

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



McMaster edges out Queen's to top annual accountability survey *Unique study by Wilfrid Laurier University professors shows Canada still scores poorly*

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WATERLOO (Ont.) – McMaster University has soared to the top of an annual survey designed to measure the public accountability of Canadian universities. The university in Hamilton, Ontario climbed from 35th place to first in just one year – scoring 64.5 using an index that considers such public documents as mission statements, performance targets, detailed financial statements and research summaries.

Researchers with the School of Business and Economics at Wilfrid Laurier University have been conducting Canada's only annual survey of public accountability by universities since 1988. The survey now involves 41 universities from British Columbia to Newfoundland. Using a modified accountability disclosure (MAD) index of one to 100, universities are awarded points based on the depth, clarity and quality of the information provided in 26 categories.

Though there has been improvement in the last two years, the researchers found that Canadian universities still fall short when it comes to external reporting and accountability. Compared to institutions in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, Canadian universities are not making enough information available to the public on key objectives, performance indicators and facts and figures.

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“We are seeing a bit of improvement overall among Canadian universities, and a great deal when you look at particular institutions like McMaster,” said Morton Nelson, one of the researchers and an accounting professor with the Laurier School of Business and Economics. “But Canada has tended to lag behind other Commonwealth countries, especially New Zealand, where accountability reports have been legislated into practice.”

In 2000, the majority of Canadian universities scored between 20 and 65 on the MAD index. McMaster, which scored only 10.9 in 1999, edged passed last year’s number one finisher, Queen’s University (the list of scores is attached; scores from previous years and information on the study can be found at www.wlu.ca/~wwwsbe/sbe2000/html/accountability1.html). New Zealand universities score in the 90s, those in Australia average in the 70s and institutions in the United Kingdom perform slightly better than Canada.

Nelson believes the one-year difference for McMaster, and the differences between countries, has more to do with reporting practices than the quality of the institutions. “I think Canadian universities in general are doing a good job, but to a large extent the general public has no idea what we do,” he explained. “Except in the annual *Maclean’s* rankings, this information just isn’t being made readily available.”

Nelson, who conducts the annual surveys with fellow Laurier professors James Fisher and William Banks, points to government-funding models based on performance indicators and to students who want to know what they are getting for their money as evidence of the need for greater accountability. He is looking for universities to produce detailed but concise annual reports that make information easily accessible to students, faculty, staff, donors, the government and the general public.

The Society of Management Accountants of Ontario has been funding the survey for the past seven years.

Wilfrid Laurier University is located in Waterloo, Ontario and is one of Canada’s premiere smaller universities, with roughly 9,400 full- and part-time students. The University offers programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and, aside from its strong and diverse arts and science programs, is well known for its business, music and social work faculties.

**MODIFIED ACCOUNTABILITY DISCLOSURE SCORES
CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES (2000)**

McMaster University	Hamilton, ON	64.5
Queen's University	Kingston, ON	64.2
University of Calgary	Calgary, AB	51.3
Lakehead University	Thunder Bay, ON	50.6
Simon Fraser University	Burnaby, BC	48.7
University of Toronto	Toronto, ON	47.5
Trent University	Peterborough, ON	47.2
University of Lethbridge	Lethbridge, AB	46.8
Memorial University of Newfoundland	St. John's, NF	46.4
University of Victoria	Victoria, BC	46.0
St Marys University	Halifax, NS	45.3
York University	Toronto, ON	44.9
Carleton University	Ottawa, ON	44.5
University of Manitoba	Winnipeg, MB	43.4
Athabasca University	Athabasca, AB	43.0
University of Windsor	Windsor, ON	41.1
Laurentian University	Sudbury, ON	38.9
University of Western Ontario	London, ON	35.8
Brandon University	Brandon, MB	35.8
University of Ottawa	Ottawa, ON	35.5
Wilfrid Laurier University	Waterloo, ON	35.1
Prince Edward Island University	Charlottetown, PE	35.1
University of British Columbia	Vancouver, BC	34.3
Universite de Montreal	Montreal, PQ	34.0
University of Regina	Regina, SK	32.8
University of Saskatchewan	Saskatoon, SK	32.1
Mount Saint Vincent University	Halifax, NS	31.7
University of Guelph	Guelph, ON	29.8
University of New Brunswick	Fredericton, NB	29.1
Ryerson Polytechnic University	Toronto, ON	28.3
Brock University	St Catharines, ON	28.3
Acadia University	Wolfville, NS	27.5
Universite Laval	Quebec, PQ	25.7
University of Waterloo	Waterloo, ON	24.9
St Francis Xavier University	Antigonish, NS	24.2
University of Alberta	Edmonton, AB	22.3
Dalhousie University	Halifax, NS	21.9
Universite de Moncton	Moncton, NB	18.9
University College of Cape Breton	Sydney, NS	18.9
University of Northern British Columbia	Prince George, BC	15.5
Nipissing University	North Bay, ON	7.9

All scores are out of 100

NOTE: Canadian universities not listed did not respond to the 2000 survey.