Into a New Era
After 10 years, Lorna R. Marsden passes the presidential torch to Mamdouh Shoukri

PLUS
- Cancer Researcher Sam Benchimol’s Secret Agent
- D’oh! How Joel Cohen Helps Create ‘The Simpsons’
- Will Ferguson on the Art of the Scam
A change of presidents at a university is a momentous time, especially when it has been 10 years since the last one. Not so when mention when the decade of Lorna R. Marsden’s leadership at York has been among the most dynamic in its history, and when her successor has as impressive a track record as Mamdouh Shoukri’s. Momentous, and no doubt invigorating. The two people who grace our cover personify the phrase “from strength to strength”, and that is clearly where York is going.

In this issue, whose shelf life spans both presidencies, you’ll find a package of features related to the transition. First, you’ll meet York’s president-designate, who takes over on July 1, in our opening profile by YorkU managing editor Michael Todd. Shoukri is a tall man with a ready smile, and his open approach is evident in Michael’s story. Then we turn to the woman with the deaf wit and clear vision who has so transformed York. No one understands Marsden’s achievements better than Marshall “‘Mickey’” Cohen, who has worked so closely with her as Chair of York’s Board of Governors. The pleasure for me, after asking him to write about Marsden, was seeing my expectation confirmed that Cohen, an entertaining speech-maker, would also prove to be a deft magazine writer.

Coupled with Cohen’s article is a feature that I think may be an eye-opener for alumni or others who have not visited York for a while. This is a timeline recounting just a fraction of all that has happened over the last 10 years. It’s quite a list, and may give you a chance to catch up on what you’ve missed.

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York’s outgoing president & vice-chancellor looks back at 10 years leading a ‘feisty and charming’ institution. By Lorna R. Harsden

Remembering the Future

This is my final column in YorkU as president of the University and I feel very fortunate to have spent my last decade at such a superb institution. Eleven years ago, apart from some good friends and colleagues, I knew almost nothing about York. What I did know was that the University was created to represent the strong, diverse post-war spirit of the 1960s – and that it lived up to those values academically, politically and socially.

For example, York was creating a School of Women’s Studies – the first in our country, York’s faculty had given birth to CanLit and to Canadian studies well before others, York had a history department second to none, and at one point York had been a candidate to be the Space University. I also knew that there were some good quantitative social scientists and some great librarians; that Osgoode Hall Law School was at York; that Seymour Schulich had chosen York’s business school above all others for a spectacular gift; and that whenever I tried to telephone anyone at York, it seemed impossible to sort out the multiple departments of almost every discipline and whenever I asked for York U cell phones, they always got lost.

Not a lot of real understanding.

So when I was approached to see if I would consider letting my name stand for president, I had a lot of research to do. I was then president of Wilfrid Laurier University, a place I loved but where I was concluding my term. It was not immediately apparent that York was a place to love and unclear whether it was a place in which things could be done. Even 10 years ago, Web sites were not a source of information and so I read through the financial statements and the catalogue and talked to some confidantes. They were divided. “It’s a wonderful place,” said some. “It’s an impossible place,” said others.

In the end, it was the values expressed in York’s very existence as well as in the spirit of the faculty, students and alumni that won the day for me. York is modern, secular, open and honest; York is the home of feisty behaviour. All universities were suffering from dramatic and unverifiable budget reductions in the late 1990s as Canada and Ontario coped with deficits of historic proportions. Poverty generally leads to conflict. Between the time I was selected as president and the time I arrived in the summer of 1997, the faculty went on strike, and so I arrived to find an unhappy mood on the campuses: a lack of trust in one another across faculty, a belligerent student body.

At once I discovered a marvellous secret about York people – they can be at one and the same time unhappy and critical but also gracious and generous. And they were in the same state of self-deprecating humour and pride in their university.

Being relatively young, York is not strong on traditional behaviour but certainly is on feisty behaviour. All universities were suffering from dramatic and unverifiable budget reductions in the late 1990s as Canada and Ontario coped with deficits of historic proportions. Poverty generally leads to conflict. Between the time I was selected as president and the time I arrived in the summer of 1997, the faculty went on strike, and so I arrived to find an unhappy mood on the campuses: a lack of trust in one another across faculty, a belligerent student body.

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University, recognizing our founders, our alumni and our early years. We have built on the strong academic reputation with more students with higher entering grades, more services for students with disabilities, more graduate students, more young and impressive faculty. We have found ways of organizing program, we have made it easier for students to understand the academic programs; we have a new Faculty of Health, a focused University Academic Plan, and continuing improvements to help students with their programs. We have good signage in place for visitors. Parking is still a challenge but we have 1,600 more spaces to help alleviate the traffic. The subway through the University seems to be coming at last – the fruits of a 30-year campaign by many generations at York, the steadfast support of one of our alumni, the Honourable Greg Sorbara, and the recent significant support by another, the Honourable Jim Flaherty.

Ten years ago our identity as Canada’s third-largest institution was not well-known in the Greater Toronto Area or nationally. In fact, we found that our reputation internationally was stronger. So we split the advancement function into its three natural parts: fundraising, alumni affairs, and marketing & communications. This idea was strongly advanced by the Chair of the board for the past seven years, Michael Cohen, and it has proved excellent. York University is now widely recognized by our logo, our brand and our tag “redefine the possible”. Our advertisements reflect our feisty, contemporary nature and the entire institution flies under one flag of identity.

Our Marketing & Communications Division works with the media, with all parts of the University and all our partners, and has won more than 30 awards for its output. Thanks to the efforts of Alumni & Advancement Services, our 200,000 alumni around the world are increasing numbers of our alumni, and are united in their support of York University.

The best excitement is what will happen in the years ahead. Through the 50th toward its 75th anniversary, York University will unquestionably come into its own. I will watch with pride.

There have been some disappointments but many triumphs. York’s football team has won the Red/Blue game every year I’ve been at York! Our student athletes are true leaders, and we take great pride in them as we do in the new spirit group, York is U. Health, a focused University Academic Plan, and continuing improvements to help students with their programs. We have good signage in place for visitors. Parking is still a challenge but we have 1,600 more spaces to help alleviate the traffic. The subway through the University seems to be coming at last – the fruits of a 30-year campaign by many generations at York, the steadfast support of one of our alumni, the Honourable Greg Sorbara, and the recent significant support by another, the Honourable Jim Flaherty.

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John Tsotsos has a dream. In fact, the computer science professor and former director of York’s world-renowned Centre for Vision Research has had it for a while – more than 15 years. Back in 1992, when he was still a professor at the University of Toronto, he began to build a machine he dubbed “Playbot” to help mobility disabled children. For a while the dream was on hold due to lack of funding, but now Tsotsos, who holds a Canada Research Chair in Computational Vision at York, is back in the game thanks to funding from the Canada Research Chairs Program and the Canada Foundation for Innovation/Ontario Innovation Trust.

What is Playbot? It is a child’s motorized, robotic wheelchair with a robotic arm that can manipulate objects. It has a camera system so it can “see” and a communication panel with symbols that a child can press when he has limited arm mobility. The panel “talks” to the arm.

“Imagine a child is seated in the chair,” explains Tsotsos. “He or she could point to an icon of a toy on the panel and then point to a sequence of action icons that he/she wants the robot to perform ... to grab objects with traditional robotic arms, because children have to rely on their vision to continually adjust it.”

Along with children, says Tsotsos, Playbot may also help mobility impaired people of all ages lead a more independent life.
Flattery really will get you nowhere, finds a Schullech prof

You’re in a store buying a jacket and the sales clerk says, “Oh, you look great in that coat!” Do you trust such judgments? Not likely, says Kelley Main, marketing professor in York’s Schulich School of Business. Main, along with colleagues Darren Dahl at the University of British Columbia and Peter Durke of Florida State University, wondered how consumers responded to over-the-top sales behaviour and how it might influence customer perception. Does flattery heighten consumer suspicion?

“One of our experiments tested for consumer responses to flattery during actual sales transactions,” says Main. “We used 102 students as customers, buying sunglasses at a kiosk in a campus mall.” During the experiment, sales clerks flattered student customers before the purchase, after it or at all. In both cases of flattery, sales clerks used the same three statements, “That’s a great pair of sunglasses. I think they look good on you. They really suit you.”

