2011 was a successful year of continued growth for USC. While it is important to reflect on that success, it is also necessary to be focussed on the future. In my first year as Vice-Chancellor, I believe we have set a strong foundation in 2011 for the next stage of development of this university.

Through a consultative process involving many people within and outside of USC, we developed a new Strategic Plan (2011-2015). New members of the executive team who took up their appointments early in 2011, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Birgit Lohmann and our first Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) Roland DeMarco, made strong contributions to this plan.

A revised academic structure, effective January 2012, and appointment of the new two executive deans, Professor Joanne Scott (Faculty of Arts and Business) and Professor John Bartlett (Faculty of Science, Health, Education and Engineering) position us well for future growth and an enhanced national profile.

One of the performance measures in our strategic plan is for the University to have 12,000 students (8,000 EFTSL) by 2015, a significant increase on the 2011 student population of 7,766. Compact discussions indicate the Commonwealth is keen to see Australia’s youngest public university reach this critical mass.

An important strategy for growth is the expansion of USC’s footprint from the immediate Sunshine Coast to service the coastal region from north of Brisbane to Bundaberg. This strategy is predicated upon closer cooperation with TAFE in training, articulation and resource-sharing, and servicing the needs of the planned Sunshine Coast University Hospital.

Growth requires new buildings and other infrastructure, and I am delighted that our joint application with TAFE to the Structural Adjustment Fund has resulted in significant Commonwealth funding for a $33 million Sippy Downs Learning Hub on campus, as well as a major higher education development on the TAFE campus at Gympie. Other proposed campus developments are detailed in the Campus Master Plan which was also revised in 2011 (to be approved in 2012).

Building a research profile in a new, small university is challenging, yet research is an important element of a university’s credibility. The strides we have taken in 2011 are impressive, including the Collaborative Research Networks initiative ($5.5 million), several ARC and NHMRC grants, our continuing role in the Seafood CRC, and industry partnerships.

Every year, I am impressed by our student and graduate achievements, from university medallists to sporting achievers to success in business and the professions. We now have more than 9,000 graduates working on the coast, nationally and around the world.

The University’s strong national ratings for teaching quality and graduate satisfaction, and our strong performance in national awards for university teaching, reflect the dedication of our teaching staff and the personal attention they afford our students. I thank all staff for their outstanding efforts in 2011.

It is important to acknowledge the role of the University Council in ensuring our future. In particular, it is gratifying that Chancellor John M Dobson OAM accepted re-appointment late in 2011 for a further five-year term.
The research efforts of academics and students are broad and varied, with sustainability and genealogy the core research foci at USC. In 2011:

- Research grant income was $2.72 million (figure unaudited). Overall, external research grant income increased more than 50% during the period 2007–2011.
- The total number of Higher Degree by Research enrolments was 113 EFTSL. Health science remains the strongest research specialisation in terms of HDR enrolments.
- USC received two prestigious Australian Research Council Discovery grants, worth more than $1 million. Dr Scott Cummins was awarded a $656,377 ARC Future Fellowship for his study of primordial germ cell migration in pericform fish, along with a $145,000 ARC Discovery Project Grant for his research into snail hypometabolism. Professor Roland De Marco, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and joint chief investigator in a project called ‘New mesoporous materials for use in high temperature proton exchange fuel cell membranes’, gained a three-year ARC Discovery Project grant of $420,000, with $40,000 each year to support a PhD student at USC.
- USC was announced as a partner in three successful ARC Linkage Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities grants worth more than $1 million. These successes will see high-end research tools coming to USC as well as access to sophisticated labs at partner institutions.
- Australia’s Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb, visited USC in September to launch the University’s $5.45 million Collaborative Research Network (CRN) project. The three-year Research Futures Project partners USC with Griffith University, the University of Tasmania and the University of Queensland in undertaking nationally significant research involving water, sustainability, forestry and aquaculture. It was one of 12 projects nationally to gain funds under the Collaborative Research Networks program.
- The CRN launch coincided with the closing date for applications for 20 USC Research Fellow positions, linked to the CRN funding, that were advertised nationally and internationally. Approximately 120 applications were received from highly qualified individuals from around the world.

### RESEARCH INCOME

Milestone changes and extended contract negotiations impacted on the 2011 target, particularly in the competitive grant income (a 73.5% decrease). Overall, total research income has increased more than 51% since 2007, to over $4.5 million in 2011.

### RESEARCH

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The University of the Sunshine Coast was the first greenfield university to be established in Australia since 1975. Founded in 1994, USC took its first 500 students at the Sippy Downs campus in 1996. Enrolments grew to more than 7,700 in 2011, with the student population projected to be 12,000 by 2015.

The 100-hectare campus lies 90km north of Brisbane on land that was once a cane farm. The University has won many architectural awards and is part of a wildlife reserve.

The University of the Sunshine Coast's full statutory annual report is available online at www.usc.edu.au/reports. Copies of the 2011 annual report are available from the Administrator, Office of Marketing and Communications, University of the Sunshine Coast, by telephoning +61 7 5459 4558 or faxing +61 7 5430 1187.

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