

Vision - 2020



Forecasting the future of an academic institution like Panjab University with so many parameters and variables is not an easy task. Therefore, the best option is to clearly define the future goals and then go all out to achieve these. During the past few months a committee has been constituted by the Vice-Chancellor to prepare Vision 2020 document for the University. The committee had its last meeting on September 15 and has come out with the following vision and mission statement:

The Vision

To attain and retain coveted position as a premier educational institution engaged in creation and dissemination of knowledge, new ideas, perceptions and methodologies; to arrange for quality teaching, research, outreach activities and for developing intellectual capital to meet societal needs and global challenges.

The Mission

In consonance with its Vision, the Mission of the University is to:

- (i) Promote learning keeping in view the concern for Access, Equity Quality Relevance and Value Based Education.
- (ii) Attract brilliant students and to train them to compete in facing global challenges.
- (iii) Search for highly talented and innovative teachers and staff and provide them with congenial work environment to retain them.
- (iv) Undertake and promote basic and applied research.
- (v) Promote a dynamic, decentralized and transparent Governance System.

There is no magic wand to achieve these goals within the given time framework. The success or failure of the mission depends on our will to undertake the remedial steps suggested by the committee in the proposed action plan.

The Strengths



Let us first dwell on the strengths of the University and how these can be utilized to further advantage of the University

One of the important assets of the University is its beautiful campus with sufficient accommodation for most of its departments. The buildings are used only between 9 AM to 5 PM and even during this period many laboratories and lecture halls are not fully utilized. The only exception is Arts Block I where classes for the evening college are held after 5 PM. In contrast, even the most prosperous countries of the world like USA use such resources continuously from 7 AM to 11 PM including the week ends. The University can start new professional, vocational and interdisciplinary courses with minimum of inputs by properly scheduling the classes at different hours.

The University can be proud of its Library which holds about 6.5 lakh volumes and is open for long hours, seven days a week. The access to about 4000 research journals in different subjects on line through INFLIBNET is the dream comes true for any researcher. With further digitization and net working it may be necessary to have arrangements for installation of more PC's in the library. The University can enrich itself by bringing out limited edition reprints of some of its rare books/scripts in possession of the library without infringing upon the copyright act.

The University has excellent support facilities including UGC sponsored Academic Staff College with EDUSAT; DST funded SAIF (earlier called RSIC) providing access to sophisticated instruments to the scientists in the region; workshop facilities at CIL and USIC; Computer Centre that provides scientific computing facilities (7000 MegaFlops) set up by TIFAC (DST) and also works as central hub with 1100 active nodes spread over the campus and an elaborate EPBAX connectivity

The University has sprawling sports grounds and excellent facilities for indoor and out door games.

The University Botanical and Herbal gardens are the envy of any university in the country and abroad.

The Weaknesses



One of the glaring weaknesses of the University is its archaic and excessively centralized administrative system. This puts undue burden on its important functionaries like the Vice-Chancellor, the Dean of University Instruction and the Registrar. They have to spend lot of their time on routine matters that can be disposed at lower levels. The movement of papers is very slow due to long processing chain and many a times the delays are frustrating to students, teachers and other staff members. Halfhearted attempts have been made in the past to rectify the situation but without any perceptible change. There is lack of coordination between different divisions amounting to hostility in some cases. A dynamic, user friendly decentralized transparent governance system is the crying need of the hour and it should receive the top priority without which it will be difficult for the University to move forward in the academic set up of 21st century. A large scale exercise will have to be taken to completely computerize the various wings of the administration and to arrange for the training of the concerned employees.

