

Distinctly Osgoode Project Research Report

**Prepared For: Osgoode Hall Law School
York University**

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Origins of the Distinctly Osgoode Project



- Osgoode Hall Law School is in a period of renewal with a soon-to-be completed new building, several new programs including two new academic chairs, and a successful fund raising campaign. The law school is also in the middle of developing a new five-year strategic plan. Osgoode is planning a series of events to mark the launch of the renovated building in the Fall of 2011.
- As part of this renewal, Osgoode Hall Law School wants to showcase the important contributions that its people and programs are making nationally and internationally and to ensure that its messages --
 - Communicate what Osgoode is doing and why,
 - Communicate what differentiates Osgoode,
 - Fit with the Law School's strategic objectives, and
 - Speak to all audiences

Research Objectives



- Marketing research was requested to gather insights from key internal and external stakeholders to help understand what is unique about Osgoode and what attaches people to the Law School. In particular the research looked for stories of what has most mattered to students, faculty, and alumni in their Osgoode experience.
- Results will be used as input into the McMahon Harvard messaging model for stakeholder communications.

Method



- Four discussion groups with current students

First-year students	1
Upper-year students	1
Student leaders	1
Graduate leaders	1
Total	4

- 21 interviews [telephone/in-person] with internal and external stakeholders

LLM students	3
Transferred Out students	2
Young faculty	7
Young alumni [5 yrs or less]	5
Older alumni [6 – 14 years]	4
Total	21

- November 15 – December 10, 2010
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Recurrent Themes and Experiences

Recurrent Themes & Experiences



- In speaking about the experiences at Osgoode Hall Law School that they feel passionate about, JD and graduate students, young faculty, and alumni reveal shared perceptions of the School, although sometimes in different words and sometimes with differing emphasis. Their experiences capture the core themes that make up a strong and distinctive identity for the School. Each theme is consistent with and supports the others; they are integrated. Each is also appealing and engaging.
- While few participants would claim that these qualities are unique to Osgoode, some argue that they are displayed by individuals at other law schools but institutionalized at Osgoode. Administrative processes, courses, and approaches to education ensure that there is a strong sense of a school and community despite Osgoode's commuter status.

Recurrent Themes cont'd

1. Openness and Flexibility

- Diversity of students
- Flexibility of admissions process, course requirements, research interests
- Risk taking

2. Opportunities

- Diversity of courses even if not 'big ticket item'
- Paths for alternative careers
- Joint degrees
- Extra Curricular Activities
- Student initiatives supported
- Exposure to best and brightest
- Ferment of ideas

3. Quality and Engagement of Faculty

- Quality and passion of teaching
 - Engagement with and availability to students
 - Public role
 - Publications and research
-

Recurrent Themes cont'd



4. Integration of theoretical and practical education

- Standard in courses from fundamentals on
- Passionate about clinical programs as deep thinking, learning experiences
- Opportunities for practice, moot court, etc.

5. Commitment to public law, social justice, and ethical lawyering

- Availability of courses and clinical experiences
- Commitment by faculty
- Public voice

6. Commitment to Critical Thinking

- In every course and at every level

7. Transformative

- Result of inculcating critical thinking process
- Exposure to diverse students and faculty -- values, cultures, ideologies, experiences

Most Distinctive Themes



- The most distinctive themes are those that seem to be more institutionalized at Osgoode and apply across a broader range of activities, evoke a deeper and more consistent commitment or are publicly embraced:
- **Openness – Opportunity – Flexibility** constitute a cluster of themes that are inter-related and mutually supportive. These qualities characterize Osgoode’s interactions with all levels of stakeholders and all of the major activities of the Law School from courses to decision making. In turn these qualities ensure that students and faculty have multiple opportunities within the School and in their careers.
- **Commitment to public law, social justice, and ethical lawyering** are also strongly linked and seem to be an important part of the Osgoode experience and reputation.
- **Integration of theory and practice** is perceived as operationalized in Osgoode’s approach to education and not confined to particular courses or faculty members. It is this integration that seems to be distinctive.
- Participants regardless of segment talk of their years at Osgoode as **transformative**. All law schools are transformative, but Osgoode seems to be so on a much deeper level because of the diversity of people, ideas, and experiences students are exposed to.

Most Distinctive Themes cont'd



- In contrast, while Osgoode seems to teach **critical thinking** extremely well, so do most law schools. This theme is strong, but not unique.
- Finally the important theme of the **quality and commitment of Osgoode's faculty** is a major strength, but other law schools can also claim to have outstanding faculty. Unless Osgoode's faculty is more open, more supportive of students than faculty elsewhere as participants in Osgoode's culture of openness, flexibility and opportunity, this theme is not unique.

The most distinctive and ownable themes need to be reviewed for their effectiveness in developing the McMahon messages, and for their relevance to each group of stakeholders.

Compelling Language

- In the stories stakeholders tell the recurrent themes are often brought to life by compelling language, words that stand out as capturing the essence of the Osgoode experience and a passionate engagement with it.



DETAILED FINDINGS

In the sections that follow first-year and upper-year students, LLM and PhD students, faculty and alumni speak about the experiences at Osgoode that meant the most to them. In doing so, they identify a number of core themes of the School that they feel passionate about. The consistency regardless of segment is remarkable, though the language may vary, and it testifies to the strong identity of the School. There is necessarily considerable repetition. There is also a deliberate reliance on verbatims, so that the voices themselves might be heard.

