satisfactory employment will attract the most students.

Recent studies have shown that students want a community experience in the school they attend. At the same time, because of smaller families of origin, students tend to “cocoon” their living spaces. The challenge is to combine these trends with the increasing diversity in Canadian culture. It has also been shown that the two experiences that correlate most fully with faith maturation in an educational setting are service opportunities and cross-cultural interactions. The government of Manitoba lists Providence among post-secondary religious institutions.

Although Manitoba is still among the least expensive places to live in Canada, inflation on necessary items still exists here. Inflation will necessitate higher wages and costs, which will increase the cost of education. Inflation also exacerbates economic disparity within societies.

Providence has courses transferable to the provincial universities, although its B.A. degree is not fully recognised by some institutions. Recognition of degrees for post-baccalaureate programs is a provincial matter. Alberta, B.C., and Ontario have quality control bodies which determine recognition levels within these provinces. In Manitoba degree recognition is left to the individual universities. None of the religious institutions have full degree recognition in Manitoba; each has distinct relationships with each of the universities. Provincial recognition affects the Seminary only indirectly. Providence receives an annual operating grant from the Province.

2. Internal Environment

- **Our mission**

Providence has evolved from a Bible Training Institute, to a Bible College, to a Christian College and Theological Seminary. The openly Christian mission of the institution combined with high academic standards makes Providence a good place. Our mission grows out of a solid evangelical Christian tradition, but it does not stymie change, which is happening at the present time in a positive way. The mission of the institution gives us great potential to make a positive impact in the world through alumni. We are committed to serving the church and society through teaching and the formation of Christian character. There is a balance between theological studies and Liberal Arts courses.

- **Our people**

One of the great strengths of Providence is the people who make up its community. The staff, students, faculty, Board, and administration make Providence a good institution. The quality of our community is based on size (small class sizes and availability of professors), but also on the quality of people who are involved here. Diversity also contributes to community life. Diversity is seen in the interdenominational focus, the percentage of international students, and the theological diversity on faculty. Extracurricular activities also foster community. Staff and faculty are motivated to work at Providence through their interaction with students.

Providence has committed staff that support the educational programs of the two schools. Many of the staff go beyond their regular hours in service to the institution. This shows that the Providence is understaffed in some areas. Resources are available for professional development. Providence has made headway in ensuring that these resources are being used.

The Board of Governors consists of twenty-two highly committed men and women that largely represent the believers’ church tradition of evangelicalism. The Board controls institutional policies, approves the annual budget, and ensures the maintenance of institutional

integrity. Board members work hard to help the Providence by advising, guiding, recommending students, recommending donors, and through generous donations.

- **Education**

The quality of instructors and instruction combined with the small class sizes make Providence a good educational institution. We have a shared vision for integrated and multi-disciplinary education. We have a commitment to excellence in education. The faculty feels there is a high level of academic freedom and academic inquiry within the evangelical tradition. The faculty also feels that the institution is committed to their success in teaching and research. The harmony between the College and the Seminary has increased in recent years.

We have a need for outcomes assessment. We have stories of success, but we have to assess whether success is the norm. As a Christian educational institution we also have goals for students outside the classroom. Are we fulfilling these goals? And though we have a vision for integration of faith and learning/life, are we achieving this vision? Do most of our graduates find places of leadership and service in the church, community, and world?

- **Finances**

Providence is financially healthy, having recovered from a half million dollar deficit over the last four years. The Institutional endowment is relatively small. Donations have increased over the last few years. Donations to the operating and student assist funds make up 9% of the annual budget of \$7.3 million. A provincial grant supplies 16.4% of the annual budget. After a few years of significant growth, enrolments have declined in the last three years (520 FTE in Fall 2006), which is a matter of concern because we are very much a tuition driven institution. Faculty and staff are significantly underpaid and deferred maintenance costs are relatively high. Faculty loads are higher than in other institutions of higher education, although faculty are often less involved in administrative work. Providence has undertaken fund-raising for a new \$5 million Student Life Centre. Three million dollars was raised in 2006. Plans are to break ground in 2007.

- **Infrastructure**

Providence is a small school. Its size gives it certain advantages. A smaller faculty is able to collaborate on cross-disciplinary projects that large departments are often unable to facilitate. Providence's size also eliminates much of the bureaucracy and policies that inhibit effectiveness.

