

**ACADEMIC  
RENEWAL AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF  
CANBERRA (SO  
FAR)**

**Professor Stephen  
Parker**

**INTRODUCTION**

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1.

**WHY?**

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2.

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**HOW?**

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3.

**WOULD WE DO IT  
AGAIN?**

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# I. INTRODUCTION

UC is in a 5 year period of renewing itself.

The process began before the Bradley Review but has acquired added significance as we move into a more competitive, performance-based era

At about the two-thirds mark

⊕ 1.1

But our long-term future depends on our capacity to

⊕ 1.2.

The strategy is based on decisions about what kind of university we want to be, which in our case is:

⊕ 1.3

1.1 At about the two-thirds mark

Our ratios of general to academic staff expenditure are back within sector norms

We are running a small financial surplus

Our total student load has grown significantly



Our weighted publications per academic FTE in 2008 placed us 10th in sector

On composite, per capita research measures, UC is the fastest improver 2004-08

We are poised for significant step-change growth through development of the campus and a capital-raising strategy

## 1.2

But our long-term future depends on our capacity to

Maintain demand for our places after 2012

Build our reputation through high quality, useful research

Retain and attract talented staff (academic and professional) in a competitive environment, where

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1.2.1

about 25% of Australia's academics are predicted to retire in the next 10-15 years

### 1.2.1

Retain and attract talented staff (academic and professional) in a competitive environment, where

the removal of the volume cap on student places will fuel expansion and greater demand for teachers

a research quality exercise (the ERA) will provoke further talent wars

performance-based funding may provide the vital extra few per cent of revenue

### 1.3

The strategy is based on decisions about what kind of university we want to be, which in our case is:

#### Research-led

With a particular mission to prepare people for a services economy, with an emphasis on public services

Leveraged off the talent available within Canberra as the national capital (especially relevant for part-time and adjunct appointments)

Relatively small, but with scale derived from a subsidiary vocational institution (the polytechnic, with teaching-only staff); a pathways college; and possibly involvement in high school education

In the early stages of our renewal program we saw that our performance was sub-par in student feedback on teaching and in research output

Performance management and development of academic staff was weak and intermittent

Academic staff separation was low (bottom quartile, per QUT Benchmarking), but the ones who left were often the most talented

Professorial leadership and mentoring was very patchy

We knew that revival required real attention to academic staff; hence the idea of creating an initiative or program which we named "Academic Renewal"


In thinking this through we concluded:


## 2. WHY?

⊕ 2.1

2.1

In thinking this through we concluded:

