



Monthly news & updates

Pension returns: 6.44% for the 4 months ending December 31, 2020

Feature-length interview: Principal Patrick Deane by Diane Kelly



I had an opportunity to spend an hour on the phone with Principal Patrick Deane recently. He took time from his exceptionally busy schedule to talk about the challenges of COVID-19 and the new Vision and Mission which has been developed for Queen's.

In response to my enquiry about the impact of COVID-19 on teaching, learning and research at Queen's, Patrick said that the pandemic had forced the university to do everything differently. Pivoting to remote learning proved to be challenging for everyone, but the university poured resources into helping faculty engage with remote learning and faculty and staff went above and beyond in working to engage with the new technology and render it an effective teaching tool.

The learning environment for students also had to change. Although the online learning format is sophisticated and a good learning tool, the students clearly miss in-person classes. Patrick expects that there will be a gradual return to the traditional teaching format in the fall; however, the expertise developed for online learning will continue to be used to enhance the learning experience.

Research has not suffered as much as might have been expected, said Patrick. The labs were closed temporarily but have been open and functioning for some time, although with limitations on numbers.

Unfortunately, the libraries were closed for a brief period and that posed difficulties for researchers in the humanities. The real toll on productivity resulted from the, at times, significant obligations that researchers had on the home front.

The financial impact of COVID-19 on the university, said Patrick, was significant, due to lost revenue from the residences and other ancillary services. Queen's was in sound financial shape when the pandemic struck, so it has managed to weather this unanticipated downturn, but it needs to get back to normal operating conditions as soon as possible.

Our discussion then turned to the process leading up to university's new Mission and Vision. In the fall of 2019, Patrick embarked on in-depth conversations with the Queen's community by way of a series of town halls and one-on-one discussions. The results of these meetings are summarized in Patrick's [**Report on The Conversation**](#) issued in October 2020. Patrick describes this Report as an important, critical document which indicated in fairly frank terms how the internal university community perceived itself and challenges facing the institution.

He discovered that members of the university were hungry to feel that they were working for a meaningful purpose; in particular, some were looking to be inspired by a greater goal which included an aspect of service.

There was also concern about the nature and quality of the university community and a desire to move beyond the old culture towards a more diverse and inclusive community of learners and scholars.

Patrick heard complaints that the university had become overly bureaucratic and risk averse, two tendencies that could discourage far-sighted initiatives in both research and teaching as well as other forms of creative change.

On the positive side, he was told that faculty felt a sense of collegiality at Queen's and trust and cooperation amongst their colleagues. This goodwill, Patrick feels, will provide the foundation for addressing the issues of concern mentioned above.

Patrick described the Report on the Conversation as offering an analysis and diagnosis of Queen's current situation. In contrast, the draft Mission and Vision statements, on which he is again consulting widely and intends to bring to the Board of Trustees for approval in March, are forward-looking documents that outline the positive next steps for the university. The Mission sees Queen's as a university for the future, building on yet challenging its past, a university that will cultivate leaders through an exceptional student experience, expand the boundaries of learning through research, and embed a commitment to an inclusive and

sustainable vision for society. The Vision for Queen's is of a university with a global purpose and broad community impact; one that will prove to be a choice for learners and researchers from diverse background who strive to achieve social and environmental change.

Patrick emphasized how important it was for today's universities to look beyond their own narrow boundaries and seek to have an impact on their local, national or global communities. This focus and resulting impact is what new university rankings are measuring. Patrick explained that the traditional university rankings can be a reliable gauge of where an institution stands in relation to others, nationally and internationally, based on a set of criteria about, for example, student experience and research profile. However, the assessment of what makes a university great is evolving and the recent **Times Higher Education Impact Rankings** measure a university's contribution to the **Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations**. What is significant about this ranking system is that it adjusts the impact data collected from each university for its wealth, size and geographic situation. In other words, it levels the playing field. Queen's participated in the Times Impact Rankings for the first time this year and expects the results in April. Patrick sees this as an opportunity to learn as much as we can about ourselves and chart our academic course accordingly.

RAQ Council encourages members to follow The Conversation and future plans around a new vision for Queen's University.

Photo credit: Bernard Clark

Pension update

The investment return for the plan year ending August 31, 2020 was 7.7% and most retirees received small increases in their monthly pension. Returns to date in the current plan year are strong – 6.4 per cent for the four months ending December 31, 2020.

The Annual General Meeting of the QPP took place on December 9, 2020. Some highlights from that meeting are as follows: The QPP is a large pension plan with assets in excess of \$2.3 billion. As at August 31, 2020, there were 8,482

Answers to questions about Manulife benefits

Q: Where can I find details of my current benefit coverage?

A: You can access information about your current elections and coverage through the "Coverage Details" section of the Manulife Plan Member site. You may also call the Manulife Customer Care Centre at 1-800-268-6195, Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m.

members: 4,340 actives, 1,398 deferred vesteds and 2,744 pensioners and survivors. An actuarial valuation of the QPP at that date showed total liabilities of \$2.5 billion, so there was a deficit of \$261,000 million as at that date. At the AGM, an update to the UPP was provided by the chair of the UPP Board of Trustees and the UPP President and CEO. From their comments, it was clear that considerable work had already been done to establish the new jointly sponsored pension plan. Pension Services has confirmed that conversion to the University Pension Plan is still on track for July 1, 2021. The regulatory requirements – CRA registration and approval from the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (the provincial body) are already in place.

Q: Where should I direct specific questions related to my claims for reimbursement?

A: The Manulife Customer Care Centre is your main point of contact for answering specific claims related questions. You can reach them by phone or through the “send a note” feature on the Manulife Plan Member Site.

Q: Where can I obtain a pay direct drug card?

A: A pay direct drug card is available for retirees participating in the Extended Health plan. To request a pay direct drug card, please contact the Manulife Customer Care Centre. You may also print this card on the Manulife Plan Member Site under “My Benefits – Benefits Card”.

Click [here](#) to see more FAQs on the RAQ Pensions and Benefits web page

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