Most important things in an academic institution are men and ideas. The University has 800 faculty members and 3700 other employees but their average age is on the higher side. The recruitment programme for all categories of employees should be so regulated that every year some new recruits with new ideas are inducted. This not only brings freshness in the organization but also increases its functional efficiency over the years. Particular attention has to be paid for the recruitment of teachers. Special measures will have to be adopted for search of talented and gifted teachers and also for creating congenial environment for them to stay This is particularly important as in some subjects much more lucrative opportunities are available to them outside the university system. Rating of a University depends on the standing of its faculty members amongst their peers. During 1960-1985, many prestigious awards and honours were bestowed on the faculty members and their advice was sought after by various government departments and agencies. It is a matter of grave concern that we have been left behind in the race during the past 20 years and there has been only a trickle of few laurels for our teachers. Is it the result of complacency or lack of motivation on the part of the teachers or it is due to some structural deficiency in the functioning of the departments? How can we develop interdisciplinary areas when there is lack of team work in a single

department? The University will have to give due consideration for multidisciplinary appointment of a teacher so that he may be associated with more than one department and may prove a link for the interdepartmental projects.

Recently a host of private universities and institutions of higher education have been set up in the territory that earlier used to be the exclusive domain of the University. Although these have been set up with commercial interest, they have many advantages due to their flexible approach. They can create necessary infrastructure quickly without any budgetary constraints; can attract faculty members with higher emoluments wherever necessary and can start new courses attracting adequate number of students ready to pay higher fees. The University will have to devise innovative strategy to meet the new challenge by starting socially relevant revenue generating courses and also to propose incentives for meritorious faculty members.

Having taken cognizance of the strength and weaknesses of the university and to convert dreams into reality a practical action plan is required.

Action Plan



The committee has recommended a three-phased action plan strategy.

Phase I

Short - Term Action Plan (2007 - 10)

It is proposed that during the phase one drastic streamlining will be undertaken in the following areas:

Administrative

- (i) A manpower auditing will be undertaken to identify under -utilized academic and administrative staff. An HRD cell would look into the existing manpower and need for new recruitments.
- (ii) Recruitment procedure will be strengthened and all new applicants will be required to present a research seminar at the department/university level for more effective and objective judgment. A contractual appointment will be offered in the first place at the entry level and only after satisfactory performance a candidate will be inducted in permanent cadre.
- (iii) Computerization of the administrative wing of the University will be implemented. A University Governance Centre will be established to train staff in the application of information technology and in the best possible practices in administration. Efforts will be made to make the administration, student and teacher friendly
- (iv) Facilitate visits by international scholars, cutting down on red-tape and unnecessary procedural delays.

Academic

- (i) Teaching and research in the inter-disciplinary areas will be promoted by introducing more interdisciplinary contents in the existing courses; starting new courses; establishing new centres and by encouraging interdisciplinary seminars/ conferences/ workshops.

- (ii) Expansion of the Dental Institute into a full fledged Medical Institute.
- (iii) Introduction of socially relevant courses.

Technical

- (i) Access to computers, LCD projectors, photocopiers etc. to all department and offices.
- (ii) Centralization of infrastructural facilities used by more than one discipline.
- (iii) Establishment of a Central Information Technology Cell which would deal with the hardware/software related problems of the campus.

E - Connectivity

The existing campus wide net work will be extended and strengthened. The existing band width will be enhanced from 2 Mbps to 8Mbps. The number of e-journals and e-books will be increased and e-access will also be offered to affiliated colleges.

Finances

A new budgetary approach will be adopted and financial matters would be managed by professionals. Steps will be taken for facile management of grants received by the faculty for their project work.

Miscellaneous

Steps will be taken to have healthy environment and proper security on the campus. The University will encourage group based tasks, cultural activities and sports for release of stress and promotion of culture of co-operation.

Phase II

Medium - Term Action Plan (2008 - 12)

The administrative reforms and technical up-gradation initiated in the first phase will continue. In particular the following steps are proposed:

- (i) Improvement of information technology facilities like providing multimedia projectors to the departments and laptops to staff members.
- (ii) Linking teaching departments, regional centres and affiliated colleges electronically with the central administration of the University
- (iii) Developing multi-skilled manpower.
- (iv) Periodic review of administration to improve work online.

Development Plan in Health Sciences

The University can take the lead in the area of Health Sciences by way of synergistic Pharma-Medico-Engineering contributions at the research level to evolve new generational formulations. Professional Courses in Pharmaceutical Sciences, Engineering and Technology Law and Management can together merge to provide direct services for the benefit of society.

