



OAC Alumni Foundation: A brief history – 1960 to 2010

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The Need for a Foundation

The OAC Alumni Foundation, a registered charitable foundation, was chartered by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario on the 26th day of February, 1960. The founding directors of the foundation were prominent OAC graduates and alumni leaders: Jack Errington Moles, Frank Earl Wolfe, Charles Earl Mighton, Lawrence Kerr, Wilbert Moffat Cockburn, Frederick William Presant, and Donald Ralph Campbell who joined the group in his capacity as the head of the Department of Agricultural Economics. Mr. W. H. J. Tisdale joined the Board of Directors in 1961 and became the first Chair of the Board. John Eccles was initially appointed Secretary and Harold Fry was appointed Treasurer.

1960s

Prior to 1964 the Ontario Agricultural College was administered directly by the Ontario Department of Agriculture. The OAC Alumni Association wanted to establish an endowment to fund entrance scholarships that would allow OAC to compete with professional programs at other universities in attracting quality students. Knowing that donors would be reluctant to donate directly to the government they created a foundation at arm's length from the College. This foundation would enable OAC alumni to raise scholarship funds, provide tax receipts to donors, and attract the "brightest and the best" applicants to OAC.

The original objectives of the Foundation, as outlined in the charter, were a) *to receive and maintain funds to support agricultural education within the Province of Ontario*; b) *to serve the purposes of agricultural education by means of scholarships, bursaries, student loans, special grants for educational purposes and other like methods*; and c) *to support agricultural education in Ontario by such means as may be available including research, publication, education and the establishment and maintenance of educational activities, agencies or institutions and the aid of such activities, agencies or institutions already established*. These objectives are as relevant in 2010 as they were in 1960. While clearly identifying the purpose of the Foundation, they are broad enough to allow the Foundation to adapt to the changing needs of OAC students and faculty.

From the beginning the OAC Dean has been an ex-officio Director of the Foundation. The Foundation has always sought the Dean's input on awards and scholarships and, more broadly, engaged in activities that parallel the current operating mandate of the College. The Foundation now embraces the four major thrusts of the OAC, namely agriculture, environment, food, and rural communities, and supports OAC students at all four University of Guelph campuses, Alfred, Kemptville, Ridgetown, and Guelph.

Early Fundraising

Fundraising began in 1959. The goal was to raise \$100,000. With interest at ten percent this would fund ten \$1000 entrance scholarships. Tuition in 1960 was \$200 per year; one year later it increased to \$250. These scholarships were intended to cover student tuition for the entire four years. The campaign goal was not reached so only five entrance awards were presented in the fall of 1960. The first recipients were Ernie Jerome, Bill McKay, Eric Norris, Pat Shier (now Mighton) and Don Stoltz. Four of these students graduated in 1964, the same year in which the University of Guelph was established. Ernie Jerome transferred to another university before graduating.

After fundraising for several years the alumni were still slightly short of their \$100,000 target. An Annual Giving Campaign was initiated in 1963 but terminated in 1967 when the U of G Development Fund campaign got underway.

UGAA and the Alma Mater Fund

The University of Guelph Alumni Association (UGAA) was established in 1966; the Alma Mater Fund (AMF) in 1969. The Foundation agreed not to compete with the AMF by fundraising independently. In return, AMF offered the Foundation an annual grant sufficient to bring the Foundation's income to the level anticipated had it met the original \$100,000 fundraising goal. Thus the Foundation was able to maintain its scholarship program but unable to grow its trust fund significantly or create a profile among potential supporters, or even among OAC Alumni.

Evolving with the times

During the 1970s and 1980s province-wide financial aid programs unfolded and the University of Guelph embarked on major scholarship and recruitment programs that included OAC students. The Foundation's entrance scholarships were no longer needed as a student recruitment tool. Within the College and the Foundation there was a new emphasis on leadership development. Heeding recommendations from the Dean and adapting to changing student needs, the Foundation refined its scholarship program and created awards to recognize outstanding student leaders. A few new in-course and graduate awards were also introduced.

Scholarships and awards were periodically adjusted upwards as inflationary pressures eroded their value. The AMF annual grant increased accordingly. There remained, however, an undercurrent of frustration amongst the Directors at not being able to raise new funds and broaden the base of the existing scholarship program. The freeze on fund raising began to thaw in the early 1980s after Professor Raithby died and funds were raised in his name to provide for an annual Raithby Lecture. Subsequently, additional funds were raised in memory of Don Risebrough, Dick Hilliard and Fred Present, one of the original directors of the Foundation.

