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was Managing Director of Reed Books, a division of Reed Elsevier, a company at which he worked for 10 years. Adrian became a Member in the Order of Australia for services to the Arts in 2008. Adrian attended Trinity Grammar School, Kew. He holds a Bachelor of Arts with first class honours from La Trobe University and a Master of Arts from the University of Melbourne. He tutored in English Literature at both La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne. Adrian also performed regularly as a singer with the Victoria State Opera and was a member of their Young Artist Program. He is a Board member of the Australia Council for the Arts; Chair of the Australia Council's Major Performing Arts Panel; a Board member of the Committee for Melbourne and a Life Member of Live Performance Australia. He was also a Member of the Victorian Council for the Arts and a Trustee of Sydney Grammar School for 6 years.

INTERVIEW

BEYOND THE 3RD STREAM

T: You have argued that deep engagement is central to the aspirations of leading research institutions like The University of Melbourne (UoM). Can you expand on this?

AC: Engagement, as I encountered it, both through discussion here at UoM and in many published ambitions of universities generally, was framed as a kind of 'third stream' activity. Relationships are built with the best of intentions with external stakeholders in industry and community, particularly with those who could benefit from the knowledge transfer of a university's scholarship. However it struck me that this kind of third stream thinking was never really going to embed a practice of deep engagement, particularly within a research-intensive university like UoM. For example, despite the fact that our Vice-Chancellor pointed to engagement as fundamental to the university's purpose for well over a decade, he would be the first to agree that the University had not come up with a strategic narrative around engagement as part of our core purpose. So, to cut a long process of consultation very short, the conceptual shift that occurred to us was to see engagement as fundamental to the university's academic mission: that scholarship could be designed to have direct benefits to our community or, indeed, respond to community needs and challenges. Colleagues at Michigan State University, for example, talk about 'scholarship in' and 'scholarship out:' they are clear about the fact that they engage through academic curiosity, and such engagement is not inconsistent with academic, peer-reviewed publication. But engaged scholarship, whether in medicine, engineering or the arts, also creates significant public value. In a nutshell, engagement has to be part of the academic mission, or it will always languish as a marginal, if very well intentioned activity.

T: How has engagement informed The University of Melbourne's new strategic plan?

AC: Our Engagement @ Melbourne strategy directly supports UoM's over-arching Growing Esteem strategy. For example, it forms part of our strategic response to a very fast-changing operating and policy environment. We work in an increasingly disrupted environment in which knowledge is being freely transferred around the world. And much excellent research is created outside the traditional university. We must collaborate to be at the forefront of knowledge creation, and therefore take the lead in creating new forms of collaborative partnerships, whether with commercial industry or NGOs. And in our increasingly competitive funding environment, we will need to demonstrate our broader relevance just as much as our excellence – to government and the taxpayer that helps fund our endeavour.

T: Is it easy to define who your community is?

AC: When I arrived at UoM some four years ago, I noticed we were engaged in almost countless ways with almost countless institutions. There is no shortage of engagement activity at universities! But the reason we need a narrative and a strategy is to steer our efforts and our resources, over time, to those areas we need to invest in most; areas that are strategically important to us, and where we might do the most good. Place-based partnerships provide a good example. For many years UoM has had a significant presence in the Goulburn Valley, in the north of Victoria, most particularly through our vet and agricultural college and through a medical centre. This area has suffered many economic and social challenges over the past two decades. Now, as our sense of being an engaged university intensifies, we are organising our efforts in this area to ensure great impact. We now have four faculties actively involved in the area: undertaking vital research in agriculture and veterinary practice; or our medical faculty undertaking an NHMRC-funded study in chronic disease and access to health care. Our Graduate School of Education is rolling out its world leading MTeach program, helping to build both the quality of teaching and actively building pathways to UoM and other higher-ed institutions. And the Melbourne Business School is working on the City of Shepparton's brand, particularly around its aspirations for the Shepparton Art Museum. By focussing on this place-based engagement program, we can foster a multi-disciplinary, scholarly response that builds lasting public value. So it's very important that we understand our institution's strategic priorities; otherwise we will just try to be all things to all people. For us, through our Engagement @ Melbourne strategy, we talk about three things essentially: engaged research that links directly to our research priorities; about engaged students, so that each of our academic divisions prioritise engaging their students with the broader community, whether through internships, global mobility or volunteering for example; and we have identified six, university-wide key engagement programs which we think are vital to our interests, but also programs which can create transformational social and economic value.