After buying the sunglasses, students completed a questionnaire asking whether they received flattery, when it occurred and how “trustworthy” they found the salespeople. "Across this field study, and three other lab studies that we did, we showed that trust judgments occur through a combination of deliberative and automatic processing,” says Main. Surprisingly she found consumer suspicion was evoked automatically (without need for deliberation), even when flattery came after the sale.

“If you have flattery coming after the sale, there’s no real ulterior sales motive. You’ve already bought the product. But even post-sale flattery caused consumers to have negatively biased judgments of trustworthiness towards the sales clerk,” says Main. Final analysis? Leaving customers alone to make their own decisions might be the best sales pitch of all.

As a researcher, Schweitzer draws on her extensive background in marketing, manufacturers, ad agents and department stores absolutely facilitated the promotion, distribution and consumption of new products and product categories, ranging from cars and soda pop to the latest Paris fashions.

Says Schweitzer: “It might seem surprising to us now, but commercial Broadway theatre then did more than borrow marketing strategies and appropriate advertising rhetoric. Its interaction with manufacturers, ad agents and department stores absolutely facilitated the promotion, distribution and consumption of new products and product categories, ranging from cars and soda pop to the latest Paris fashions.”

As a researcher, Schweitzer draws on her extensive background in theatre history, cultural studies, film and business history, and fashion and women’s history. “My work has a broad appeal to scholars and students in a number of fields, she says. “It’s a growing area of research that recognizes shopping as much more than a frivolous pursuit and I’m looking at the various ways in which women have used fashion and other commodities to negotiate a place for themselves within the public sphere.”
If you’re not on the grid, now’s the time to join – and have your snoozing computer help the world’s scientists battle major diseases. What is the grid? Well, the World Community Grid, powered by IBM software, is a remarkable project that links up idle home or work computers (PC or Mac) to provide researchers with a global system that has the processing power to outstrip even supercomputers.

The grid uses all that computer downtime to tackle huge real-world challenges, such as the Human Proteome Folding Project. The HPFP recently provided scientists with grid-crunched data on how individual proteins within the human body affect our health and enabled researchers to work on new cures for illnesses such as Lyme disease, malaria and TB. Without the grid, it would have taken five years to achieve the same results. With the grid, it took the HPFP only 12 months.

In March, York became the first Canadian university to join the grid, and it is inviting the entire alumni community to come aboard – see York’s World Community Grid page at yorku.ca/wcg. Users are asked to download a small, free piece of software, and the page explains how to register as part of the “York University Research” team. After that, whenever your computer is not in use, a screensaver will show you what your processor is working on – it could be AIDS research or fighting muscular dystrophy.

University officials involved in the project hope York will become one of the largest contributing groups to the grid. “It’s a satisfying feeling to be part of something that’s making a real impact on global research,” says Stan Shapson, vice-president research & innovation. “It’s also a very tangible way for York to enhance its growing research reputation within our regional community – specifically by complementing our external collaborations with leading industry partners like IBM and others.”

York will soon be getting a big chunk of Ontario history – but not in the form of log cabins or old farm machinery. Instead, the province has chosen the Keele campus as the new home for the Archives of Ontario. Fonds relating to Ontario history will not only be getting a new locale, but a new building to live in as well.

The Archives of Ontario Building will be a three-storey, 290,000-square-foot podium structure linked to the eastern end of York Lanes. Picking up on the scale of York’s inner core buildings, it will contain the archives themselves and an expansion of existing York Lanes retail space. A seven-storey “research tower” will be set back on the podium, containing an additional 120,000 square feet of academic and research space for York.

The relocation of the Archives of Ontario is part of a larger project that brings together two significant provincial investments – the other being the extension of the Spadina Academy for the Arts in nearby Vaughan. The archives building will include access to the new subway stop planned for the same location.

The new structure will more than double the size of the archives’ current public reference area. And the facility will meet international archival standards and make it easier to showcase some of the Archives of Ontario’s most valuable collections by serving a broader clientele, including school groups. Estimated cost of the entire project is $100 million. It should be complete by March 2009, coinciding with York’s 50th anniversary.

During the 1810s, Canada meant freedom to hundreds of American slaves escaping forced servitude by way of the Underground Railroad. For every newcomer to the tiny hamlet of Buxton in southwestern Ontario, an enormous brass bell, housed in the local church and known as the Buxton Liberty Bell, would ring out the sound of their freedom.

On March 25, that sound rang out again at York as Canada’s Governor General Michaëlle Jean officially opened the University’s new Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global History of Slavery. The original Buxton Bell, which remains in the church steeple, still rings for services.
President-designate Mamdouh Shoukri, who will lead York starting July 1, brings with him a stellar reputation as a research administrator. By Michael Todd
Photography by Jeff Kirk

It seems fitting that Mamdouh Shoukri is an engineer by trade and training, especially since he grew up in Egypt, a country renowned for its own engineering marvels. York’s president-designate has shown himself to be a builder in every sense. On July 1, Shoukri will bring his wealth of academic experience and administrative skills to bear on his new job as York’s seventh president and vice-chancellor, succeeding Lorna R. Marshen, who is retiring after 10 transformative years (see following stories).

Shoukri, 59, did his undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering at Cairo University in Giza, then came to Canada...
Shoukri says that when he originally came to Canada his life plan was to get a PhD and head back to Egypt. “I did mechanical engineering so I likely would have ended up going back to a university job, or government job,” he says. “But we enjoyed being in Canada. We started to realize how privileged we were by living here. And we started to have a family. So we stayed because we couldn’t see any reason not to stay.”

While Egypt has many wonderful things, one thing it does not have is winter. Does Shoukri remember his first snowfall? “I do. It was November 13th, 1972. My wife and I woke up in the morning to the ground covered with snow.” Shoukri didn’t experience great culture shock, he says, but he does remember being puzzled at “nothing being open past 6pm – no coffee shops or restaurants, nothing. I came from a very cosmopolitan background and at the time I couldn’t believe that there was no place to go after 6 o’clock on a weekday, and that if I ran out of gas I’d have a problem finding a gas-station that’s open.”

One quality about Canada which convinced him to stay was the opportunity the country itself presented. “Quite frankly, we felt we were in the best country in the world. We enjoyed being here. A community started to develop around us – and I don’t mean an ethnic community. I mean a community of people who were like-minded, a community of people who were in the field I am in, and I felt part of that community. That applied equally to me and my wife. We couldn’t see a good reason to leave!”

Aside from getting his academic credentials in order, Shoukri says it was always on his life-radar to work in the “real” world. “I wanted to have experience as an industrial engineer.” Shoukri felt an engineer cannot really be an engineer without practical engineering. While I was finishing up my PhD I didn’t even consider applying for university jobs.” Instead, Shoukri took a position with Ontario Hydro’s research division where he did research projects in support of the safety analysis and operation of the Canadian-made CANDU reactors. “The job allowed me to interact with academia all over the world,” notes Shoukri, “and with the nuclear industry the world over – the people doing R&D in the area – so that was very useful for me professionally. And when I went back into the university and developed my own independent research program that experience was a great introduction to what the research issues were.”

Like any good administrator, Shoukri has translated a penchant for listening into his approach to his upcoming presidency. “I think a good quality for any university president to have is a willingness to listen and understand that, at the end of the day, the university is an academic institution with an academic mission. I’d like to be able to believe that I will lead a culture of inclusivity, where everybody has a role and everybody feels valued. I am a person who believes very strongly in issues like accessibility and giving people a chance, which is some thing that has been a part of the heritage of York. I believe in fairness and commitment to giving people opportunities to show their excellence.”

Shoukri must be a good listener because he made such a big impression on his students as dean at “Mac” that they even wrote a song about him for a 2001 musical called The Wizard of Eng (Tagline: “We’re Off to See the Mambouh!”). Set to the tune of “The Sound of Music,” the lyrics of “The Sound of Shoukri” extol both his rep as a champion for students (“He fights for our rights”) or “I go to the dean when I need assistance” and his skill as an administrator capitalizing on McMaster’s research strengths and human potential (“Our dean has the power to change the amount of our debt/To a million dollar fee”).

