

# Found on Bovey, York

In the first of a two-part interview, Acting president William Found discusses his academic priorities for the Fall term. *By GRAHAM THOMPSON*

**A.** We produced two documents. The first one in May. Nobody asked for that, we just wrote it on our own. And we wanted to make a particular point.

**Q.** Did that come about because you were dissatisfied with the mandate of the report, or you saw some particular problem?

**A.** No, it wasn't the mandate of the commission. It's just that for years York has been very interested with the question of the funding formula. No matter what else they did they were bound to look at the question of the funding formula. So we wanted to express that very strongly even before requested. And, I think it's good that we did. It was a pretty useful paper.

Your interview with Mr. Bovey [*Excalibur*, July 2C] suggested that the commission needs to relook at that (the operating grants formula system).

**Q.** Within the president's office they were concerned—from that interview—that he really didn't understand the way the funding system worked. My question then would be are they (the Bovey Commission) really out of their depth?

**A.** Well, I don't think out of their depth would be fair because presumably they're still reading stuff and they're still learning. They have a very small support staff.

They have one person who is apparently responsible for the data analysis side of things.

They have a very short time period in which to do the job. I think most of us don't see how three people, with a very small staff can absorb all the material they need to within their specified time period.

**A.** It's been very difficult to plan ahead because there has been so much uncertainty about what the funding base is going to be about the role of central authorities. What is the Ontario Council of University Affairs really going to be? How much freedom are we going to have? It's been a very very difficult environment to work inside. So I think, on one hand, people are glad that they're trying to have a look at that and resolve some of those uncertainties. That's why one of the most important things they can do is to set up an ongoing planning process that could deal with the problem. But, certainly there are some things that lead us to believe that they can make some very, very major errors—really false assumptions about the universities—if they don't take their time and really look at the universities and consult, talk and learn about them and not just use the crude quantitative measures. There are a lot of things about universities you can only learn through experience.

**Q.** What are some of these major areas they might be making errors?

**A.** All right, I'll give you an example. They, in their data supplement, have a table that indicates the amount of each university's operating budget which comes from external re-

search grants—that varies from a high about 40 percent to down to a low of somewhere about 10 percent. And then they seem to imply in the report—I forget the exact words—that perhaps those data indicate the university's seriousness about research—their commitment to research. And that's just invalid because there is a very strong funding bias depending on the fields that a university works in.

The universities that depend most heavily on external funding are medical schools—funding from the medical research council. Those with engineering schools depend on funding from both industry and National Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).

If I can give an example, a department in the humanities—let's say History. Very good external grant funding for a science department might be two or three million dollars. So if you have a university with a large science department, or engineering—there you get into industrial money as well—or medicine, you have much, much higher rewards from external funding.

So, York on those data might be interpreted as not having a serious commitment to research because the proportion of operating income from external grants and contracts is not large. But that's because we're so strongly oriented towards the social sciences, humanities and professional schools which are not heavy consumers of external funding compared to those others.

So using that as a measure is totally irrelevant. But it also is perhaps tempting for some people to draw those conclusion. What are the schools in engineering and medicine? They're the old ones.

**"That's an attractive model for industry. It just doesn't happen to apply very well to universities."**

**Q.** One of the things you talk about in your brief is accessibility. You said "we may in fact have to reduce enrollment given the present strain on resources. Is the university planning rigid enrollment limits?"

**A.** We have already. It was cut back this year. That is, the entering class was cut back a bit.

**Q.** Cut back from what—in percentages?

**A.** The actual numbers I'd rather you got from Sheldon (Levy—Associate Vice-President) because we usually ask him to be the single source of our numbers. We have always had rigid enrollment limits in some of the programs—the professional programs and graduate programs. But until the last couple of years, we pretty well had an open door policy in Glendon, in Arts and in Science.

The first significant change in our history occurred last year because for all of 1983 we set limits on all of our programs.

**Q.** And that's when this got in the news about so many thousands of students...

**A.** Being turned away last year, that's right. And we did it for two reasons—probably three.

One, the funding formula gives us such little amount of money to fund additional students that we reached the point where we couldn't afford to take more.

Secondly, we were having serious space problems. We were spending a lot of money. I think it was a million dollars just last year simply renovating space in order to make more class rooms and more offices.

And then there's also been a certain amount of concern about standards. There has been some tightening up—if I can use that word—in terms of entrance standards of some programs.

One of the major changes in the last couple of years since I've been here has been the requirements on English language competence for visa students. That has been increased quite dramatically.

There's also an ongoing debate here about what is the appropriate level for people coming from grade 13. Traditionally York has been fairly liberal. We like to give people an opportunity so if there is doubt let's err on the side of letting people come and have a try. And then, hopefully, have high standards for achievements.

One of the results of that is we have had a somewhat higher attrition rate from year one to two than the average. But that's had to change. Last year the minimum entrance grade went up. We never have been higher this year.

**Q.** What sort of range this year?

**A.** It's different in all programs, it's also different in different times in the summer. Initially, if a person applied early, to get into York for the current session, they would need 66 for a science degree, for Glendon they would have needed 66 or 70, for Arts they would have needed 64.

What we've always done is kept the door open to some extent during the summer. Years ago a student could come right through to September, as long as they had 60 percent. But what we tend to do now is have a higher minimum grade for June and then as the summer goes by we see what the acceptance rate is and gradually try and fine tune that so we come in exactly on target—as close as we can—come September.

**Q.** One of the things you mentioned in the brief was future developments (at York) and the possibility of establishing engineering and medical faculties here. You also talked of expanding the sciences in the future. Do you have firm plans for these developments?

**A.** There are certainly no immediate plans for the next few years. Science is fairly happy with its enrollment. I'm one of those who believes that it would be good for the university to see that enrollment increased.

We say what we did about engineering and medicine really looking some distance down the road. For example, we have been approached by a number of organizations or institutions related to the medical field wanting to see some development at York in medical research. We have not done that because the cost is huge. But who knows what will happen in the long run.

There are now a lot of hospitals in North York and Metro. It's important for them to have an affiliation with a university. I think it's just commonsense U of T can't serve them all. So in the longer run there may well be a provincial or metropolitan need for those.

**Q.** Given the expansion of Metro in the north, east and west, does the university feel that there's going to be continued enrollment growth at York?

**A.** It's very, very hard to predict, and that's what I think anybody would say. The predictions are almost always wrong. Actually enrollment growth for the last five years goes very much against the predictions of five years ago.

If you just look at the demographic base though, there are a couple of things that suggest that this part of Ontario will have a stronger basis for growth.

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## Rugby foul

Last week *Excalibur* published a story, "York Eyesores," in which it was suggested that a steel sculpture should be torn down by the York University rugby team. *Excalibur* regrets any embarrassment or inconvenience this story caused to the team members.

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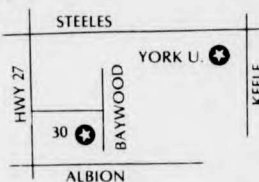
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