The Foundation had earlier begun what became a long-standing practice of establishing a scholarship to honour the contributions of the OAC deans after their tenure as dean was completed. Each retiring dean was given the opportunity to define the terms of the award based on observations during his tenure as dean.

By the early 1990s the awards and scholarships included the following:

- OAC degree and diploma entrance awards
- In-course leadership awards
- Hilliard Extension Award
- Waghorne Teaching Fellowship
- Beth Duncan Gold Medal
- NR Richards, CM Switzer,
FL McEwen awards (Deans' Awards)
- Joint-venture graduate study awards
- Oliver White, Emiel Griesbach,
and Don Risebrough awards
- Raithby Lectureship
- Support for library materials and for the
professional development of faculty

Creation of the Teaching Trust

By the mid 1990s many other significant entrance awards were available to OAC degree students, although not to diploma students.

The “Vision 95” curriculum development project emphasized “whole student development” and recognized the need to help faculty develop case studies, integrated teaching teams, and student-centered learning projects – all of which were seen as essential for the success of the new curriculum. The emphasis on leadership qualities increased as a result and a number of awards were fine tuned to reflect this approach.

At the same time, although the number of OAC students was declining from the peak levels of the mid to late 1970s, the total scholarship endowments in the OAC continued to grow, eventually surpassing \$20 million. It was time for the Foundation to review its awards program and consider new ways to fulfill its mandate.

In 1997 a Student Enhancement Fund was created. This provided opportunities for donors to contribute to new programs designed to enhance student learning. This was subsequently renamed the OAC Teaching Trust to come in line with a similar initiative of the College. While scholarships are still important, the Foundation’s new focus on student-based learning and leadership development coincides with the current priorities of the College. The Teaching Trust is now the largest specified fund within the Foundation’s portfolio and attracts new donations annually.

1990s

Aggie ACCESS – Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Fund

In 1996 the Harris government established the Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Fund. Ontario Universities were encouraged to create new trust funds, the income from which would be used to assist academically qualified individuals who for financial reasons would not otherwise be able to attend. The Ontario Government pledged to match dollar-for-dollar all funds pledged by individuals, companies and organizations outside the universities themselves between May 8, 1996 and March 31, 1997, and paid in full before March 31, 1999. University of Guelph named this new endowment the ACCESS fund, and OAC’s portion Aggie ACCESS.

As a provincially chartered organization separate from the University, the Foundation was an eligible donor. Its portfolio at that time was valued at \$658,000. After considerable debate the Foundation agreed to conduct a fund raising campaign among marketing boards and agricultural organizations and to match their donations with up to \$300,000 of its own money. The opportunity to see the value of their donation quadrupled when matched first by the Foundation and then by the Province appealed to donors and led to a very successful campaign. Contributions were received from ten agricultural marketing boards and agencies and from the Class of OAC ‘57. The Foundation donated \$600,000 (\$300,000 raised, plus \$300,000 of its own funds) to the University. With the provincial government matching funds the Aggie ACCESS fund reached a total of \$1,200,000.

Growth of the Foundation's Portfolio

The failure of the Foundation to meet its first fund raising goal of \$100,000, coupled with the creation of the AMF and resulting inactivity in fund raising for the next 20 years, resulted in a slow growth rate of the investment portfolio. Most of the investment income was needed to fund scholarships and no new funds were being raised. It took until the early 1990s for the investment portfolio to reach the half million-dollar mark, then, following the significant contribution to the ACCESS Fund, another 12 years to surpass the million-dollar mark.

The value of the investment portfolio doubled from one million to two million in just 7 years from 2003 to 2010, reflecting a new and much more active fund raising program that continues today. In the early 1990s the investment policies of the Foundation became more aggressive as up to 60% of the total value of the portfolio was moved from fixed income investments to equities. Bruce Stone served as Treasurer of the Foundation throughout most of the 1990s and was instrumental in opening up the range of investments in equities as well as fixed income securities. This proved to be a wise decision as markets increased significantly during this period and the Foundation's portfolio prospered accordingly.

In 1999 the Foundation and the OAC Alumni Association formed a Joint Investment Committee (JIC) to manage the investments of the two organizations. Each of the parent bodies nominates three representatives to the JIC. Sandy Warley was the first Chair of the JIC and was instrumental in developing the JIC's terms of reference. He was succeeded in this capacity by Tom Sawyer who will complete his term as Chair in 2010. The JIC meets twice annually. They establish investment policies and advise the three portfolio managers (currently Dale Lockie, Bruce Stone and Clay Switzer) on markets and economic conditions.