Shoukri believes in disseminating knowledge as widely as possible so that the world can judge the quality of scholarship (through peer-reviewed journals or otherwise), but also so the world can benefit from access to the knowledge itself, he says. “We need other new vehicles aside from just journals these days. We need to find ways to disseminate the knowledge in ways that society can use. It’s easy to see this in the areas of applied sciences through technology transfer, but I also see dissemination in a broader sense. Excellent research in humanities and social sciences needs to be made available to decision makers, policy-makers, and to society, so society can adopt it and use it rapidly - without having to wait.”

Like York’s high-profile work on bullying? “Good example,” says Shoukri. “Such research is part of what I call technology transfer, not just ‘technology’ transfer. It’s an evolving mandate for us. We see knowledge transfer through our graduates, through scholarly publications, and now we need to invest in new vehicles that make our knowledge available to a world where knowledge is a driver for economic and social development.”

“I don’t think we should be in a position where we wait for somebody to come and take that knowledge off the shelf [from a published academic journal] to translate it into policy; we need to be part of the process. We don’t do it all, but we need to facilitate it.”

But there’s also a caveat, he says. “Whatever business practices we do should be done to serve the academic mission of the university. The core mission can’t be lost, which is that whatever we do is done to serve those who are teaching in the classroom, those who are receiving knowledge in the classroom, and those who are working in the labs or the library or whatever.”

Along with the need to be socially responsible, Shoukri says he believes “a progressive, 21st-century university” also has to be linked to the social and economic development of its region, which is located in. “When I talk about a university being progressive, I mean the university is the driver of development. I also think we need to be a university that values life-long learning. For any society to be competitive, it will need to continuously train people and prepare them for evolving and changing roles. And if there’s a university that’s suited for that it’s York.”

One of the biggest issues for at least two former presidents has been York’s lack of direct connection with the centre of the city – best solved, since you can’t move the campus, by the extension of the subway to York and the 905 region. Now that link looks set to become a reality, thanks to confirmed federal, provincial and municipal funding. How does Shoukri feel about York’s geographical placement and the subway pledge?

“I think the subway is very important for York, York Region and the City of Toronto. It is the one thing that will alleviate many of the perceived disadvantages of York’s location. Let’s look at the advantages – York is part of a very strong and prosperous metropolitan area with the most diverse population one can imagine. With the subway we’re going to eliminate most – if not all – of the disadvantages, and start enjoying the advantages.” Some of the subway digging may begin next year. For the engineer who has come to York, there will be plenty of large-scale engineering to watch in coming years.
I first met Lorna Marsden at a time when York University was nowhere on our mutual horizon, but the experience was a precursor of what was to come. We were “over the fence” neighbours (she was still president at Wilfrid Laurier University) and my first sighting of her was in her garden. I watched her with fascination (not being much of a green thumb, it was all a mystery to me). She didn’t have much time for gardening but she evinced several personal characteristics that I was to see in later years and over and over again. She attacked the weeds with ferocity, she cradled her flowers with loving care, she wasted no time, she planned her garden, she got results and she worked at it till she was exhausted – her beloved garden or her beloved University? Both.

In July 2000, I became Chair of the board of governors and we began a deep and productive working relationship. Lorna did many things at York with astonishing success, but much of her on-campus achievement will be better detailed by her many colleagues and admirers in the academy. I want to talk about some other things that we did together and which, for me, showed the depths of her character and her courage. In retrospect, they look easy, but at the time, they took guts and plenty of it.

Perhaps the most innovative and profound were the “branding” of the University and the creation of the York University Foundation. (The two were inextricably linked, though that may not be apparent at first blush.) We were both convinced that until York had a clear and distinguishable “brand”, we could not reach our potential for fundraising. More than that, we could not harness the power that lay within the campus but was dispersed and hidden in too many corners. And so Lorna, having come to understand the power of a
A selection of events that occurred during the tenure of President & Vice-Chancellor Lorna R. Marsden.

Ten Years of Transformation

By Michael Todd

Lorna R. Marsden, 54, appointed York's sixth president and vice-chancellor, Jan. 29

York appoints its first-ever vice-president research & innovation, Stan Shapson

Atkinson College renamed as the Joan & Martin Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts recognizes their $3.75-million gift

The newly named Joan & Martin Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts recognizes their $3.75-million gift

Fisher donates Las Nubes Rainforest in Costa Rica to York

Dr. Woody Fisher donates Las Nubes Rainforest in Costa Rica to York

Descendant of Sir Isaac Newton's apple tree planted at York

Sir Isaac Newton's apple tree planted at York

Marsden sets up President's Task Force on Sustainability for Keele campus

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Marsden organizes a series of public events supporting a subway to York

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Experiments by York Professors Ian Howard and Barry Fowler fly aboard space shuttle Columbia

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Atkinson Faculty of Liberal & Professional Studies

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Stong Lane dedicated to Marsden in honour of the Stong family, ancestral owners of the Keele campus land

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Avie J. Bennett, president & CEO of publisher McClelland & Stewart, appointed York's 10th chancellor

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York Then and Now

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<th>Total faculty (full &amp; part time)</th>
<th>Academic programs</th>
<th>Operating budget</th>
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LEADERSHIP

meme, set off almost on a woman crusade to “brand” the University. Not an easy task. And to make it harder, this was not Lorna’s world – much of it is about marketing, advertising, symbols and messages, not the usual playing field of an aca-
demic administration. And to make it even harder, every nook and cranny of the place had its own turf, its own logo, its own graphics, its own message. Give it up for the greater good! Here’s why! And worst of all, the whole notion reeked of corporate capitalism.

But she persevered and gradually a wholeness began to emerge. We are not done yet, but it is working and we will get there. And we would never have even gotten started without her conviction, her capacity and her raw courage. I watched it up close, I know how tough it was.

The York University Foundation was a similar story. Fundraising at York was in its infancy in the late ’90s and the rest of the world was fast occupying the philanthropic dollar space. We had to do something radical and do it quickly. More of the same old approach would see us fall further behind, not close the gap. And so the foundation was conceived. A separate organization; an independent board; a separate budget, free of the University’s bureaucracy but yoked to the University’s priorities and plans. But this meant turf had to be yielded by the Faculties and schools (for the greater good and for their own greater good, a fact not easily acknowledged by many). And the power structures within the University (the board of governors, Senate, the senior administrators) all had to stand back. A hard pill to swallow for many.

As with her garden, Lorna set to work. We had a plan, she trimmed the weeds, she watered and nourished the seedlings – and the foundation began to bloom. The results, of course, are now well known. Our donations are growing exponentially; we are launched on a highly ambitious campaign. Our message is out there and it is working. I’m not sure that the battles within the University are all over, but the war is – the University writ large won, and it and all its parts will be better off. None of this would have happened without Lorna.

A third example is the York University Development Corp.

There sat the south lands – just sitting there. Land that could become money for the University’s many needs. Land that, instead of being a vacant and sometimes dangerous field, could become a place where people lived and worked and shopped and socialized. But inertia had set in many years ago. After all, maybe someday that land would be needed for academic purposes. (Yes, it would if we wanted to have a campus with over 100,000 students on it.) And houses and stores and offices meant development and that meant commercialism and what business did the University have in that game anyway? Again, once she became persuaded that development was the way to go, she plunged into her garden with all her passion and energy. Today there are houses there, tomorrow there will be a community with all the attendant benefits to the York community.

Again, the road was not smooth. The scandal that never was became a headline newspaper story and it took a judge and an inquiry and a retraction to make it clear that there was no impropriety nor anything else worthy of mention. But for a few months, it was very tough going – people’s reputations and the University’s reputation were in play, but Lorna never wavered. There were principles at stake and in those circumstances, no quarter could be given.