Another example of a key place-based engagement program is our desire to engage deeply with our city, Melbourne, of which we are a part. One manifestation of our strategy is through our cultural program. We have significant partnerships with the National Gallery of Victoria, the Melbourne Recital Centre

and the State Library of Victoria to name but three. These partnerships are based around areas of common research interest and student opportunity. The sweet spot for us in all this is trying to create research outcomes as well as student enrichment. And these partnerships help make you part of the city and make scholarship accessible. The NGV, the State Library, the Melbourne Museum, the University of Melbourne – we are all ‘anchor institutions’; we employ thousands of people and directly affect the lives of many more, so there is much to be gained when we collaborate.

And speaking of ‘anchor institutions,’ we notice that many organisations working directly for community benefit and public policy development are increasingly part of our broader precinct. Whether leading think tanks like the Grattan Institute; or the Melbourne School of Government and the Australian and New Zealand School of Government; the Melbourne Institute or major NGOs like the Red Cross and OXFAM; increasingly the broader precinct is enriched by leading, publicly spirited, not-for-profit organisations. So one enticing question here is whether the truly engaged collaborative opportunities of such co-location could be greater than the sum of our parts, particularly around policy development and community challenges?

T: In the UK successive governments (notably, the Blair/Brown governments) introduced and continued significant third stream funding for Higher Education Institutions which transformed economic regions as well as changed how businesses and universities work together. Are there lessons here for Australia?

AC: Yes, I think we have much to learn from the UK experience. When I first started working on UoM’s engagement agenda I sometimes encountered a kind of suspicion about engagement having to be called out as a priority for research. ‘We believe in pure discovery or basic research as the purpose of university endeavour. This is where our value lies!’ I would hear such claims frequently. But when we talked to some fine universities and institutions in the UK, they could remember this kind of tension when prompted. However, partly because their behaviour had changed in response to fundamental shifts in competitive government grants, the conversation had moved on – had matured if you like – to be far more comprehensive about the fundamental aims of university research. English universities embraced ambitious basic research, ambitious applied research, and discovered that the two could be closely interrelated. In Australia, we are only just starting to talk about ‘impact’ and how we measure both engagement and impact as part of the competitive grants process.

I think we should also look to some of the engaged American universities, which in a way I found most instructive because they have been driven by an engagement agenda as long as they have been in existence. Many of them were born out of a passion to bring benefit to broader society through scholarship; exactly the kind of thing we are now talking about. Many US universities are also built on philanthropy, and philanthropists tend to demand socially beneficial outcomes. Philanthropic interests drive deep engagement. But because we have a much higher reliance on the public purse, many academics and universities will be motivated by a different set of priorities. Now we see the environment changing here, quite sharply; and the debate about whether government will demand greater impact as an incentive for funding is over. The

debate now is not about whether, but about how engagement and impact will be evaluated.

T: UoM has made the strategic decision to establish a VPE portfolio to drive forward its engagement agenda. Which key areas of focus does this Senior Office include as similar portfolios often vary in their constituency among Australian universities?

AC: One very important part of our engagement program focuses on industry engagement. In the enterprise space, people can get obsessed about the potential for commercialisation, which of-course is very important. But there are a whole lot of relationships we are developing with industry that are more fundamental and more important. So, we have taken the step now of appointing a Vice-Principal (Enterprise), Doron Ben-Meir, to really focus resources and strategic leadership on how we work more effectively internationally as well as locally with industry. It is a very big part of our engagement plans, and it doesn’t take long to understand what the incentive is for universities and what the value created might be for industry and government.

Under the broader engagement portfolio here we have our leading community programs; our Indigenous programs, including the second iteration of our Reconciliation Action Plan; our very valuable collections, which includes the University Librarian being part of our portfolio and also responsible for collections policy; and our strategically important cultural programs, including our partnerships with other important institutions. We also host our cross-faculty Engagement Academic Leadership Committee, comprised of Associate Deans, Engagement, which encourages both alignment and broader understanding within academic divisions of our university-wide priorities.

Very importantly, University Marketing and Communications is part of the Engagement portfolio at UoM, which is vital to promoting a deeper understanding of the University’s purpose, both externally and internally!

T: You seem to be arguing that there are real and significant benefits for Australian universities in strategically aligning their marketing and communications operation under the broader umbrella of engagement?

AC: If we want to change or enhance UoM’s brand and reputation over time, or build a brand or create an identity for the University that goes to deep relevance as well as deep excellence, it makes compelling sense for Marketing and Communications to be part of the broader engagement effort.

Tellingly, a couple of years ago when we undertook an extensive research exercise while developing our new brand identity, it became clear that people knew that UoM is ranked number ‘1’ in Australia. That message seemed clear. That said, ‘number 1’ will not win the hearts and minds of people. It is just not a narrative that runs very deeply. So when we asked people: ‘why do you think we are number 1?’ there was frustratingly little knowledge – even amongst our alumni – of what this might mean. For example, surprisingly few people recognised universities like UoM are very big and very important research organisations. Most thought we were here to teach and to foster future employability.