1.0 Perceptions and Stories of Students

1.1 Why Students Choose Osgoode



- JD students choose to come to law school for many different reasons – for security [desire for a respected profession, a high income and status, the ability to move up quickly, a fail-safe choice], lack of clarity about their future and the belief that a law degree opens doors to a variety of occupations, for intellectual challenge, or a commitment to helping people. Some report they want a more powerful tool kit for negotiating the world whether for themselves or for others. Among first generation Canadians there is also a desire to have a voice, to value the rights and freedom of their new country, and to choose something with an element of the practical.
 - These students are then attracted to Osgoode by the School’s
 - Strong reputation for excellence – “one of the best if not the best law school in Canada”
 - Its commitment to social justice
 - The quality of the faculty
 - Its practical, not just academic approach to law
 - Specific programs, especially the Clinical programs
 - Desire to live in Toronto
 - For a few, failure to get into the University of Toronto
 - Fear of U of T’s ‘dog-eat-dog’ reputation and homogeneity
 - LLM and PhD students often cite the same reasons, but also usually have a specific interest that Osgoode caters to, i.e., environmental, criminal, labour, international law.
-

1.2 Living the Osgoode Experience: Core Themes



- There is a perception that Osgoode has one of the most diverse student bodies of any Canadian Law School. Diverse in culture, language, ideologies, education and interests, students develop a number of common values as they pursue their education at Osgoode. Despite its myriad intake, the School works from the start. Even first-year students who had only spent 4 months at Osgoode prior to the research had begun to internalize the School's fundamental values. The School has a strong core identity and is committed to educational processes that foster common interests and attitudes among students from the start, while continuing to welcome and support individual goals.
- Osgoode students from JDs to graduate students celebrate especially --
 1. The diverse and talented student body [primarily JDs]
 2. The quality and attitude of the faculty
 3. Diversity of courses and programs
 4. Commitment to critical thinking
 5. Transformative experiences

1.3 Stories of the Osgoode Experience



1. Diverse Student Body

- First year students admit to being overwhelmed by Osgoode, its size, the amount of work, and its energy, but one of the biggest surprises is the student body. First and upper year students describe their sections as helpful, friendly, and far more talented than expected.

“Surprises? -- How great the section is...dynamic, really great opportunities. People lack arrogance and pretention. They talk to each other, support each other.”

“I thought they’d be more stuck up and competitive, but they weren’t.”

“U of T is more homogenous, more elitist, has a more competitive culture, a different socio-economic [group].”/”There’s a law-school type at U of T, not so much so at Osgoode.”

“There is incredible talent at this school, singers, dancers, artists, UN employees, single moms raising three kids on their own.”

“Everyone here has a 1,000,000 interests and it’s nice to talk to people with other things on the side.”

“We were in the top 10% of our undergraduate classes. Here you lose your arrogance, see others are smarter...calm down...humbling.”

“It’s not an accident that so many amazing well-rounded people are winding up here.”

Stories cont'd



2. Quality and Attitude of Faculty

- The quality of Osgoode's faculty draws students at every level. They like the prominence of some faculty members, the quality of the teaching, and the mix of theory and practice.

"Osgoode has such influence on public [policy]....It's thrilling."

"The faculty is incredible, much better than other law schools in South America and Europe."

"Faculty and the work being done there are fantastic."

"Good blend of theory and practice in the faculty. Reality of a more critical stance....lack of rigidity in faculty thinking."

"Great LLM program....taught interactively. We learn through others' experiences and courses. My class mates are experts in their own area, all practiced, all have been physicians, nurses, lawyers. The professors are amazing...the stuff you learn you can't in day-to-day practice."

- JD and graduate students are surprised and very appreciative of the interest faculty members take in them and the support and encouragement they provide.

"The faculty humanizes law."

"[Impressed most by] some of the profs and their accessibility...modest and available despite their banner names."

"The faculty have open doors...They talk with you."

Stories cont'd



“During the LLM the faculty and administration were incredibly supportive. They were nothing but desirous of your success in the program. The librarian worked so closely with me. I never felt or experienced that level of support or comfort before, not at McGill or U of T.”

“[Graduate student] The faculty is approachable. They help you publish, speak at conferences, get you involved.”

3. Diversity of Courses and Programs

- Students often become aware of the full diversity of Osgoode’s courses and programs only after they enter the School. They also much appreciate the way faculty blend the theoretical and practical in the same course and the clinical programs that provide students with first-hand experience.

“Breadth of courses, more to offer in selection -- advocacy, evidence, criminal law, health law course. They don’t have to be just the big ticket items... astonishing.”

“So many ways to flourish here...academic or technical or whatever.”

“The intensive clinical programs. All schools have one or two, but Osgoode has more programs and they are focused on making lawyers.”

“I love the clinical programs..... invaluable learning.”

“U of T has one moot court for first year, Osgoode has 3.”

Stories cont'd



- Graduate students particularly like the Reading Groups, the Faculty Lunches, and the Graduate Seminars.