These three matters, the branding, YUF and YUDC can be seen as examples of leadership and vision, but to me, they are also examples of something else which sets Lorna apart from the crowd. That characteristic is courage. In very different ways, each took a determination to get it done that not many of us have. But she has it in spades. There are lots of other
examples I could cite, but these three are more important because they will have a profound and lasting positive effect on the University – and they took enormous intellectual courage and character to get them done. I must also note her tenacious campaign for the subway to York, now an agreed deal that will transform the Keele campus in coming years. Within the academic precinct itself, there are also many great accomplishments, indeed far too many for me to comment upon. And so with apologies to the rest who do not get mentioned, I will reflect upon two matters that I know something about.

We have two great world-class schools at York, Schulich and Osgoode, and we have many departments and “pockets” that are world class, but we need more – many more. A few years ago, it became clear that one of our Faculties had come to a crossroads. Fine Arts had all the components of a world class and world-renowned school, but it needed a galvanizing vision to bring it all together and take it to the next level. At the same time, the Ontario government was dangling SuperBuild dollars in front of all our eyes. Lorna saw the vision, hatched the strategy, developed the tactics and once again waded into her garden. Thus was born the Accolade Project. Big money from the government, big money from the private sector (using the newly created foundation – the pieces come together), and there emerged new academic space, glorious new performance space, long overdue recognition as Canada’s finest fine arts school – and another world-class school in our quiver. And the fourth and fifth are on their way. Her successor will see them bloom, but Lorna planted the seeds. (I leave it to others to identify them. Hopefully more than two of you will raise your hand and claim the prize and then we will have a host of new world-class players.)

The second matter I want to touch upon is the 2005 University Academic Plan, with its emphasis on research, graduate education and health studies among key priorities. This is a very bold and transformational document. It has formed the basis for the campaign and for 50th anniversary planning, and it has been the intellectual architecture within which the search for the new president was conducted. It will lead the University down a very different path over the next decade. Many people and institutions within the academy had a hand in it, most especially the Senate, but make no mistake, it was inspired and driven by Lorna. And it was not an easy sell, for many recognized that when it was done, the garden, and their place in it, would look very different. But it was absolutely critical that a new and path-breaking course be set. We are starting down a road but it was Lorna who got us out the starting gate.

I cite these last two matters, Accolade and the University Academic Plan, as examples of great vision and leadership. Every great institution needs those qualities in its leader and we have been blessed to find that our cup runneth over.

I want to conclude on a personal note. I have painted a picture of a great leader, but one who sounds almost stentorian in her manner and style. This truly was not the case. Lorna and I worked closely together for seven years and during that time we shared many crises, many successes, many luminous moments and many

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**Leadership**

- Student spirit group York is U formed
- York University Foundation established as York’s fundraising arm
- Marsden signs Talloires Declaration committing York to promoting environmental sustainability
- York adopts a new logo and branding, with the tagline “Redefine the possible”
- Bold new signage and outdoor maps sprout all over the campuses
- Ontario’s “double cohort” arrives: first-year student enrolment up 25 per cent over 2003
- The high-tech, $77 million Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Building opens, housing York and Seneca programs
- Tennis Canada’s Rexall Centre at York University opens
- York’s Las Nubes coffee arrives in Timothys World Coffee stores across Canada
- The Globe & Mail’s University Report Card gives York B+ for overall quality of education and teaching in its category
- Pond Road Residence opens at Sentinel Road intersection
- YorkU magazine launched
- York/Uniforum opens at Sentinel Road intersection
- York’s advertising campaign ranked best among all universities in North America
- Senate approves new University Academic Plan, with priority to research, grad students, health studies
- Students in York/Sheridan Joint Program in Design present astronaut-alum Steve McClean with mission and personal patches to be worn on space shuttle
- York Centre for Asian Research opens
- Elegant, $102 million Seymour Schulich Building opens, home to Schulich School of Business and named for philanthropist whose gifts to York total $27 million
- Marsden forms “pink lung” task force to make York a non-smoking campus by 2009
- YorkU magazine launched
- 250 Japanese cherry trees planted on Keele campus to symbolize Japan-Canada ties
- St. George Station gets a complete makeover in York colours and branding messages (“subway domination”)
- Business student Karen Cockburn wins Olympic silver medal for women’s individual trampoline in Athens
- Marsden participates in Nobel Peace Prize events, Stockholm and Oslo
- Half of incoming high school students now have averages over 80 per cent
- Tribute Communities opens “new urbanism” medium-density housing on lands south of Keele campus

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The road was not smooth, but Lorna never wavered. There were principles at stake and in those circumstances, no quarter could be given.
LEADERSHIP

and the Chair, to plan the mighty “affairs of state” of the University, but these meetings did not occur in some grand boardroom with plush leather chairs – rather they would occur on a weekend, early in the morning at the Starbucks down the street from where I live. Picture the scene: the Chair (usually in his golf togs or his workout clothes), the President in her walking togs (often having walked the several miles to get there), huddled around a little table, steaming coffee, papers spread. After a few months of this, the regulars at Starbucks caught on and moved their tables back, lest the grand secrets of York leak into the public’s awareness prematurely. Occasionally friends would approach, but the regulars quickly learned the protocol. Only a few moments of socializing allowed – there was serious work to be done – and so the decisions I talked of earlier and many others like it got made midst the chatter and the clamour of a morning Starbucks crowd.

Lorna and I are no longer neighbours. And soon we will no longer have the “York” working relationship to bring us together. But we will always have a special friendship and I will always be her admirer. And I will always remember the affection she bestowed on her gardens and the way in which they responded and flourished – both of them.

The moments that come to mind involve our fortnightly ‘summit’ meetings – not in some grand boardroom but in the Starbucks down the street.
p53 has a licence to kill. It is a highly trained professional that can scan secret code for suspicious activity and move quickly to neutralize the enemy, by persuasion or deadly force. First discovered 27 years ago, this counter-malignancy operative has become one of the world’s most prominent weapons in the life-and-death struggle against an evil that affects millions. And, as with James Bond, its more famous human counterpart, no one’s entirely sure how p53 accomplishes its mission but many are trying to find out.

Enter microbiologist Sam Benchimol, York’s Canada Research Chair in Biomedical Health Research, whose 22-year pursuit of p53 has come to York’s Faculty of Science & Engineering. Based in an unassuming lab in the Keele campus’s Farquharson Life Sciences Building – it was still discreetly labelled “Women’s Lounge” when he moved in last fall – Benchimol studies p53’s every move, in an effort to unlock the mysteries of this world-renowned protein.

Yes, p53 is a protein: a molecular agent involved in tumour suppression that Benchimol first encountered in England, in what is now Cancer Research UK’s London Research Institute. His “M” in those days was Lionel Crawford, an international expert in animal tumour viruses and a co-discoverer of p53. The protein’s function, researchers have since established, is to regulate cell growth, a task it performs so efficiently that it’s been called nature’s inherent defence against cancer. “Fifty-three”, as Benchimol familiarly dubs it, is present in every cell in our body. When damage occurs to a cell’s DNA, p53 senses the problem and signals the cell to stop replicating and repair itself. If the damage is too severe, p53 exercises its licence to kill by triggering apoptosis, the technical name for cell death, and halts the runaway growth of cancer cells. But, in true Bond fashion, p53 must contend with enemy agents such as Puth2, a gene that inactivates p53, allowing tumour cells to multiply freely. There are many types of cancer cells but because p53 is present in all of them, it has become a primary subject for cancer researchers attracted by its potential as a targeted therapy.

Benchimol first delved into this world of cellular cloak and dagger when he developed a fascination for the “really, very obscure” field of bacteriophages, viruses that attack bacteria. In the early ’80s, when he was finishing graduate work at the University of Toronto, he chose to do his postdoctoral research with Crawford, who was working with the DNA tumour-virus SV40. When Benchimol returned to Toronto and joined Princess Margaret Hospital and U of T, he officially became a cancer researcher. He spent the next 22 years as a member of the Ontario Cancer Institute, where he collaborated with numerous colleagues including Alan Bernstein, now president of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the nation’s major funder of health research, and Tak Mak, director of the Campbell Family Institute for Breast Cancer Research at the University Health Network.