Providence has 100 acres in which to grow. We have adequate parking, wonderful green space, and room to expand our facilities and still maintain the beauty of our natural surroundings. The twinning of Highway 59 makes the campus seem closer to Winnipeg, and thus the "perimeter barrier" is melting away. There is a mix of old and new buildings on campus. Deferred maintenance costs are large on the older buildings. Some campus roads also are in need of repair. All the educational and administrative work of the institution occurs in two connected buildings. There are about ten classrooms, an office for each of the 33 full-time faculty members, an office for each administrator, and offices and workspaces for support staff. One strongly felt need is for spaces for groups of thirty to forty people (both classrooms and/or meeting rooms). Campus housing consists of two large residence halls, six fourplexes, Providence House, and Seminary House. In 2003, when our enrolment peaked our housing was stretched to its limits.

PART THREE VISION 2010

In 2010 Providence College and Seminary (at its 85th anniversary) will be poised on the edge of a climb towards greatness. **Human, physical, and financial resources** will be in place to make the climb. We will have **determined our destination and the path we are going to take** to get there. We will be ready to take “**The Next Step.**”

Human Resources

There will be 620 full-time equivalent students (400 in College; 220 in Seminary) at Providence and 35 full-time faculty positions (two more than Sept 2007). There will be two additional staff positions beyond the number in 2007. Every student will be growing in cultural sensitivity because of the racial, cultural, denominational, and theological diversity on campus and because of involvement in cross-cultural experiences. The curricula will be delivered in traditional (M-F, 8:30-4:30) and non-traditional ways in order to accommodate space needs, varied learning styles, and market share expansion.

Staff and faculty will have time to think and plan as well as perform the needed tasks to make Providence effective in fulfilling its mission. Faculty will have more time for research and production. Institutional culture will value the empowerment of every member to participate fully in the life of the institution.

Physical Resources

The exteriors of the campus will be attractive and invite outdoor recreational activity. The Rat River will play a larger part in our exterior orientation. Exteriors will be free of debris and unneeded buildings. Interiors will be clean and accommodating. There will be plenty of comfortable and inviting places for all members to “hang out.” Individual and family residences will be desirable and satisfying places to live. Classrooms will be fully equipped and highly functional. The campus master plan will be revised and more detailed. Deferred maintenance will be manageable with a view to eliminating it within five years (2015). We will be ready to begin the process of planning the next campus capital campaign.

Financial Resources

The budget for the year 2010-2011 will be \$8.4 million. Wage scales will be more competitive for all staff and faculty. Budgets will be large enough to sustain positive institutional initiatives. We will have adequate reserves to face temporary shortages and emergencies.

Destination and Path

Both the College and the Seminary will be in the process of implementing their respective strategic plans, which will include a vision for 2015 and beyond and a plan to achieve that vision. We will be an evangelical academic community that is enabling people to grow in character and knowledge for leadership and service. Our constituency will be noticeably larger and more diverse than in 2006. We will have a firm grasp on the needs and desires of our constituency and we will provide educational programs to meet those needs and desires. We will be more fully involved in post-secondary education in Manitoba. We will have three years of data by which we will measure our successes and failures.

PART FOUR STRATEGIC GOALS

We have five goals toward which we will move in the next three years, each goal being a response to a critical issue that we face as an educational community. Each of these goals is stated in italics. A key word encapsulates the basic objective of the area that the goal addresses. After each goal there is an explanation of how we understand that goal and what it entails for our work together.

1. **Academic Life—*Integration***

We understand that the integration of revealed truth and academic pursuits is the joyful and difficult task of Christian scholarship.

We, as individuals and as a community, will teach and model a doxological and critical approach to life.

Doxology—We will live in recognition of and for the glory of God among the nations. This will be seen in our life together through chapels, mission encounters, community and private prayers, conferences, and celebrations. But most of all, our talk (the language we use) will reflect God’s glory in our lives.

Life—Our lives as individual scholars and as a community will be integrated into and governed by our understanding of God and God’s written and incarnate Word. We will define and practice the integration of cognition, practice, and identity. This will be reflected in our language, in our curriculum, in our publications, in our ethical choices, and in the emphasis we give to Holy Scripture.

Critical Thinking—We will be critical thinkers, critical of ourselves first and then of the world of thought around us. *Fides quarerens intellectum*, “faith seeking understanding” (Saint Anselm) will become one of our watchwords in all of our intellectual pursuits.

Community—We will collaborate in our academic endeavours. We will practice the hospitable reception of others’ ideas with openness and, where we disagree, with constructive and humble criticism. Members of the community will sense these attitudes. Our community life will lead to greater understanding of the truth we pursue together.

Faculty—We will recruit and retain the best teachers whose central focus and priority is the integration of the Christian faith with their academic pursuits. Through their teaching the faculties will lay a foundation for the formation of both character and scholarship of students. The best teachers regard the Christian commitment of the institution as a sacred trust and reflect this in their teaching, scholarship and service. Faculty advancement will reflect these values.

Library—We will have a library that supports the academic and information needs of our community.