So much of our marketing and communication effort over the past two years has been to position UoM as a place where interdisciplinarity thrives, and shine a light very brightly on the community benefits of deep research. We have to build this narrative over years – it is not a stop-start game. But if the strategic value of engagement is to embed the University in much more concrete ways within our community, then it is vital that that is carried through all of our marketing, our communications, and our broader public affairs.

T: Do you see the traditional model of a university campus changing towards a more co-located model?

AC: Even if it calls for very deep investment, I think this might be the single most practical way to foster a culture of engagement between universities, industry and community. A nice example here is the rapidly emerging arts precinct in Melbourne. Melbourne is very fortunate to have an identifiable Arts precinct, which comprises the Victorian College of the Arts, the Arts Centre, the Melbourne Recital Centre, the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Melbourne Symphony, the Australian Ballet, Opera Australia and many other arts organisations. So when UoM decided to invest in a new Conservatorium, there was absolutely no choice that it had to be moved from our Parkville precinct to the Southbank arts precinct – so our students, researchers and teachers, both from the VCA and the Conservatorium, would be co-located with their professional peers. (I believe over 50% of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra's musicians actually teach at our Conservatorium.)

And probably the greatest example we have in Australia of an engaged academic division is of course UoM's faculty of Medical, Dental and Health Sciences, which is inextricably linked to many of Australia's leading hospitals and major research institutes, with extensive post-doc studies and professional joint appointments, right here in the Parkville precinct. The results of co-location give the country one of the finest medical precincts – in research and medical practice – in the world. An ultimate example of what we call 'public value.'

T: In attempting to advance leading edge engagement strategies around co-location as a future model for universities is there a management risk of being left with an implementation gap between rhetoric and reality? If so, how can universities address this issue?

AC: The gap between rhetoric and reality can only be addressed if engagement is seen as a strategic response to the emerging environment, whether national or international, and vitally respected as part of our academic mission. For example, there is terrific work being led here by academic colleagues to reposition how engagement is seen as part of an academic career. In the past it has been very much about rewarding research, rewarding teaching, and acknowledging engagement as a good but relatively modest contribution to an academic career. (How often I heard in the past that only senior academics could 'afford the luxury of engaging. The rest of us are too busy applying for grants and writing articles for Nature!') Now, engagement is positioned as an outcome of one's academic scholarship, and if you can point to the public value that is created through your research and, indeed, through your teaching, then it will be influential in the way your career can be framed and to the way it can progress.

T: Are there any parallels between your previous role as CEO of Opera Australia and your current role as VPE, UoM?

AC: I think many of the issues are surprisingly similar. True, Opera Australia is a hundred-million-dollar organisation whereas UoM is a huge and complex environment, but both are committed to excellence, are committed to elite performance, and also committed to being relevant to their communities. Essentially what we did for well over a decade at Opera Australia was to harness the extraordinary talent and skill available to an opera company – and Opera Australia is one of the largest opera companies in the world which attracts the most talented musicians, the most talented conductors, designers, technicians, crafts people – and ask what, with all this commitment to excellence and access to talented professionals, can we do with all these skills to be as relevant and useful as possible to the broader community, most of whom might never set foot inside the Sydney Opera House or the Melbourne Arts Centre? So we started what is still the biggest regional touring program in Australia; we started education programs, internship programs and experimented across media platforms. This wasn't called 'engagement' at that time, but it was absolutely a strategic response to taking an elite art form, able to command the best talents that this and other countries had to offer, and make sure we created much greater community benefit. What we noticed very quickly was that sponsors, philanthropists and governments were attracted to all the ways we were trying to make music making and great theatrical and technical practice enrich the lives of many communities – largely through participation. We could all have a debate about repertoire, or what great opera is or is not, or which soprano should be cast, or what the balance of programming at the Sydney Opera House should be. But what created real growth in the company, and gave tremendous opportunities to artists by the way, was the ambition we had of being relevant to a much broader community.

T: Any final words of advice for those of us involved in advancing the engagement agenda?

AC: I think I would end where I began: that for research-intensive universities, engagement has to be fundamental to our academic mission. I would add that the time has come to share our knowledge in this space, and build a national narrative about engaged scholarship in this country. Recently, I had a terrific discussion with the VC of UNSW, Professor Ian Jacobs, about programs they are developing internationally, clearly based on a public value agenda. At UoM we are shaping a twenty-year program supported by Atlantic Philanthropies, the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity, which is based on a partnership model with the University of Auckland, QUT, UQ, Jawun, the Kaiela Institute, The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Government, that will foster transformative leadership informed by deep indigenous knowledge and practice. Collaboration and shared understanding across national and international borders will be key to creating public value.