The decision to come to York after all those years was a natural one for Benchimol. The chance to become a Canada Research Chair at this stage in his career was appealing, but equally important was the associated funding from the Canada Foundation for Innovation that would allow him to build a new lab with the latest gadgetry to aid his research. York’s decision to establish a Faculty of Health, the first new Faculty at the University in 34 years, was also a factor, he says. “York and Stan Shapson [York’s vice-president research & innovation] made it very clear that they were committed to developing biomedical health research and that I would be part of that development, which is very attractive,” he says.

But, like a true science whiz kid – Benchimol says it was almost his only interest at North York’s W.L. Mackenzie high school – the clincher was the fact that York has one of the newest research gizmos anywhere, a mass spectrometer, and the award-winning expert who can make it do magic, Professor Michael Sui, director of York’s Centre for Research in Mass Spectrometry. “Even though there was a ‘mass spec’ downtown we were sending samples to Michael’s lab before I thought of coming here,” says Benchimol. “Michael and I have a very good relationship and we’re talking about a lot of things we can do together.”

And, ultimately, it’s not technology or funding that makes Benchimol glad to be part of the biomedical team at York but the interdisciplinary culture he has found at the University. One example is the research being done by York’s biologists and kinesiologists on muscle cells – work that has direct relevance to a cancer phenomenon know as cachexia, a muscle-wasting syndrome that debilitates patients and prolongs or prevents their recovery. “You can ask different types of questions here, some I never would have thought of asking if I had stayed downtown,” he says. “This muscle research would be a new opportunity and new initiative that we might get off the ground here.”

So, for someone who helped write the book on p53 for the past 22 years, is change really as good as a rest? “Yeah,” says Benchimol with a smile, “change is good.”
In 1988, having finished a bachelor of science degree at the University of Alberta, Joel Cohen found himself at a crossroads. Though he didn’t see himself as an artist, the Calgary native had long harboured aspirations in film. But he wasn’t sure how to make them happen. Partly in an effort to “delay reality for another couple of years,” he says, he opted to pursue an MBA at York’s Schulich School of Business. And where did that lead? Don’t have a cow. Today, Cohen is one of nine co-executive producers on “The Simpsons,” a show about as far removed as is possible from the business world it often satirizes (and hardly a bastion of science, either). Not that Cohen has entirely neglected his York biz school roots. He now gives a lecture to corporate conferences entitled “The Business Tao of Homer: Lessons in Creativity and Innovation from ‘The Simpsons’”.

Cohen has certainly arrived. “‘The Simpsons’ is an incredible icon,” he says from his office in Los Angeles. “There are days when I can’t believe I have the opportunity to be here.” A modest and affable 39, Cohen has an impeccable body of comedy work behind him, including time spent on the feature films *The Cat in the Hat* and *Curious George*, and a shared Emmy last year for a Simpsons episode he helped write. Most importantly, Cohen helps run one of the most envied writing “rooms” in the business. “The Simpsons”, anointed by *Time* magazine as “The greatest TV show of the 20th century”, is heading into its 18th season with little sign of slowing down.

But for Cohen, it was a journey as bumpy as a Simpsons intro. He used his 1992 York MBA to get a job at a Toronto film distribution company, where he worked his way up from salesman to become vice-president. But his creative urges persisted, and in 1995 he wrote and produced what he calls “one of the worst plays ever presented” at the Fringe of Toronto Theatre Festival (*Year of the Freak*, blurbed as “a comedic smorgasbord presented in the tradition of classic Amish vaudeville”). Whatever the quality, he was now bitten by the writing bug. He grabbed the position, hoping he could sell by day and write scripts at night. “I’d had no success writing in Canada,” he recalls. “Trying to break into writing was, and is, a horrible process. They say writers aren’t respected in Hollywood. But the truth is, when you start, you’d love just to get to a position where you could actually be disrespected.”

In 1999, after two years of slogging, he landed a job writing for NBC’s “Suddenly Susan”, starring Brooke Shields (ironically, Cohen later admitted, “At the time, if you’d asked me what my least favourite show was, I would have said, ‘Suddenly Susan’”. Luckily no one asked.”). Cohen had his first crucial break. The show, however, was cancelled and in 2000, urged on by his screenwriter brother Rob (who wrote the famous “Flaming Moe’s” Simpsons episode), he moved on to the land of Bart, Lisa, Homer and Marge.

Cohen credits much of the series’ success to a writing process that is entirely collaborative. Each episode originates with a story idea that is worked on by three or four of the show’s 13 full-time writers. Once it has been broken down into scenes, complete with subplots and a story arc, an individual writer does a “pass” and submits a first draft. It’s at this point the “room” goes through the script line by line, often rewriting it entirely: “The writers’ room is a mill,” observes Cohen. “There will be five or six runs through the script, discussing every joke and coming up with new ones. We’ve had writers who wanted to be proprietary – you know, ‘these are my words’ – but it never works. The truth is the best stuff comes from the room.” The production cycle for a single episode is nine months, and the script will be returned to the writers two or three times during production, for reworking and editing. “The hardest thing is to try and think up enough new and fresh ideas,” says Cohen. “Recently, we had 10 ideas pitched to us. None of them we had already done and the last one we rejected. It’s tough.”

One of the secrets to keeping the show vital creatively is focusing on the characters as people. “We try to anchor everything on reality, to anchor it in human emotion. We stop ourselves and say, ‘Remember: Homer is human.’”

Cohen, who last fall joined York’s “50 to the Power of 50” alumni group supporting the York to the Power of 50 fundraising campaign, is now pursuing more forays into feature film writing, something he finds quite different. “You’ve very much a cog in the machine,” he says. “But in features there is also freedom. I’ve got my base with ‘The Simpsons’ and I continue to move out from there.” Ah, strategy – spoken like an MBA.
I was May 24, 1990, and like all Ontarians, Ottawa correspondent Chantal Hébert expected the day off. But her boss at Le Devoir in Montreal had other ideas. Victoria Day was no holiday in Quebec! Cabinet heavyweight Lucien Bouchard was showing signs of frustration at attempts to amend the Meech Lake Accord and Hébert’s editor wanted her to interview him. She trudged up to the West Block, expecting to find nobody and hoping to spend the day with her two young sons. She entered the building and headed down the empty hallway. “It was a muggy day and the window above the door to Bouchard’s office was open,” she recalls. “I could hear his press secretary dictating a resignation letter.” Stunned, Hébert whipped out her pen and took notes as fast as she could. She had arrived just in time to transcribe the last three paragraphs of the letter. Bouchard was stepping down as Brian Mulroney’s environment minister and Quebec lieutenant to become an independent. For years, Bouchard thought Mulroney had leaked his letter to Le Devoir.

Scoops like this, Hébert (BA ’76) often tells journalism students, don’t happen totally by chance. You don’t get them by sitting in your office, but by going out and talking to people. “The highest skill in journalism is having good eyes and ears. Brain comes second,” says the seasoned journalist who’s made a career of taking the pulse of Canadian politics. She’s so good at it she’s on the payroll of the country’s biggest-circulation English daily – the Toronto Star – writes a weekly guest column for Le Devoir, Quebec’s high-brow newspaper, and appears regularly on a political panel on CBC-TV’s “The National”.

When Hébert speaks, Canadians listen. Fluent bilingual, a Franco-Ontarian who now makes her home in Quebec, Hébert has lived Canada’s two solitudes from the inside out – but is just as intimately acquainted with the entire Canadian political landscape. Unadorned, sans makeup, thick hair cropped close and dressed simply, she comes across as frank, sensible, fair-minded and knowledgeable. Recently she brought that knowledge to the advisory board of the new Glendon School of Public Affairs at York’s Glendon campus (see following story). “She has a distinctive voice and a high degree of integrity,” says Glendon Principal Kenneth McRoberts. “She can be counted upon to offer insights that are original to her.”

Hébert always wanted to be a journalist like her father. If she hadn’t been so young, she might have bypassed university altogether. Instead, at 17, she enrolled in political science at Glendon, the only Ontario university setting where she could write essays in her mother tongue. “I had no ties to Quebec and I couldn’t afford to study there,” she says. She cut her honours program short the minute Radio-Canada offered her a casual job as a news writer in its regional Toronto newsroom. At 21, Chantal St-Cyr had landed her dream job and a husband. Mrs. Chantal Hébert knew two things. “I wanted to work at journalism and have children.”