2. Educational Experience—*Diversity*

We will take significant steps toward an inclusive high-quality, multicultural, and service-oriented Christian education in the evangelical tradition for all students, which includes growth in both intellect and character.

Inclusive—Providence will be recognised by churches and the public as adding significant value to the various constituencies where our alumni/ae serve or pursue further education. Students will pursue intellectual understanding from the stance of faith. We will be theologically diverse within an inclusive evangelical tradition. For those who choose to graduate elsewhere we will lay an academically sound and theologically informed foundation.

High-Quality—Students will be better at articulating the relationship between revealed truth and culture. We will increase the number of programs with multiple faculty. Our technological sophistication will improve. We will have clearly measurable pedagogical outcomes. We will maintain a small student to faculty ratio and relatively small average class sizes.

Multicultural—Each student will experience a culturally sensitive environment on campus and be involved in cross-cultural experiences off-campus. The international presence on campus will be maintained or increased. Student, staff, and faculty support will be in place for training in cultural sensitivity.

Service Oriented—Students will grow in their understanding that Christian leadership is oriented toward service to God and humanity.

The Evangelical Tradition—Our education will be holistic, spiritually formative and vibrant, communal, environmentally concerned, and oriented toward a Christian ethic. Our goals will be clearly stated in our calendar/catalogue, in our viewbooks, and in other public documents. Beyond the classroom these goals will be reflected in the community life of the institution, in recreation, in sports and fine arts, and in student leadership activities. More students will participate in co-curricular activities.

Character as well as knowledge—Students, staff, and faculty will learn to act on theologically informed moral choices made for the greater good of the community and society. Students, staff, and faculty will be growing in their spiritual life of devotion, faith and hope; in their community life in pursuit of justice and peace; and in their personal life of honesty, generosity, gratitude, and diligence.

Overall, we will be better at preparing students for vocational pursuits, further study, and their life's work.

3. **Public, Governmental, and Educational Relations—Recognition**

We will be known as a strategic member of the academic community in Manitoba and Canada.

Profile—We will raise the profile of Providence to be recognised across Canada as a leading Christian institution of higher education. We will raise the profile of the President and faculty. We will also increase the number of our programs of distinction (signature programs) that have national and international recognition. We will position ourselves to begin significant specialized institutes and lectureships. We will broaden our constituency to include more people in more diverse settings. We will establish more annual traditions.

Recognition—Our education will have noticeably better formal recognition among Canadian Universities and professional schools. More of our college graduates will go on to more schools for further education. Informal recognition of the quality of a Providence education will also increase.

Brand—We will have a consistent brand (not just a logo, but a true “brand” in the sense that when people hear of Providence they get the feelings we want them to have). We will communicate our institutional values particularly by highlighting the contributions Providence makes directly and through its alumni, faculty, and staff.

Publics—Providence will be a good corporate citizen. We will expand our involvement in the life of the Manitoba community. Provincial and local governments will recognise Providence as an important contributor to the economic and social fabric of southern Manitoba.

Educational Partnerships—We will establish more partnerships with other institutions that are beneficial in fulfilling our mission.

d. Infrastructure—Quality

We will improve the quality of our work and of our physical plant for future growth and ecological sustainability.

Physical Plant—Our campus will be attractive, functional, welcoming, technologically current, relational, and re-creational. The campus will create an aesthetic ‘feel’ where people enjoy coming to work, study, and re-create. We will refine the long-range campus plan and use the Rat River as a focal point. The plan will include goals for ecological sustainability and beautification. It will reflect a collaborative process of deciding on campus utilization. We will significantly reduce our deferred maintenance.

Work— Providence will be a great place to serve. Staff and faculty will understand our distinctives. We will establish sustainable patterns of open internal communication. Decision-making processes will be collaborative and responsive to environmental changes as they occur (for example, options for vacated space due to the new student life centre). We will improve our delivery of what is important to our members (wages, professional development, supervision, opportunities for advancement, health and fitness opportunities, family involvement, work environment, safety, recognition, conflict management, equitable and open communication).

Evaluation—All aspects of the institution will have regular audits that measure effectiveness in accomplishing our mission.

e. Financial Base—Strength

We will strengthen our financial base for future growth by increasing enrolment, increasing the number of donors, and by raising the commitment level of our present donors so that decisions are based on values more than on budget. The budget for 2010-2011 will be 8.7 million dollars.

Increase Enrolment—We will increase enrolment to 620 FTE.

Donor Development—We will build our financial reserves by increasing donors' commitment to Providence. Annual donations to the general and student aid funds will be 1 million dollars.

Donor Acquisition—We will broaden our donor base by involving more donors in our vital mission.

Stewardship—We will increase our efficiency by reducing our non-educational cost per student.

Major Sources—We will build a more productive relationship with government and foundations.