Schools of learning

The University proposes to set up Schools of Natural and Applied Sciences, Bio-Medical Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Social Sciences, Languages, Visual and Performing Arts and Commerce and Management Sciences. The objectives of the schools are to provide inter-disciplinary teaching and research; close interaction among sciences, humanities and social sciences, and to encourage regular interaction of students with the public/industry, national research institutions and rural areas.

Besides the schools mentioned above, following three centres of excellence for interdisciplinary research are proposed:

- (i) Centre for Experimental and Theoretical Physical Sciences
The major participating disciplines would be Chemistry Geology Mathematics and Physics. The thrust area of the centre would be on Material Sciences, Nanoscience and Nano-technology
- (ii) Centre for Biological and Bio-medical Sciences
The participating disciplines would include Botany Environmental Studies, Biophysics, Biochemistry, Biotechnology, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Human Genome Studies, Microbiology and Zoology The thrust area of the centre would be stem cell, tissue engineering and conservation of biodiversity and its exploitation for practical purposes including drug development.
- (iii) Centre for Inter-disciplinary Studies in Social Sciences, Humanities, Performing Arts and Languages
The departments of Political Science, Economics, Philosophy Psychology, Sociology, Public Administration, Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology would participate in this centre. It will undertake interdisciplinary research in traditional and contemporary literature, language and culture, theatre, dance, music and fine arts.

Phase III

Long-Term Action Plan (2008 - 20)

The University will intensify its efforts to provide greater access to the marginalized groups of our society to affordable quality education through its Departments of Correspondence Studies and Evening Studies. Special attention will be given to colleges affiliated to the University by periodic inspection by teams from the University to ensure the colleges are equipped with proper infrastructure and facilities. University will regularly arrange lectures by distinguished teachers at the colleges. Efforts will be made to introduce job-oriented and socially relevant courses in the colleges.

At the national level the University will continue to interact with other universities in the country and develop faculty and student exchange programme. Co-curricular activities with other institutions will be probed and encouraged.

During the third phase the University aims at becoming an international institution of repute. It plans to produce best of the students most sought after in the international market. The University will facilitate interaction between renowned teachers and researchers internationally specially with those successful NRIs who can be easily motivated to pay back something to their nation and the students of our University through video conferencing, guest lecture series and Internet website mode.

To covert the dream of becoming a world class institution of higher learning into reality, the University proposes the following steps:

- (i) Attracting and retaining the best minds across the globe in each faculty;
- (ii) Build world-class state of art infrastructure, including scientific laboratories and hostels by utilizing global capital;
- (iii) Continuous faculty development programmes and up-gradation of infrastructure to international standards;
- (iv) Inviting eminent scholars as visiting professors for a longer duration;
- (v) Developing partnership with top ranking universities for teaching, research, training and consultancy;
- (vi) Promoting international exchange of faculty and students;
- (vii) Introducing the practice of dual degrees;
- (viii) Encouraging students for internship with MNCs and top ranking research institutes/laboratories;

- (ix) Increasing the problem solving inputs in the courses as per international standards;
- (x) Encouraging the patenting of research out come;
- (xi) Presentation and viva voce of Ph. D. research scholars through teleconferencing;
- (xii) Undertaking exercise for major restructuring of the courses on regular basis incorporating global changes taking place in respective fields;
- (xiii) Attracting more foreign students through cultural exchange programme;
- (xiv) Offering on the spot admission to students of developing countries;
- (xv) Offering single window based admission to foreign students;
- (xvi) Allocating additional seats for the foreign students;
- (xvii) Activating already signed Memoranda of Understandings (MoUs) with the foreign universities/institutions and also entering into fresh Mo Us in future with international institutions of repute.

The Vision - 2020 is a dream woven around ideals, good intentions, wishes and imagination. It can be translated into reality only when all concerned act with responsibility and determination. Now that we have started the journey we hope to reach somewhere. Let us remember the famous lines "If you want to reach the tree, sky should be your aim".

