

New building big symbol for Carleton

River Building seen
as most important
2012 achievement

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Like the hundreds of windows that make up its shiny facade, Carleton University's new River Building is the result of many smaller victories, says university president Roseann Runte.

Opened this fall, the \$55-million building is symbolic of how committed the federal and provincial governments, as well as individual donors, are to funding higher education, she says.

The reliance on sustainable construction practices — the building has a bio-wall and green roof — and its location near the Rideau River signify Carleton's connection to the community and its concern for the natural environment.

But Runte says its greatest symbol is inside the building, in the form of a giant sculpture carved from the wood of an oak tree that stood in Old Ottawa South for more than 200 years.

The impressive sculpture, called *Sailing Through Time*, shows a tree upside down, its branches pointing toward the ground and its roots in the sky.

"To me, that is a symbol of what happens at university — that people learn new ways of thinking, new ways of opening their eyes to the world," Runte said in selecting the River Building's opening as the single most important achievement at Carleton in 2012.

With baccalaureates largely seen now as only the first step toward entering the workforce, Runte says, Carleton must make getting such a degree as enriching as possible.

A few years ago, the school started giving students a co-curricular record upon graduation, which is essentially a transcript of all the volunteer work, internships and international work they did outside of class during their time at Carleton.

Co-op placements are also a big deal, Runte says, adding they're not just for science and engineering students any more. All arts departments at Carleton offer co-ops now.

In terms of reforming the post-secondary sector as a whole, Runte said stable government funding and a greater adoption of technology on campuses provincewide are key.

It might soon become commonplace to have some courses taught on campus and

others offered strictly online, for example. "I think that will become the norm," she said. "There will be a greater mixture of how that is done, and that will bring greater collaboration among institutions."

Collaboration is something else she'd also like to see more of.

Runte used the example of a unique joint program it offers in conjunction with Algonquin College called the bachelor of information technology. Students attend both schools concurrently, getting both the theory and the practical, and graduate in four years with both a degree and a diploma.

That means entering the workforce two years earlier and saving thousands of dollars on tuition.

Runte said the two schools are currently looking at other programs to do this with, and added that other Ontario campuses appear interested in doing the same.

Although calm has been restored now, this year's Quebec student protests and ongoing concerns about rising tuition have put the issue of access and affordability front and centre.

Runte says the current model requires a balance to be struck between what proportion government and individuals each contribute, though there is not currently a formula to set these amounts.

But, she said, Canadians could also choose to make free tuition a national priority and work toward that goal by, for example, collecting \$10 from everyone who pays income tax and putting the money into an endowment for higher education for 25 years.

"When I look at what happened in Quebec, people were out on the street banging those pots because they're so frustrated. They want a change," she said. "So I think you either accept the system as it is and say, 'Everybody pays part and that's the way it is,' or if you really want change, then let's have a real national project ... and then we can be really proud and say, 'This is what we've done for the future.'"

In the meantime, 2013 is expected to be a busy year at Carleton.

Renovations at the library will be complete, as will a new strategic plan.

A number of new programs will also be launched, including a master of philanthropy and non-profit leadership and PhD programs in social work and applied linguistics.

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Carleton president Roseann O'Reilly Runte says 2013 will see the finish of library renos and a new strategic plan.