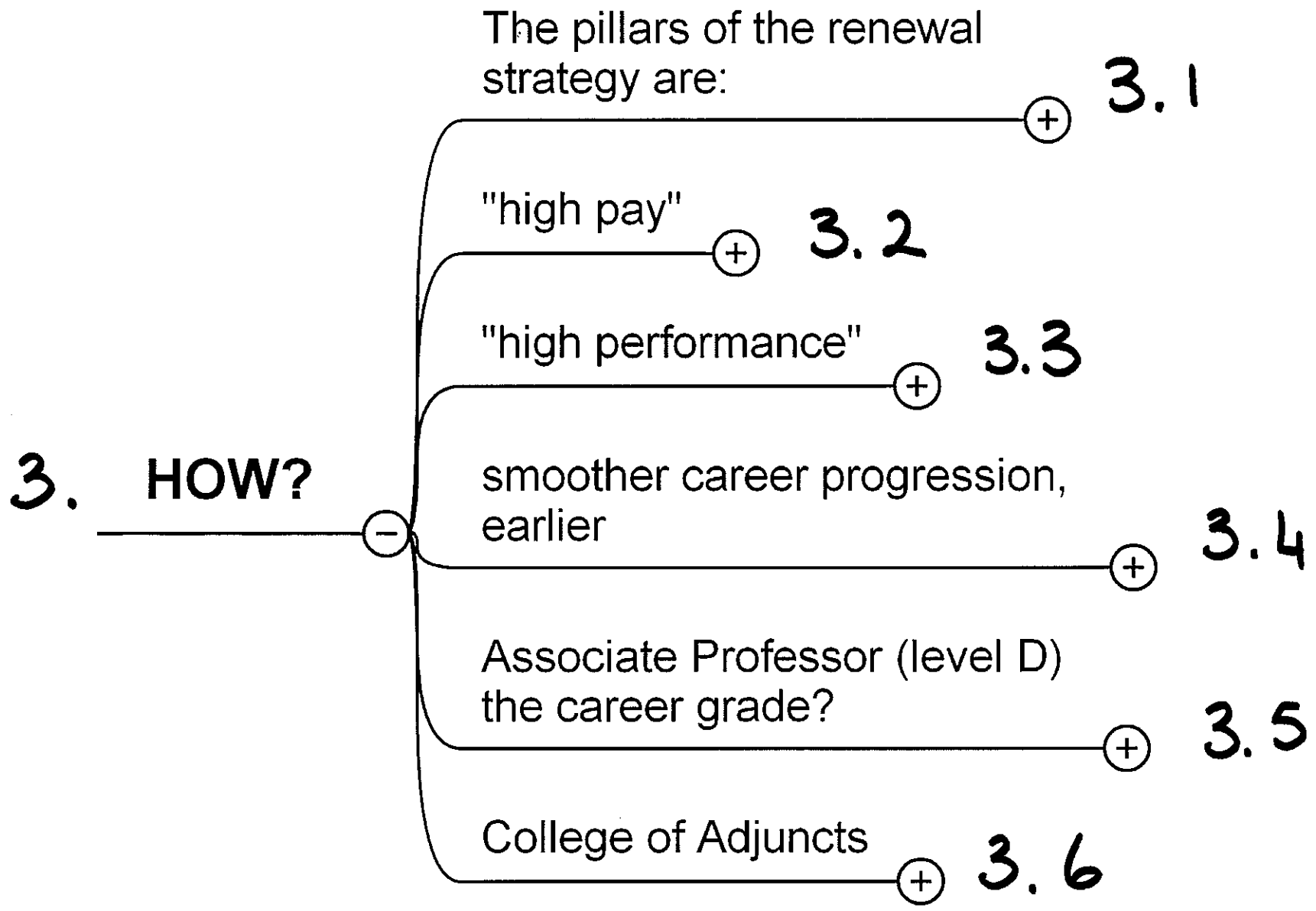
Our academic staff profile was more "aged" than an already ageing academic workforce in the sector, with only 3 of 7 faculties having any academics under 30 

It was also relatively junior, with levels B and C accounting for perhaps 75% of the academic staff 

It looked like middle age spread 

If one were a young graduate considering one's options, the career ladder of roughly 25 incremental steps from bottom of level A to professor (assuming steady promotion) is unattractive

There is a lot of "process" going into the ladder, esp re promotions



### 3.1

The pillars of the renewal strategy are:

to create a high pay, high performance culture where everyone who works hard and is good at their job has a secure place

to lay down clear expectations for academic performance, by level and discipline or faculty

to make early career progression smoother through an assistant professor designation spanning levels B and C

to assume that Associate Professor is to be "career grade" in the future, so that Assistant Professor is explicitly a grooming for Associate Professor

to performance manage professors directly from the centre and expect leadership and mentoring from them

to make maximum, strategic and managed use of adjunct staff

to invest heavily in staff development and leadership development

### 3.2

"high pay"

Coincidental that E.B. under way in 2009

The new assistant professor designation has only 5 increments (starting at B2) instead of 12 - see illustration in 2009 dollars



6 per cent per annum for 3 years

In years 2 and 3 the last 2 per cent are dependent on institutional performance in 2011 and, in 2012, individual performance

### 3.3

"high performance"

The PEAS (Performance Expectations for Academic Staff) are reviewed annually, used in annual performance reviews and at promotion, linked to strategic plan targets

Current staff were assessed in 2009 as either T-R (teaching and research) or T-P (teaching professionals)

T-P staff stay on lecturer/senior lecturer nomenclature

Doctorate becoming essential, with specific disciplines potentially exempt but within those disciplines each case requires specific approval

The new Enterprise Agreement specifically recognises that staff not T-R according to PEAS may be redundant in 2012

Professors' annual PDR through a panel chaired personally by VC

Professorial Forums to be held, in addition to all-staff Forums

### 3.4

smoother career progression,  
earlier

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No promotion between level B  
and C if T-R

But must be satisfactory in  
annual PDR

### 3.5

Associate Professor (level D)  
the career grade?