“The professor who taught it [Graduate Seminar] laid out what a Masters Thesis looks like and how to do it....how to ask the critical questions.”

4. Commitment to Critical Thinking

- Students even in the first year are exposed to a different way of thinking. Courses are taught with an emphasis on critical thinking which students find exciting.

“Osgoode is modern, big ideas. A progressive school where students are taught to challenge [everything].

“Osgoode is not conservative, are left leaning. They look at things critically which as a student is so important. They always get the other point of view....It’s not don’t rock the boat. Other schools teach the law, Osgoode teaches the policy. This [particular law] may not be right; think of everything critically.”

“The attitude of having a critical perspective resonates....Critical lawyering.”

“Vitality of the speakers series.”

Stories cont'd



5. Transformations

- Many of the students, even among the first-year students report that they now think differently. For the upper year students and graduates, mastery of critical thinking comes with a new confidence that they celebrate. Osgoode Hall Law School and its diverse student body and diverse faculty also expose students to a wide range of ideas and experiences. Some are changed more deeply.

“Self worth. I’m able to see things and pull them apart. Pro, con, and the middle ground and how to make a decision. Knowing I have that ability and can extract information from people, give options.”

“I have been tested by the work load and have the ability to respond...feel resilience...amazing skills.”

“I think differently, different language. It’s exciting and adds confidence.”

“Confidence. I know how the world works and I know how to protect myself. I belong in this world.”

“The way people look at you...the level of respect, more responsive.”

“I’m finally realizing I belong here and admissions didn’t make a mistake.”

“I feel more passionate about access to justice.”

‘I met people with totally different views. You learn to get along. It meant a big shift in my personal life. Now I’m in labour studies.’

Stories cont'd



“I have been taught to think like a lawyer, but my personal compass has not been changed.”

- This sense of possibility and transformation extends to the School itself.
“Osgoode is the oldest law school in the country, but has changed the most.”

Transfer Students

- Only two students were interviewed who had chosen to leave Osgoode after one year. One went to the U of T; the other, to UBC. Despite having left, their comments on Osgoode echoed those of the other students. Osgoode, its student body, faculty, courses and education remain much admired.
“When I got to UBC I realized my foundational course [constitutional law, contracts, etc.] is stronger than my UBC classmates. I feel I have a better base.”
 - One student wanted to return to his home in Vancouver and to practice there. The OCI process is set up to serve only the big Ontario firms. Several students who seek alternative career paths noted that there is no process in place for them, though praised the career counseling service.
 - The other student was very upset by the construction and loss of library space. She lived on campus and had no space of her own.
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1.4 The Osgoode Experience through Images