The Foundation now has a policy of setting aside funds in an Inflation Protection Fund on an annual basis so that it can protect all of its existing awards from inflation as time goes on. Gordon Nixon was a strong advocate of this idea in his later years on the Board as its Honourary Chair.

In recent years individuals, including Harold Minshall, Norman McCollum, and the estate of the late Fred Presant, have contributed funds to the Foundation to establish named awards. In memory of Ralph Campbell, a founding director and their honourary class president, OAC 59A are also raising funds.



Order of OAC

In 1999, to celebrate the 125th anniversary of OAC, Ginty Jocius, then a Director of the Foundation, initiated a new fund raising opportunity – the Order of OAC. Ginty designed and had made a pewter medallion which is presented to individuals who give or bequeath a minimum of \$100,000 to the OAC Alumni Foundation. The number of members of the Order is restricted to 50 living donors, with no limit on the number of deceased members. Ginty's original objective was to raise \$5,000,000 in five years.

At the end of 2009 there were 15 members of the order: N. Richard Richards, Mary K. Richards, William L. Campbell, Dorothy I. Campbell, Patricia L. Mighton, Dennis C. Mighton, Gordon L.E. Nixon, Kenneth G. Murray, Donald M. Rutherford, Patricia L. Seyfried, Jan A. Seyfried, Alexander F. Henry, F. Thomas Cowan, Joanne M. Cowan, and Clayton M. Switzer.

Many members of the Order have used life insurance policies payable to the Foundation as a means of making their contribution. Others have elected to donate eligible securities with significant capital gains and thus avoid having to pay the federal capital gains tax.

The Order of OAC and the highly successful Aggie ACCESS campaign are among the most creative developments of the Foundation during its 50-year history. Both can be attributed to the ingenious thinking that Ginty brought to the Board.

2000s

Class Projects and Financial Stewardship

A number of OAC classes (1949, 1953, 1954, and 1959) have raised funds for the Foundation, often to commemorate their 50th anniversary of graduation. Scholarships and awards are administered on their behalf by the Foundation. Other classes (1933, 1951, and 1953) have asked the Foundation to manage their awards in perpetuity once they are gone. To celebrate the 125th Anniversary of the Diploma program, OAC Diploma graduates are raising funds to provide awards at the four campuses involved in Diploma Programs. Their campaign formally finished in 2009.

Chairs of the Foundation

The Foundation has been well served by 12 individual alumni who have served as Chair during its 50 years of existence:

1961 to 1965	W. H. J. Tisdale, 11A, OAC 13
1966 to 1970	Paul Couse, OAC 46
1970 to 1972	Dave Adams, OAC 49
1972 to 1986	Gordon Nixon, OAC 37
1986 to 1989	Peter Lindley, OAC 57
1989 to 1994	Tom Sawyer, 59A, OAC 64
1994 to 1997	Pat Mighton, OAC 64, MSc 93
1997 to 1999	Pat Seyfried, OAC 57, MSc 59
1999 to 2002	Ginty Jocius, OAC 70
2002 to 2005	Mary Lynn McPherson, OAC 80
2005 to 2008	Bill Bearss, OAC 71
2008 to present	Bruce Christie, 58A

Gordon Nixon was by far the longest serving Chair of the Foundation. Following his time as Chair he was appointed Honourary Chairman, a position he held until his death in 2008. Gordon also served in many other capacities with UGAA and is widely recognized for his unfailing support and dedication to the OAC and to the University of Guelph.

2010-

THE FUTURE

Over its first 50 years the Foundation's goals have progressed from recruitment to reward to enrichment, always with the focus on "investing in people", both students and faculty. It is this theme that has struck a positive chord with donors, especially with alumni and agricultural organizations.

Poised to enter its second half-century the Foundation has a well-managed portfolio, an excellent relationship with the College and the Dean, and a clear mandate to continue to support agricultural education and leadership development. The precise nature of that support continues to evolve. Student recruitment remains a high priority and is an activity that the Foundation continues to support. Class projects and individual legacy gifts (Order of OAC) are now the primary fund raising activities. Excellent groundwork has been done in these two areas.

Support from and co-operation with the OAC Dean and the University of Guelph Department of Alumni Affairs are key components of the Foundation's success.

Interested donors and individuals who wish to become a member of the Order of OAC are invited to contact: OAC Alumni Foundation, Alumni House, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, N1G 2W1. ■