Her marriage collapsed a few years later but Hébert kept her ex-husband’s name, her nom de plume. By the time she was 30, she had fallen in love again, produced two sons and landed a political beat. In 1988, Radio-Canada posted her to Parliament Hill. Two years later she was covering the Meech Lake constitutional crisis for Le Devoir. This episode in Canadian politics marked her entry into political commentary and eventually prompted her to move to Montreal. “Though I could speak about Quebec, it was not knowledge that came from living there,” she says. She also served as Ottawa bureau chief for La Presse and was writing guest columns for several major newspapers when the Star came knocking in 1999.

Despite her high visibility, Hébert prefers to stay out of the spotlight. “If you knew me, you would know I am a person who likes to melt into the background, into the wallpaper.” As a rookie reporter, Hébert suspected her “baby face” and reticence fooled politicians. “They didn’t think I was dangerous!” laughs the 53-year-old. They soon smartened up.

Now based in Montreal, Hébert reads six newspapers a day, commutes to Ottawa for part of every week, never misses Question Period and responds to every one of the 100 e-mails she receives daily. “I can judge how hot an issue is by the e-mails I get.” Her trusty BlackBerry in her pocket, she roams far and wide to take the political pulse. “I need to know how other people think more than what I think.”

In late February, she began crisscrossing the country promoting her first book, French Kiss: Stephen Harper’s Blind Date in Quebec. Ever the political junkie, she was ready to drop the book tour in a flash if needed to cover the Quebec election or a then-bruited federal campaign.

In the past two years, Hébert has won major public service and public policy journalism awards and, last November, York’s Bryden Alumni Award for Pinnacle Achievement. She’s made a difference to how Canadians perceive each other, says Don Stevenson of the Toronto-based Canadian Urban Institute. “I cannot think of anyone who has contributed more to building bridges between our two language groups and essentially creating a basis for understanding the other that didn’t exist before.”

T he journalist and Glendon grad Chantal Hébert bridges Canada’s two solitudes for a national audience.

BY MARTHA TANCOCK
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TONY FOUHSE
Greg Sorbara
Ontario finance minister
BA ’78, Canadian studies; LLB ’81 (Osgoode)

When Greg Sorbara decided he wanted a career in law or public policy, he opted for a Glendon education because of its bilingual character and its expertise in Canadian history. “The courses I took at Glendon and the chance to improve my French added up to a very strong foundation for both,” he says. His professors’ dedication created a very fertile learning environment. “What Glendon has to offer is particularly important for people considering public administration, or work relating to Canada’s international role,” says Sorbara. “And the new graduate school will provide an added dimension to the college’s original mandate.”

Sorbara held a series of senior cabinet posts in the previous Liberal government of the late 1980s, then spent part of the 1990s in the private sector, practising law and working for the community, including several years on the board of the York University Alumni Association. Back in the public arena since 1999, he is MPP for Vaughan–King–Aurora as well as the man who holds Ontario’s purse strings.

Lesley Lewis
CEO, Ontario Science Centre
BA ’71, sociology

Lesley Lewis arrived as a shy 17-year-old at a time of great social and political movements among university students. “We were leaders in taking political stands on issues such as the war in Biafra,” she says. “Our students were among the first in Canada to obtain a seat on the University Senate.”

Glendon men and women could be in each other’s residence at any time of the day or night – that was “radical” in 1966. We also had lots of fun and learned to play a great game of bridge!”

Lewis puts her Glendon friends to use right in the first summer, at Expo ’67. The skills she honed at Glendon proved to be an excellent foundation for her career in public service, which includes senior posts in the Ontario government and executive directorships at the Ontario Human Rights Commission and, subsequently, the Ontario Heritage Foundation.

Rhéal Séguin
Globe and Mail correspondent, Quebec City
BA ’75, political science

A native of Port Colborne, Ont., Rhéal Séguin was already bilingual when he arrived at Glendon. But being able to study in French was a rare opportunity in Ontario in the early 1970s and a deciding factor in his choice of university. At Glendon, he gained a clear understanding of the political situation within Quebec and across Canada, and the ideological currents that were unfolding in the world. “The excellence of Glendon’s professors and the wide range of subjects they offered gave me the thorough foundation I needed when I decided to pursue a career as a political reporter,” says Séguin, who started as a journalist for Radio-Canada in 1978. Since 1990, he has been The Globe and Mail’s political correspondent in Quebec City.

The friendships he made throughout his Glendon years remain among Séguin’s fondest memories. “I still have those close friends and when we meet, we often reminisce about our student days. Especially our evenings at the infamous Glendon pub, where we spent long hours one evening debating politics with Parti Québécois founder René Lévesque, who visited the campus before his election as premier of Quebec.”

Joan Andrew
Ontario deputy minister of citizenship & immigration
BA Spec. Hons. ’72, sociology

Joan Andrew was raised in Ottawa, where speaking French was part of everyday life. But her French became “really mature” during her studies at Glendon, she says. “My career choice was greatly influenced by Glendon conferences on separatism, Aboriginal matters, student politics and other important topics of the day.” She also recalls Reid’s speech about the importance of public issues and having that “fire in the belly” – the motivation to work for society’s benefit.

Andrew worked for the federal government for 15 years before joining Ontario in 1988 for a series of posts that led to her current one in the public arena since 1999, he is MPP for Vaughan–King–Aurora as well as the man who holds Ontario’s purse strings.

Jill Sinclair
Assistant secretary to the cabinet, foreign & defence policy, Privy Council Office
BA Hons. ’80, political science/history

It was Glendon’s Professor Edward Appathurai, a former diplomat for Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), who pointed Jill Sinclair toward the Canadian foreign service. “I never fail to think of him – lost to us much too early – or the many other faculty members who taught me to challenge, to imagine and to work relentlessly to advance broader goals and aspirations,” says Sinclair. Since joining the then Department of External Affairs in 1981, Sinclair has helped lead Canada’s effort to ban anti-personnel mines, represented Canada at the UN, NATO and elsewhere on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues and, most recently, served as Canada’s special coordinator for the Middle East peace process.

Currently, working at the Privy Council Office – which is the civil service office of the prime minister – I am surprised how often I draw on the ideas and the knowledge that I took from Glendon: philosophy and politics (how to balance rights and freedoms, what is ethical behaviour); history (never forget) and science (make sure you have the facts),” says Sinclair. “Glendon provided me with tools, friends, mentors and models that continue to guide me in my work and life.”
In the desk in Jeremiah Sulunteh’s office sits a small-scale model of a Dutch bus. It embodies hope and reality for Liberia’s transport minister, reminding him of what he wants but does not have. An alumnus (MA ‘01) and former staffer at York, Sulunteh deems what passes for public transport in his West African nation as unfit: shared yellow taxis of questionable mechanical condition that squeeze in six passengers for a few Canadian cents each. What excites him is the prospect of introducing public buses to benefit Liberians, an attitude common in the progress-minded administration of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa’s first woman president. “The dream of this government is to rehabilitate and reconstruct, specifically the infrastructure, roads, bridges, ports,” Sulunteh says. But it is no easy thing. Earlier this year, Sulunteh spoke publicly about how the Toronto Transit Commission had donated 25 used buses to help Liberia improve public transport, but he was still searching for the funds to ship them.

Fourteen chaotic years involving two separate civil wars have certainly left Liberia in extreme need of reconstruction. Throughout the capital, Monrovia, many buildings still bear the scars of bullets and governmental neglect. The wars halted the city’s supply of electricity and piped water. By restoring both services to a few areas within six months, Johnson Sirleaf’s new government endeared itself to the public last year. “The whole country, the whole social-political fabric was ruined,” Sulunteh says.

A key architect of that ruin was former president Charles Taylor, now facing trial in The Hague for war crimes in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Liberia’s first civil war, which raged from 1989 to 1997, ended with Taylor’s election. A subsequent two-year armistice proved fleeting as rebels backed by neighbouring countries launched their assault on Taylor’s regime from 1999 to 2003, ending with his exile from office. That violence killed 250,000 people, at least 10 per cent of the country’s population.