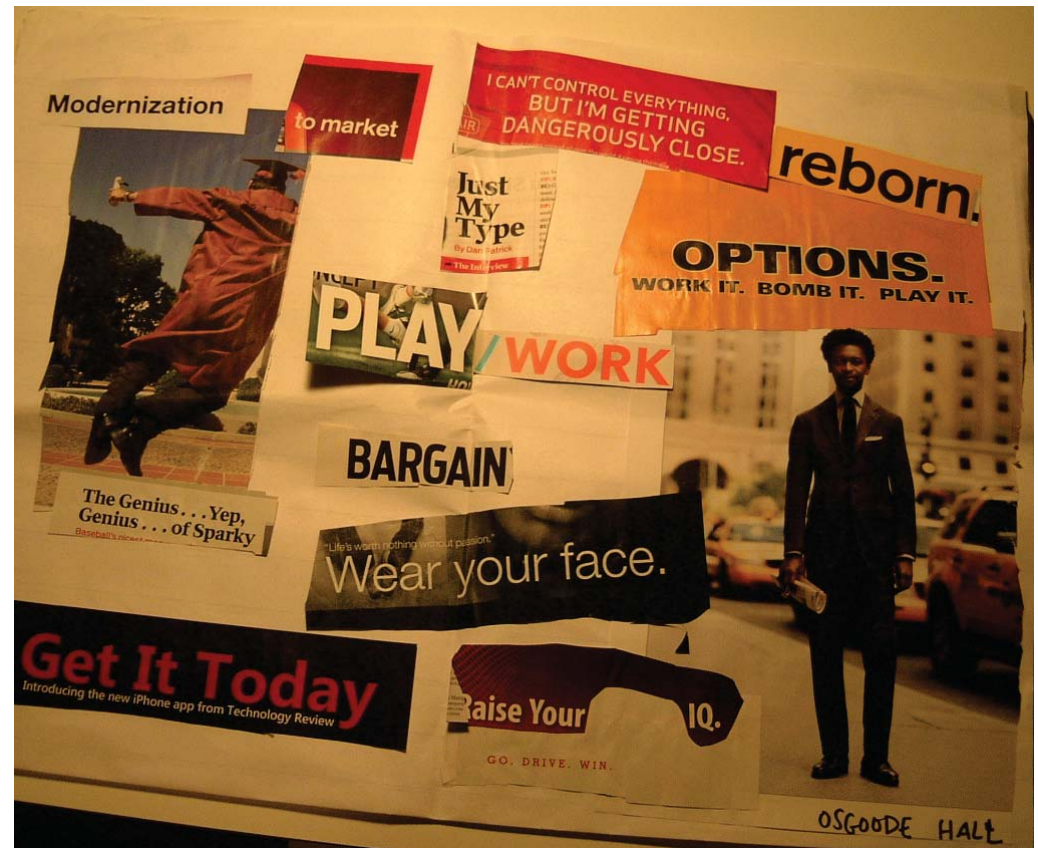


- Students were asked to develop collages that captured the best of Osgoode or the ideal Osgoode. Not surprisingly many of the themes already explored came through but in strong and colourful images and sometimes surprisingly vivid language.
- Recurrent themes included –
 - The idea of metamorphosis or rebirth
 - The idea of a tool kit, control, self-confidence
 - Osgoode’s intellectual challenge and its excellent faculty
 - Diversity
 - Opportunity, finding the right path
- Recurrent images included the slogan ‘Wear your face’, a man in a wheelchair who learns to walk, a graduate genius in his gown -- often captured leaping through an open doorway -- a light bulb for big ideas, sports figures for competition and achievement, and maps for networks, international relationships, diversity.
- The explanations that follow opposite selected collages are paraphrased from the students’ own comments when explaining their collages to the groups.

First-Year Students

The Ideal Osgoode

- “Life’s worth nothing without passion’. Wear your face” – Wear a suit downtown, but be genuine; wear your face, know who you are.
- Be reborn. It’s a huge rebirth, you gain and you shed. You are changed by your education.
- Bargain – there are different ways to approach everything; you have options.
- Control comes with knowledge. It’s a modern way of thinking... a critical approach.
- Work/ play balance.



The Ideal Osgoode Hall Law School

First-Year Students cont'd

OSGOODE

OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL
YORK UNIVERSITY



- At first you go in all directions [the birds]; it's like evolution, scattered and then at Osgoode move in the same direction... the progression of elephants – Change your attitude.
- Strategy is in the middle, a strategy for career and work.
- You learn to make connections....exposure to the world and society.
- You can get what you want by the tools that Osgoode gives you.
- Football – competition

The Ideal Osgoode Hall Law School

First-Year Students cont'd

- Osgoode as the way to the desired professional and family life, one that mixes business with pleasure, 'Life Out Loud'.
- A smooth ride to the future, a path to hit the bulls-eye.
- Gorilla, birds, sea creatures – environmental issues – ultimately to use your skills in the world.
- You will know your place in the world.



Ideal Osgoode Hall Law School

Upper-Year Students

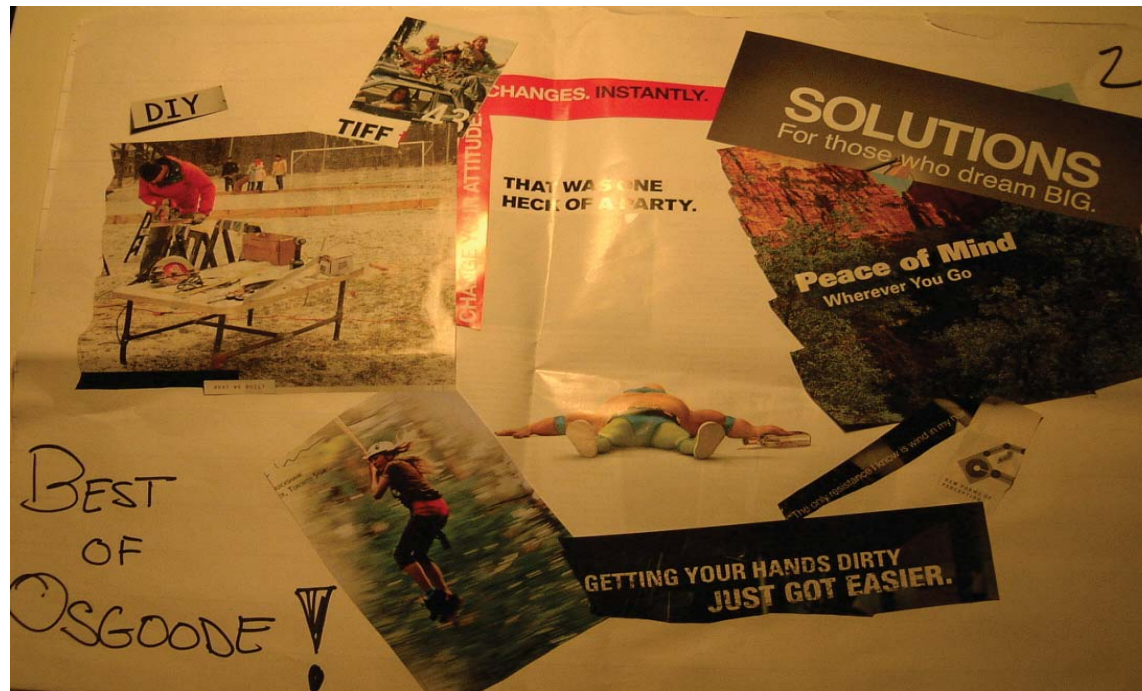
- Osgoode is modern, a progressive school with big ideas. You're taught to challenge, think differently, transformation. Light bulb – this place is about ideas.
- Get the tools of the trade.
- 'The largest law library in the Commonwealth.'
- It's like a marathon, but you don't have to do it alone ...bright and airy and you're listened to.
- 'The office is dead' – work outside of the classroom. Sports are part of the experience, charities. Will continue this afterwards.



