



Coalition
nord-ontarienne
pour une université
de langue française

Expert Panel Report Summary and Recommendations

Coalition nord-ontarienne pour une université de langue française

(Northern Ontario Coalition for a French Language University)

April 14, 2022

1 – Vision – Mission – Values

Vision: Open on the world, the Université du Moyen Nord (University of the Mid-North) offers quality education grounded in recognized scholarship at the undergraduate and graduate levels to foster the advancement of diverse Franco-Ontarian communities and environments.

Mission: Unique in its location in the heart of the Canadian mid-North, the UMN brings communities together to offer a quality university education from the undergraduate to the post-doctoral level, to ensure the cultural, social, political, economic and professional development of Franco-Ontarian populations and the communities in which they thrive. Their dynamism and diversity enrich Canada as a whole and radiate to the rest of the world.

Values: In a spirit of openness and transparency, together we value continuous improvement in the quality of education, respected impactful research, engagement with our communities, inclusion and diversity, innovation in learning, opportunities for specialized study, international study, and the preparation of student populations for dynamic careers in an ever-evolving globalized world. The vision for a French-language university in the mid-North of Ontario is rooted in the vision of comprehensive programming available from the Sudbury campus as well as through other venues. Programme offerings may be delivered through distance education, hybrid mode, and through partnerships with other university institutions.

2 – Geographic Scope

The University proposed in this report will primarily serve the needs of Francophone and Francophile populations in the Mid-North corridor of Highway 17 from Mattawa through Greenstone to the Manitoba boarder, and along Highways 400 and 11 from Barrie to Hearst. The UMN will also meet the needs of Francophone and Francophile residents of other Ontario regions wishing to study in French towards degrees unavailable in their region, while also attracting a national and international student population.

3 – Which University for Franco-Ontarians?

If we cannot design an institution of our own, within which universal knowledge will become the forge in which our identity can be soldered, where else will we encounter the Northern part of our life in a country still looking like a landscape? Claiming, with the mere excuse of realism, or, under short term political pressure, to be satisfied with a shadow university that will for ever remain a « glorified community college » will not meet the needs of Franco-Ontarians. The move towards the extension to colleges of degree-granting status will remain legitimate in some specific cases, but these changes have nothing to do with what we envision for the University of the Mid-North.

Community colleges involve seasoned practitioners teaching action modes and methods of execution for various technical, artistic and other fields where practice is of the essence. Conversely, University teaching is rooted into faculty and students' scholarship: in fact, it is this very relation which constitutes the University, defined as a community of scholars, particularly at the graduate level.

Currently, the pressing issue is to fill urgent needs for Francophone teachers' education, which can only be done within a university. There are deep knowledge gaps about the Ontario Francophone communities; these gaps will mainly require extensive university level research, notably regarding immigration and the integration of new Canadians, business creation and entrepreneurship, the lack of legal services in French, engineering education, health professions education, and artistic creation, including the booming Ontario film industry.

It is only by building a full-fledged university for Franco-Ontarians that they will be able to meet the aforementioned challenges they are facing. This means hiring seasoned, fully qualified and full-time tenure-track faculty, able to conduct the scholarship required, with teaching loads commensurate with university level research activities. This also means providing the seed funding required to build the labs and work spaces required for both faculty and graduate students.

4 – UMN will offer programs guaranteeing long-term access to university education in French language for 2,500 students or more

Through program by program with guaranteed inflation-indexed financing, Ontario and the federal government will guarantee the long-term viability of quality university research and teaching in French language from the undergraduate to the post-doctoral level. This will allow both levels of governments to enhance the access of Franco-Ontarians from all origins to professions requiring university education, while individuals and community organizations will thrive by being able to access teaching, research and community support in French from the university. We vision the emergence of an institution with a student population of 2,500, including 600 to 800 international students.

UMN will be mandated to coherently plan for a complete array of programs at all undergraduate and graduate levels and will be responsible for the complete administration of its programs by Francophones, including managing human, financial, and physical resources. UMN's management style will be anchored in transparency and rooted in a decision-making partnership

with the community (notably via Franco-Ontarian organizations) and governments (provincial and federal).

The University will be open to Franco-Ontarian and to Francophone communities across Ontario, Canada, and the World, not only through its governing structure, but also and mostly in its daily operations, through its faculties' interactions (i.e. faculty members and students) embedded within their teaching and research endeavours. Most programs should be introduced over the period 2022 to 2035, with more intensity within the first five years.

The 1914 secular Charter granted by the Ontario Legislature to Sacred Heart College, now under the University of Sudbury, could govern the establishment of faculties and programs at the University of the Mid-North. If the University of Sudbury were to become the institution in charge of establishing the UMN, we recommend a name change in order to develop a new image reflecting the community wishes expressed in this report. It is worth noting that one of the two other French Language Universities (Hearst and Université de l'Ontario Français) could act as the University of the Mid-North.

5 – Presidency – Administration – Board of Governors – Senate – Joint Board-Senate Secretariat

Democracy shall be the default modus operandi of the UMN. Consequently, all academic administrators, from the president to the deans, shall be elected by faculty members. Among the fifteen members of the Board of Governors (BG), four will be selected by Francophone community organizations, the others will be either elected or appointed by the province. Participation to the BG by community members on a rotating basis should allow the BG to better consider specific community needs in terms of programs. Senate shall be elected according to current practice.

The Joint Board-Senate Secretariat (JS) is a new body in charge of establishing a permanent, organic and operational linkage between senate and BG. The purpose of the JS is to maintain a dialogue between the two bodies with the scope of limiting conflicts related to budget priorities.

6 – Funding

Ontario universities ensure their financial stability by securing over a quarter of their income from international student fees and from uncapped professional programs such as the MBA. In 2020-2021, thirty percent of Ontario universities receipts came from student fees paid by Canadian families. UMN will need to secure special funding to renovate buildings and labs on the Sudbury campus (and potentially elsewhere), or build new ones where required when retrofitting is too costly. UMN will also need funding to promote its programs across Canada and abroad. Support from the federal government will also be important, as it is the case with other official language minority institutions.

In regards to international student fees, we recommend that student fees be substantially lower than those of other universities in order to ensure UMN a competitive advantage and attract a maximum of students. Similar tactics are already successful at other institutions.

7 – Partnerships and other considerations

Besides existing agreements between postsecondary institutions, the report highlights the importance of new partnerships with communities and other universities across the world. An example within the arts field is provided in the report. Other issues discussed are academic freedom, the importance, structure, and integrity of research and scholarship at UMN, new programs, the compared costs of studying in Sudbury vs. Toronto, internationalization, and faculty structure. The section about programs introduces an innovative two-year core program common to Arts and Social Sciences which should maintain programs within reasonable costs.

About the Panel

The Expert Panel was set up by the Coalition in February 2022 to consider programming priorities for the *Université de Sudbury* based on the needs identified by the community and the local economy, including suggestions emanating from recent and current events dealing with the future of French-language postsecondary education in Ontario and Canada. It was mandated to recommend mechanisms that the *Université de Sudbury* should put in place to ensure the creation of a culture of action “with” the community and its ongoing participation in the governance and teaching, research, and community service activities of the institution. The Panel was asked to then propose structural and institutional relationships with other post-secondary institutions and school boards.

Information

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