Sulunteh, his wife and children avoided joining that grim statistic when they landed in Saint John, NB, as refugees in July 1997. Moving to Toronto, Sulunteh found work with York University’s Financial Aid Services as a financial aid adviser, helping to deal with 46,000 students. “It really was a huge challenge,” he says.

Sulunteh, now 48, feels his studies and employment at York forged his thinking and prepared him for his ministerial position. He became further exposed to Western culture and different strategies and methods of management, which he brought to the Liberian government, he says. “I’m transferring that knowledge here from Canada for the benefit of the Liberian people.”

That process started in late 2002 when he returned home to work at his first alma mater, Cuttington University, the only Liberian university outside of Monrovia. The second civil war was nearing its end, and he wanted to be part of Liberia’s reconstruction. However, Sulunteh’s wife and three children remained in Toronto where they still reside; he returns for visits twice a year.

Sulunteh served as Cuttington’s vice-president of development and planning until November 2005, when he ran as a vice-presidential candidate in the country’s first post-war presidential election. He says he wanted to take his classroom experience, including lessons to students on accountability, good governance and transparency, and turn them into practice. His party finished fourth among 22 in the election. When the vote went to a second round, Sulunteh backed Johnson Sirleaf against her rival, saying her platform was best.

Sulunteh’s support did not go unrewarded, and he was offered the transport ministry, a move he does not regret. (Liberia’s political system mirrors that of the US, where cabinet members are appointed.) He says he is grateful to York, crediting some of the approaches he learned on campus with helping Liberia’s transportation sector, including the issuing of driver’s licences and increasing its general capabilities. He is equally sanguine about the progress of Johnson Sirleaf after nearly 18 months in office. “So far, so good,” he says.

However, rebuilding Liberia is daunting. Running water and electricity remain in short supply. Unemployment stands at more than 80 per cent, fuelled by 100,000 former combatants. Government workers earn just $30 a month. And at $US120 million, Liberia’s 2006 national budget is well below the annual payroll of the New York Yankees.

Sulunteh advises Liberians to be patient with the government as it pursues its vision while still lacking the money to deliver on many of its promises. That will require further backing from the international donors who have already spent tens of millions of dollars helping this new Liberia, formerly a failed state. Sulunteh has a clear argument for that. “After coming out of war and going through the process to elect your own leaders,” he says, “the rest of the world should take pleasure in supporting such a democracy, to make sure that it works.”

Hard Road

After studying and working at York, Jeremiah Suluntech became minister of transport in his native Liberia. It’s not easy street.

By Blake Lambert. Photography by Christopher Herwig
It was 2000, just a year after she graduated, when Amanda Martinez had an epiphany. The newly minted bank executive with an IMBA from York was wandering through a downtown Toronto concourse when she heard Amy Sky singing I Will Take Care of You. “I was standing there in my suit thinking no one knows I have this talent because I’m hidden upstairs on the 19th floor,” says Martinez. A few months later, the high-school star of Grease who loved to sing with her Mexican cousins shed her suit for peasant blouses and hoop earrings and landed her first gig at Alley Cats, a mid-town bar. “I decided it was now or never.”

Now, the host of “Café Latino” on Toronto’s Jazz.FM91 uses her business education to manage a thriving singing and acting career. Last year, her CD Seis, showcasing her sultry blend of Afro-Cuban rhythms, Mexican folk and jazz, won for Best World Music at the Toronto Independent Music Awards. This year, she was nominated for Best Latin Jazz Artist in the National Jazz Awards. “I now put in way more hours than I did banking,” says Martinez, “but none of it feels like work.”

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEVE CARTY
Ever since elementary school, Franky Morriello had dreamed of becoming a writer, and he wrote constantly. At 17, he completed his first novel, Quintencia: Pirates of the Montaleo Isles, and self-published it a couple of years later. F.V.A. Morriello, as he bylines himself, didn’t stop there. He organized his own promotional tour speaking in schools and libraries, gave several television interviews, and created a Web site. It paid off: Chapters/Indigo started receiving requests for the book and offered to stock a few copies. Since then it has sold in the thousands and a sequel is due out this fall. A fantasy tale about a hidden continent whose inhabitants have extraordinary mental powers, the book is based on Morriello’s imaginative efforts, à la Tolkien, in creating a history, geography and language—“Quintencian”—to inform the narrative. “I was fascinated by the fact that humans only use 10 per cent of their brain’s capacity and even more so by what powers might lie beyond that,” says the fourth-year English student in York’s Faculty of Arts.

I’M INTERESTED IN SMALLNESS,” says Nigel Lockyer (BSc ‘75), who has just landed back in Canada as head of a laboratory that contains the world’s biggest cyclotron. Shortly after his appointment in December as director of TRUMP, Canada’s national laboratory for particle and nuclear physics in Vancouver, Lockyer received a message from York President & Vice-Chancellor Lorna R. Marsden inviting him to visit. He dropped by in February to discuss York becoming a member of the collaborative group that conducts research using the lab’s accelerator, located at the university of British Columbia. A professor at the Ivy League University of Pennsylvania since 1984, Lockyer has maintained his Canadian connections, serving on numerous review committees for the National Science & Research Council of Canada. His mentor, Professor Emeritus William Frissen of York’s Faculty of Science & Engineering, saved one of the world’s leading particle physicists and a co-discoverer of the top quark, from a very different career path. When Lockyer announced in his final year that he was thinking of becoming a provincial civil servant, Frissen told him, “You can’t do that, it’s not allowed.” Lockyer went on to complete a PhD in physics at Ohio State University.

Franky Morriello
Author, English student
Fantasy Islands

P H O T O G R A P H Y  B Y  J E F F  K I R K

Nigel Lockyer
Nuclear physicist
Little is Big

P H O T O G R A P H Y  B Y  L E S  B L A L E Y
Role Model
A Nigerian chief helps his community.

At 13, Chief Emmanuel Mbulu (BA ’77, BA ’80) realized the importance of family and responsibility when his father was killed, just prior to the Nigerian civil war. He promptly assumed the role of guardian and provider for his younger siblings in Igbodo, Nigeria, and the experience set a pattern of caring for others that would continue throughout his life.

Mbulu earned the title “chief” for his extensive humanitarian work in Nigeria, which he undertook after his Mississauga, Ont., company Tone-A-Matic Inc. became successful. He continues to build schools, houses and hostels there, while in Canada he is establishing educational awards.

Mbulu wishes to serve as a positive role model to others, particularly those from disadvantaged communities. “Any community that does not have the ability to move forward will defeat itself,” he says. His advice to young people: anything is possible with hard work, belief in themselves and faith.

People Person
How York nurtured Paulette Joseph.

Paulette Joseph (BA ’97, BA Spec. Hons. ’92) says working with people drives her. If not for York University, including individual Faculties, student financial aid, libraries, research, sport & recreation, infrastructure, or other areas of need (see yorku.ca/foundation). "You don’t just want to take," Joseph says. "You want to give as well."

A new online network connects York alumni

NETWORK CAN be a powerful thing – just ask Stanford Milgram. In the 1960s, Milgram, a social psychologist at Harvard University, published a series of highly touted papers suggesting that any person in the United States could connect to any other person by a network of six acquaintances, an idea later popularized by a play and film called Six Degrees of Separation (not to mention the Hollywood trivia game known as Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon).

Although some questions have been raised since Milgram’s findings, the basic idea behind his work still rings true. Social networks – your friends, your friends’ friends, their friends, and so on – are treasure troves of potential golf partners, business contacts, babysitters and more. And now York grads have their own online social networking tool, called YORKinCommon (incommon.yorku.ca), to help them tap the power of York’s 200,000 strong alumni network.

"With the popularity of online sites like MySpace and Facebook, we knew that the time was right to launch a Web-based social-networking site for the York alumni community," says James Allan, York’s director, alumni. "People love to connect with like-minded folks to explore their passions, find old classmates, reminisce about the old days at Stong, or promote their businesses. And YORKinCommon makes it easy to do it all with features like a full directory of York grads, job boards, event listings and forums, along with profiles, photo albums and blogs."