The Best of Osgoode

Upper-Year Students

- It's exhausting and rushing by. It changes your attitudes instantly. 'New forms of perception'.
- DIY – you can build your own courses.
- 'Solutions for those who dream big.' Most people will be OK...peace of mind. It opens a lot of doors and doesn't close any.
- Group of guys – great people; TIFF – it's in Toronto



Graduate Students



The Best of Osgoode [See collage on following page.]

- Metamorphosis, birth of idea of self as an academic. Like the community of ants -- they are highly coordinated and institutionalized, working. The gasmasks relate to a drive to uniformity. It's not negative but a certain rigour, rules, and expectations.
- Active solitary study.
- Migration, constant movement of faculty from abroad, graduate students. At core is movement of ideas. To question the *status quo*.... Part of lots of different networks, some remarkable. Osgoode is plugged in.
- “Osgoode is colourful, diverse....There is power in colour and Osgoode has a certain power. If you say you are from Osgoode there is a certain understanding of where you come from. Open-minded, intellectual adventure, flamboyant, eccentric in a wonderful way, creative, exploring. Not conservative, but how to think about the law in a different way. Law has a history, a certain inflexibility in black and white but for people who do not operate in black and white, it becomes colourful. Talk about things here not do anywhere else. A European perspective, plugged into the tenor of debate in continental Europe and have access....Can't wait to do that -- they say go and do it.”
- Shark – JD students' efforts to get into high status job.

Graduate Students cont'd



The Best of Osgoode

2.0 Perceptions & Stories of Young Faculty

2.1 Why Young Faculty Want To Be at Osgoode



- Young faculty members offer a wide variety of explanations for wanting to become part of the faculty at Osgoode Hall Law School.
 - Its excellent reputation among law schools in Canada, but also recognition of its name [Osgoode Hall Law School, not York University] abroad.
 - For some, the most progressive law school in Canada, top 10 or top 20 in the world.
 - Its commitment to social justice
 - Appreciation for the size of Osgoode and the breadth of programs size makes possible
 - Excellence of faculty, especially reputation in labour law, poverty law, dispute resolution, quality of publications
 - Appeal of specific programs – Parkdale Clinical Program, IP Program, Centre for Refugee Studies, Nathanson.
 - Desire to live in Toronto, a large city with a large professional community
 - Good experiences at Osgoode as students

2.2 Living the Osgoode Experience: Core Themes



- The view from the outside as a job applicant does not fully capture the experience young faculty become immersed in as they begin to think, teach and research within the Osgoode environment. There was little difficulty in getting these young men and women to articulate what they feel passionate about at Osgoode after only a few months or a few years. Excitement, enthusiasm, and optimism animated their contributions.
- Young faculty do not argue that all of these themes are unique to Osgoode. However, some suggest that at other law schools they are expressed by individuals rather than institutionalized within the school as they are at Osgoode. The themes define Osgoode's core identity and are held more strongly.

“Faculty is independent...very entrepreneurial and diverse....The administration supports faculty to go after their dreams....Competition in the faculty, very high standards, and rigour attracted me to come and to stay....It’s a place to make dreams happen, a place of inspiration and inclusiveness.”

Core Themes cont'd



- Stories coalesce around five core areas of experience that seem to define the culture of Osgoode for young faculty. Each core value is consistent with and integrated with the others. This integration speaks to a strong cultural identity at Osgoode that survives its current 'commuter school' status for both faculty and students. Told from the point of view of the faculty, the students' perceptions are clearly recognizable.
 1. Openness
 - Diversity of students and faculty
 - Decision-making process
 - Multi-disciplinary/collaborative processes and programs
 - Ferment of ideas
 2. Commitment to public law, social justice and ethical lawyering
 3. Commitment to critical thinking
 4. Integration of theory and practice
 5. Transformative experiences

2.3 Stories of the Osgoode Experience



1. Openness

- It is common to speak of Osgoode as having one of the most diverse student bodies of any law school in Canada, but what impels this welcome for differences is a much larger core value – open mindedness. It is this quality that opens the door to a wide range of students and faculty, and also embraces diverse ideas, interests, and career aspirations. It encourages innovation in the classroom and in research, and it inspires young faculty to take risks and pursue ideas that they believe might not have been supported at other institutions.

“U of T and Osgoode are the places in Canada if you want to work in the big firms. But we can deliver on both that and other opportunities. Osgoode is actually many law schools. The challenge is to deliver that with fifty faculty. We do incredibly well in delivering to a diversity of markets. We have courses to prepare students for big firms. We have courses to prepare students for social justice careers. We can prepare students for a research and academic career.”

“Osgoode has changed to be able to accept someone like me with my combination of practical and theoretical interests coming from a non-conventional track. The conventional track for teaching at a law school was top of class, clerkship, maybe a Masters or PhD in the US or UK then professor. Osgoode is open to a diverse range of experience to get to academia.”

Stories cont'd



“The administration is open to out-of-the box research. I would not have been supported at any other school.”

“U of T might have supported me but they are very conservative, have less freedom. Osgoode is more inclusive.”

“We take more risks.”

- Openness also informs a valued decision-making process at Osgoode, despite the administrative load it imposes. There is a strong governance model.