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Initially, the Assistant Profs  
(B/C) were to be 7 years, fixed  
term, US-style

Emerged from E.B. as  
"continuing contingent"

If not promoted in about year 7  
then contract terminated

Review points (not probation) at  
years 3 and 5, based solely  
around the likelihood of  
promotion at end of 7 years

"Dean" to be appointed from amongst the active ones

3.6

College of Adjuncts

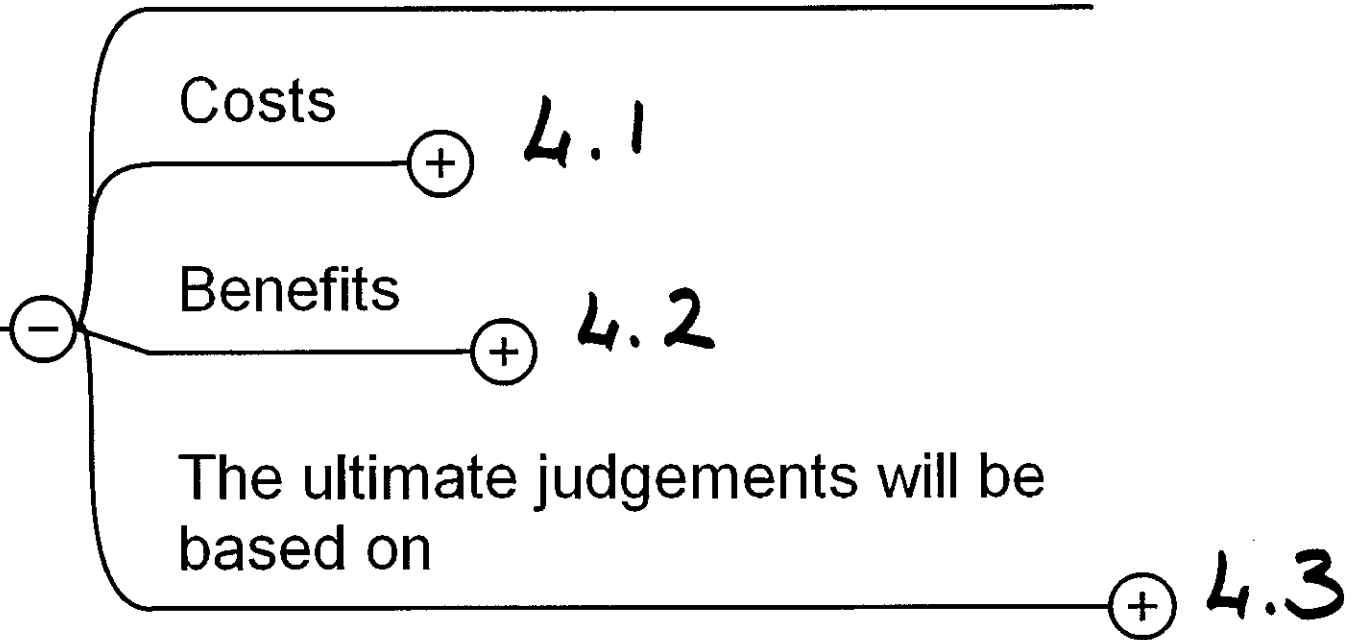
Annual engagement plan, with review

Constitute a sense of community; the only club that only they can be members of

Boils down to costs vs benefits, although there are also lessons to be learned about the change process (but the answer is yes)

4.

**WOULD WE DO IT AGAIN?**



Risk that less security (i.e. 7 years) is more influential in minds of prospective Assistant Professors than faster progression (the NTEU position)

4.1  
Costs

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Salary bill

⊕

4.1.1

Extensive investment in PDR

⊕

4.1.2

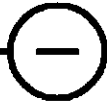
Significant internal tension from staff who are part of UC's past

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4.1.3

4.1.1

Salary bill



Marginal initially

Will need to be managed

Backing our ability to grow revenues in real terms

4.1.2

Extensive investment in PDR

Risk that we can't provide support that staff say is necessary for them to make Level D



Management bandwidth

### 4.1.3

Significant internal tension from staff who are part of UC's past

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T-R vs T-P is confronting

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## 4.2

### Benefits

Early days

Awaiting 2009 QUT  
Benchmarking Data

In second half of 2009, average  
applicant interest for Assistant  
Profs was 9.9, but with some  
fields large by any standards

UC has tended to be about half  
the national average for  
applicant interest, but we think  
we are rising quickly

The staff profile is starting to  
change



PEAS and PDR fully  
internalised in all academics'  
minds

Everyone is focused on a  
performance-based HE sector

## 4.3

The ultimate judgements will be based on

Whether we reach our strategic goals of being top third in the sector on educational measures and top half per capita in research measures

Whether we thrive in a competitive, performance-based funding environment from 2012