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EASY and Secure
The YORKinCommon site operates in a secure, trusted environment for alumni, and adheres to the strictest security standards to keep members’ information protected. All York alumni may join by visiting incommon.yorku.ca and registering with their student number.

For questions and to ask for your student number, contact the Alumni Office at incommon@yorku.ca or by calling 416-650-8159 during business hours.

The site was built by Affinity Circles Inc., originally founded by Stanford University students, which provides secure networks to more than 50 universities and colleges across North America.

A NATIVE son of Nigeria, Chief Emmanuel Mbulu (BA ’77, BA ’80) has devoted his life to humanitarian work. He has established educational awards in Nigeria and Canada to help others achieve their dreams. His example has inspired many, including his son, who is now attending university.

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Giving Back
The Black Alumni Chapter is born

Bryden Nominations Open
Nominations are open for the 2007 Bryden Alumni Awards. To find out more about nominating a York grad, or to watch video profiles of past winners, visit yorku.ca/brydenawards. You can also call 416-650-8159 (toll free in North America: 1-800-876-2228).

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**Class Notes:**

**Summer 2007**

**YorkU**

**ALUMNI**

Memorial obituary and other news.

**1988**

**Ferne, Carl Mikhail** (BA Spec. Hons. Stong) spent 4 years after his degree working at Hewlett-Packard in Western Canada. He is currently a product manager in the Datacom Division of Applied Materials, a leading semiconductor equipment company in Santa Clara, Calif.

**1989**

**Fostee, Brian J.** (BA Hons. Glendon) was the National Director of Volunteer Services, Canadian Red Cross, Toronto.

**1990**

**Coultes, Tjija** (BA Spec. Hons. Calumet) is an actuarial analyst working for the City of London.

**1994**

**Sallavo, Shawnna** (BA Spec. Hons. Winters) has been a grade 3 teacher for Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board since Sept. 2003.

**1999**

**Rhee, Chulpa** (BA Hons. Winters) is vice-president at CIG, responsible for systems integration and consulting services within the CGI, M. 21

**2000**

**Vanier** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at U of T. She is a second-year law student at University of Ottawa. M. 1c.

**2001**

**Foster, Gorden M.** (BA Spec. Hons. McLaughlin) is a partner at the law firm of Parlee Fitzpatrick. M. 22

**2002**

**Gibbons-Baker, Wiselena A.** (BA Spec. Hons. Stong) and husband Rob A. Baker (BA 95 Stong) are still enjoying life in Bermuda after 8 years. M. 16

**2003**

**Garrett, Tricia A.** (BA Spec. Hons. Winters) has completed a postgraduate program in regulatory law at Seneca and works for Metroland Publishing as a senior marketing & advertising sales representative. M. 15

**2006, in Kleinburg, Ont. She is a registered nurse at the Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit at Toronto General Hospital.

**2007**


**1998**

**Bournhoolo, Ranteel** (BA Calumet) lives in San Jose, Calif., where she works to implement Information Technology Infrastructure Library processes. M. 21

**2000**

**Hons. Winters) has lived in South Korea for the last 10 years.**

**2001**

**McLaughlin) is British Columbia & Yukon regional manager of ScotiaMcLeod Direct Investing online securi-

**2002**

**Sung, Norman** (BA '96, BA Calumet) is teaching English at a private English school and at Bond Academy, a private school in Toronto. She also provides dance instruction to a stage band. M. 16

**2003**

**Pereira, Richard** (BA Spec. Hons. Vanier) has completed an executive consultant for Advanced Measures, a team of consulting psychologists who are expertise in measurement and evaluation, in North Bay, Ont., by. 2005

**2004**

**Sallavo, Shawnna** (BA Spec. Hons. Winters) received the Canada Revenue Agency Award of Excellence for Learning in November 2006 and, in December, became a team manager in the Toronto Centre Tax Services Office.

**2005**

**Yoon, Hong**, (BA Spec. Hons. Winters) is back on her faculty of economics, was an internationally recognized expert on economics who worked and taught in Canada as well as working at the International Monetary Fund. The author of numerous articles, pamphlets and books died at 95 in Toronto on Feb. 25.

**2006**

**Nayak, Ashleigh J.** (BA Winters) is pursuing a PhD in geography at the University of Western Ontario. M.

**2007**

**Boudalis, Charles L.** (BA Spec. Hons. Winters) works for Inco Ltd. in the communications department at Polytechnic Institute of New York. M.

**Your Privacy Is Your Priority**

At York, your contact information is considered highly confidential. Your data as a graduate is used to keep you up-to-date on alumni programs and services, York news, and for fundraising and development activities. All of your personal information is stored in a secure database managed by York’s Alumni & Advancement Services and is only accessible to authorized staff. It is never sold or inappropriately disclosed to third party service providers, and York adheres to the federal and provincial privacy legislation to ensure that your information is kept safe.

To learn more about York’s commitment to privacy, visit yorku.ca/alumni/privacy.
Dear reader, I am the son of an exiled Nigerian diplomat. No, but you’re too clever to fall for that. Or are you? The Nigerian e-mail scam cost North Americans more than $720 million in 2005 alone. Hard to believe anyone would fall for it, but fall they do. More unbelievable still is the fact that this particular scam dates back more than 400 years, to the days of the Spanish Armada. Nigeria’s e-mail swindle is simply a modern variation of the “Spanish prisoner” con, one that started in 1588, with letters sent from the desperate offspring of a captured English officer who was being held in a Spanish jail cell. Money was needed, to bribe guards, cover costs. In return? A reward worth millions. Millions, mind! I uncovered this while researching Spanish fly. Not “Spanish fly the beetle that causes irritation of the urinary tract,” but rather “Spanish fly the fake aphrodisiac sold in men’s magazines.” The one labeled Génaine 100% Placebo! It was for a book I’m writing about swindles. And somewhere between Spanish fly and the Spanish prisoner, I came across a devious short-changing scam as well.

This one hit home, because I recognized it immediately. It had been pulled on me when I was working part-time as a clerk back in high school, manning the late-night till at a convenience store in Red Deer, Alberta. On my first shift – my very first shift – a charming fellow strolled in and purchased a pack of gum with a 50-dollar bill. As I handed him his change he said, “Wait a sec, I have a dollar. No need for you to break such a large bill.”

When I cashed out at the end of the night, I was short exactly $50, and the money ended up coming out of my paycheque. I won’t explain how this scam works – no need to aid and abet any would-be grifters out there. But I will say this. If you ever find yourself behind a till and someone purchases a small item with large tender and then immediately wants to get change – stop. Close the till. Take a deep breath. Complete the first transaction before dealing with any requests for change. Trust me on this.

Addled store clerks aside, the best cons actually rely on a bit of larceny in the hearts of the victims they target. One of my favourites is a classic that dates back to the 1920s, something called “the pedigreed pooch.” A fellow strolls into a bar with a puppy under one arm. He orders a drink, slaps a bill on the counter, says “Keep the change.” The puppy is for his little girl’s birthday, y’see. And he asks the bartender to watch the dog while he runs to his bookie to place a bet. He’s got the inside track on a race, y’see – a sure thing, easy money. And he hurries off to lay his wager.

As soon as he leaves, a wealthy-looking couple sweeps in, looking for directions to a certain dog-breeding establishment, when lo! their eyes settle on the pooch. A rare Albanian... – and immediately offer the barkeep $1,000 for the puppy. Provided he can give them the papers the pooch came with.

“It’s not mine,” the bartender weakly replies, so the well-heeled pair leave a note instead for the other fellow, asking him to stop by their suite at – name the swankiest hotel in town and that’s where they are staying – and offering said grand for the dog.

When the first man returns he is despondent. The horse race was a sham, you see. He has lost everything. All he has now is this puppy to give to his little girl. Stifling sobs, he ... then shuffles sadly towards the door. “Hang on,” comes the inevitable cry. “Why don’t I help you out. I’ll buy your dog.”

A good con man could squeeze as much as $500 per puppy. Not bad for a litter of stray mutts. A profitable swindle, indeed. Not that we’d ever fall for something like that. No sir. We’re too clever to be taken in by such a ruse.

And if you believe that, I have some beachfront property in Nunavut you might be interested in.