“There are lots of administrative activities we are involved with. At first I thought it was lots of committees and it takes a time commitment. But there are more people to spread it around. I thought it was inefficient but it’s a remarkably inclusive decision-making process – input solicited, decisions avoid pitfalls, more democratic.”

- Openness also supports a multidisciplinary culture and valued collaboration among faculty members. Faculty members mentioned interdisciplinary programs with the department of philosophy, environmental studies, Schulich School of Business, a partnership with an Indian Law School, as well as projects shared by faculty members.

“We talk to colleagues in other faculties. It’s possible and encouraged.... Osgoode is not a silo.”

Stories cont'd



- Perhaps most importantly this openness leads to a rich intellectual life, to a constant ferment of ideas and programs.
 - “It’s ‘A place where a 1,000 flowers bloom’...there’s a plethora of things being done.”*
 - “We don’t want a ‘type’ of student...We want people with clashing ideas where they come together in dialogue...a safe place to exchange ideas with respect.”*
- 2. Commitment to Public Law, Social Justice and Ethical Lawyering**
- Osgoode’s openness is consistent with the School’s strong commitment to public law [as well as private law] and social justice. Faculty members are aware of the School’s reputation for this commitment and, in some cases, it forms a principal incentive for wanting to work at the Law School. Again as a core value, it is part of the school’s identity and not just the passion of a few. The Parkdale Clinic, CLASP, the Innocence Project, and other activities make this commitment real and ensure Osgoode’s openness to the community around it.
 - “[I’m passionate about] Osgoode’s commitment to social justice. It’s what we do, the courses we offer, the clinical programs, the orientation of the faculty and their research. It’s the diversity of the faculty and there are critical voices on faculty who question the institutions and the practice of law.”*

Stories cont'd



“At LSE there were no institutional pathways to channel idealism into applied work. At Osgoode there are those pathways. It is one of the number one strengths of Osoode and one of its unique features. Idealism can make something happen only if there are institutional pathways to channel that energy and idealism. For example, industrialization doesn’t only happen because there are entrepreneurs. It happens because of institutions. Osgoode puts in place those established organizational modes of operating. Students actually develop their idealism through skills.”

“The Parkdale Clinic creates an intensive experience [for students]. They have to go there every day. They meet with low income clients and the student is on the hook to address their issues. They learn that legal tools don’t serve everybody, what it’s like to live on the ‘other’ side, and they are surrounded by other people who care about those things....It’s different from programs at other schools, a living experience. Other clinical programs are more detached.”

Stories cont'd



- The commitment to social justice is accompanied by the School's commitment to place the practice and development of law within an ethical context.

“Students are exposed to different perspectives, social justice and diversity issues -- and that not all Bay Street lawyers are evil. We work in all areas of law....What does it mean to be a good lawyer and a good person? Not just learn the rules but how are the rules animated by policies, values. Osgoode was the first school to require a set number of hours of *pro bono* work. They [students] begin their first year with a course on ethical lawyering in a global community....There are courses that engage these issues...disability and the law, gender and the law, racial diversity in boards....I don't see my role as telling students specifically what they should do to be an ethical lawyer, but I hope they think about it.”

- Some young faculty are concerned to keep a balance.

“I'm worried if we only hire legal philosophers and people interested in social justice. People who do high theory and people interested in law reform need to be balanced with more traditional lawyering...You can't do social justice law without private law. Bankruptcy has a lot do with poverty, for example.”

Stories cont'd



3. Integration of Theory and Practice

- Many young faculty members are also strongly committed to Osgoode's emphasis on the integration of theory and practice in the education of young law students. Some believe this emphasis has increased in recent years and that Osgoode is well on its way to bridging the gap between being an 'academic institution' or a 'barfeeder'. Faculty cite the clinical teaching programs which engage tenured faculty as well as adjuncts, the critically-engaged faculty research that feeds directly into teaching as well as the increasing number of faculty with practical experience.

"Recent faculty see the bridge between the practical and the theoretical."

"It's a culture of doers."

4. Commitment to Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is at the core of being a lawyer. At Osgoode, young faculty believe this value resonates at all levels. At the faculty level they speak of 'critically-engaged' research, of engagement with public issues, of courses that teach the law and also the thinking behind it.

"Hard public thinking is being done...visible and engaged in the community and not shy about issues."

"At Osgoode they are very serious about protecting space for critical inquiry. The big name law schools [Columbia, Yale, LSE] all take academic freedom seriously."

Stories cont'd



“Students are pushed to think harder about the law lens...what justifies it? What does it impart to society.... Is that the law we should have?”

“Students want to learn law. We want thoughtful, reflective lawyers. Osgoode brings that perspective.”

“Students learn how to think about the law. How should the law be different. Law is changeable.”

“Its about the role of lawyers and the law. We situate the law in a philosophical context. What are the limits of the law and the potential abuse of the law. It’s about critical self-reflection about themselves and the law. So you can teach tax law and critique of tax law.”

“We ask the tough questions and bring a thoughtful critique to the law. We ask students to participate in that. We walk the talk. We do that from the first week course in ethical lawyering. But we also realize we have to give students the context. Before it was critique without context.”

Stories cont'd



5. Transformative Experiences

- Several young faculty members talked about the impact of the Osgoode experience on students. Critical thinking is the foundation of any good law degree, but at Osgoode this is placed in a particularly open environment that confronts students with diverse people and experiences, a ferment of ideas, and exposure to varieties of legal practice. Osgoode institutionalizes its core themes to provide students with an integrated and formative learning environment.

“First year students struggle with the transition. What am I meant to learn? It’s disorienting for them...not just learn the law, but ethical and moral questions, not just the statute....[Students are challenged] locate yourself, what you believe about those things. Second year students are confident about their views, can defend their views. They take courses they are interested in.”

“It’s a place of inspiration and inclusivity. It fosters academic excellence and leadership and also creates great citizens of Canada and the world.”

“Students are changed. It’s an intense process.”

3.0 Perceptions & Stories of Alumni

3.1 Selected Alumni and their Relationship to the School



- Osgoode alumni represent a broad and interesting external point of view of the Law School. The older alumni in this sample graduated between 1992 and 1996. Younger alumni are drawn from graduating classes in 2005 to 2010. All of these Osgoode graduates are working in interesting sectors from investment banking to politics, government, sports and the major Toronto firms. They include specializations in criminal law, bankruptcy, civil litigation, constitutional law, as well as general counsel. They live in Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary, and Montreal.
- Older alumni remember a somewhat different School, one that was more academic, offering more black letter law and less practical training to students. For some the faculty was also less distinguished at this time and the comparison with U of T less favourable. Later graduates value the successful blend of practical and theoretical they now find at Osgoode and cite quality of faculty as one of the drawing cards of the School. They give little ground to U of T on quality of education and experience at Osgoode.
- Regardless of graduation date almost all of those interviewed value the education they received at Osgoode. Many but not all still keep in touch with the School and almost all still have close friends from among their fellow students. One alumni who doesn't often get to Osgoode reported that he still feels he has a 'family' behind him.

3.2 Reasons for Choosing Osgoode



- Alumni cited several reasons for choosing to go to a law school.
 - A clear path to a profession
 - Always wanted to be a lawyer
 - Prestigious job, good income
 - Gives options if don't know what want to do
- Reasons for choice of Osgoode
 - Reputation
 - Range of courses
 - Quality of faculty
 - Joint degrees, i.e., MBA
 - Quality of programs, i.e., Innocence Project, International Law, Criminal Law
 - Big city
 - Did not get into U of T [Mainly older Alumni]

3.3 Stories of the Osgoode Experience



- Alumni have a variety of positive stories to tell, but they tend to coalesce around five areas of experience:
 1. Opportunities
 2. Diversity of courses and people
 3. Quality of faculty and specific courses
 4. Transformations
- Again the language is somewhat different but the similarities with the experiences of students and faculty are strong.

1. Opportunities

- Alumni remember with pleasure and gratitude the opportunities that were opened for them at Osgoode. While some of these opportunities come with the size of the school, others are seen as illustrating the flexibility of the School in accommodating their needs and interests. This flexibility was expressed in terms of admission policies, courses, career choices, and personal initiatives. The treatment alumni received as students made them feel listened to and personally valued.

Stories cont'd



“I got into Osgoode under special circumstances. I did well in LSATs but had a B average. I did have lots of extra curricular activities. They [Osgoode] looked at the whole person.”

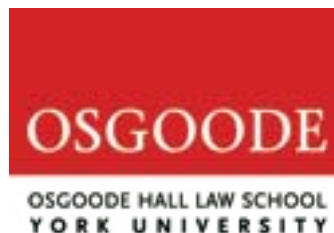
“My last year I did a semester abroad in South Africa. My professor helped me persuade the Administration to let me do this for credit. I was ultimately supported by Osgoode – speaks to flexibility and that they see the value of alternative approaches.”

“During my third year I did an independent project. I had this interest in the sports broadcasting industry. I was able to tailor my education to exactly what I was looking for. They [Osgoode] were very open to that, not just to taking the standard course. I got to meet everyone in the industry during that project. The reputation of Osgoode was an entrée into all of the places I did my research.

“No other school offers the same opportunities. Basically I owe my professional career to experiences there....Opportunities to take initiatives as a student and take on leadership roles....[Started] an international legal partnership program. I got a lot of support in the school. That kind of support could be stamped out in another school. Money came later.”

“

Stories cont'd



“I became a Division leader at the legal aid program and President of the Osgoode International Law Society. I went to New York to the UN...I had a project working for NGOs. It’s rare to have that opportunity in first year.”

“There are so many people out in the world doing really neat things. That is a function of the student body but also the training. And it’s because they support that at the school....People are involved in things that are not necessarily law. It’s about the opportunities that are offered.”

Stories cont'd



2. Diversity of People and Courses

- Diversity of people and courses are a large part of the opportunities alumni remember. They support the flexibility of Osgoode that is so much part of its fabric.

“Diversity is the whole vibe of the School – from students to faculty to courses.”

“Size allows for real diversity not just in the student population but more important in the range of courses especially electives. Because of the size you can offer courses that would not attract enough students at smaller schools You can always find ten people interested in something.”

“I really liked the breadth of courses and the side range of people and activities...really excellent. No matter what your point of view, there is a subset relevant to your interests. I made friends for life.”

[Osgoode’s message?] Focus on the fact that Osgoode offers the greatest diversity of experience of any law school in the country. You can craft your own experience, can seek any path you want want more than at other law schools....You can find a home there whatever you want to do.”

“The breadth of courses offered is huge. I did a lot of smaller seminars. In a big school that’s pretty fantastic. There were different streams to focus on, even breadth within a particular stream and then a particular treaty...the tribunals...the granularity.”

Stories cont'd



3. Quality of Faculty and Courses

- Many of the alumni's memories focus on individual faculty members and specific courses, especially the Securities, Advocacy, and Evidence courses, Advanced Business Law Workshop and the International Law and Criminal Law programs. Alumni valued highly the passion which many faculty members at Osgoode bring to their courses, the inclusion of their practical experiences in the narrative, and the high standards illustrated.

"The faculty, the experience they bring to the table, their own interests...the diversity of the faculty is a huge appeal."

"The faculty was wonderful...All of the profs even the purely academic ones brought common sense and practicality to everything. They were passionate and caring about what they do. It resonated with us. Topics that ought to have been boring in fact weren't. Great energy."

"The evidence course was amazing....taught by two judges. Now I am in front of judges."

"The program in international law. Few other programs have that depth and experience from around the world. Faculty are very well placed and the program was broad enough even in the first year...Globalization and the Law."

Stories cont'd



4. Transformative Experiences

- Students and faculty talk about Osgoode's commitment to teaching critical thinking, while alumni talk about it in terms of their own transformation.

“Once you go to law school your way of thinking is changed. Far more organized, analytical. It bothers me if arguments do not make sense. I have a broader focus. Before I didn't read the newspaper, wasn't interested in local social issues, but now I'm more global. Now I go abroad to work in social justice and am a more engaged citizen in Canada.”

“It teaches you to critically think, research, and read and how to be efficient and what to look for, how to see things from both sides. Law thinks about problems and issues in a different way.

“Yes, it changes the way I look at the world and the way I see things, the way I assess things. It's an experience not like any other.”

“I was very well trained, taught to think about issues from different perspectives, learn how to problem solve in a professional environment... invaluable. At Cornell I'd study the War of 1812 and write about it. Useless. Law school is not like that. Law school is more like math. Here's an algorithm...here's how it works...a few different theories and processes.”

Stories cont'd



- Osgoode Alumni also testify to Osgoode Law School as formative for them, not just in terms of the critical thinking skills that all lawyers learn, but also in terms of the clash of values, cultures, and ideologies that the diverse population of Osgoode provides.

“Change me as a person? Yes, I’m from a small town. Now I’m more open to other people, religions, and different sexual orientation.”

“The diversity of culture and interests...political ideology. I strongly disagreed but appreciated learning from them.”

“I felt U of T was more focused on grades. Osgoode focused more on the whole person. There were many different types of people, many different experiences. It’s more like the real world where you come into contact with all kinds of people.”

Stories cont'd



- Overall Osgoode alumni remain positive about the School's future and the contribution it makes. Many expressed hope that the new building and subway will help Osgoode to develop a stronger on campus community

“Osgoode will continue to train the next generation of open and smart people who can lead the province forward, who aren’t overly focused -- dig at U of T – know how to do it using the tools developed at Osgoode. It’s important to keep this alive....It’s hard to imagine education better anywhere else.”

Appendix

Discussion and Interview Guides



- Separate discussion and interview guides were developed for each stakeholder segment, but all were based on the same core model.
- An example of each is given below. Specific guides are available on request.

Student Focus Groups Discussion Guide



Distinctly Osgoode Student Discussion Guide

1. Introduction [10 minutes]

- Introduction of participants and moderators
 - Current activities, legal specialty, if any, most looking forward to this year at Osgoode
- Purpose of research – Quick review of progress to date, new building; to understand what is distinctive about Osgoode, from a variety of points of view.
- Confidentiality & Audiotaping

2. Telling their stories of expectation [20 minutes]

Stories: What has brought you to this point in your life?

PROBE: Why did you want to come to law school?
What role did you think you would play with a law degree?
Why did you choose Osgoode Hall?
What are the strengths you thought an Osgoode Hall degree would bring to your career?
To you as a person?
Any other law school offer the same? Or offer other things as valuable or more valuable?

3. Telling their stories of experience [30 minutes]

PROBE: OPEN ENDED: What were the surprises at Osgoode?

Have you changed? How?
What do you see now as the value of a law school education?
What does Osgoode bring to that education that is unique?
To your development as a person?

What perspectives, skills, practices, attitudes from Osgoode do you want to be sure to take with you when you leave and enter the work world?

LIST 5 things that feel passionate about.

Review lists of 5 things on board.

What do you think others think of Osgoode Hall

PROBE: parents, friends, potential employers?

1. Distinctly Osgoode [40 minutes]

A. COLLAGE EXERCISE – PUT IN TEAMS [20 minutes]

FOLD THE PAPER IN HALF. ON THE RIGHT HAND SIDE DO A COLLAGE THAT FOR YOU REPRESENTS THE BEST OF THE OSGOODE HALL EXPERIENCE

ON THE LEFT HAND SIDE DO A COLLAGE REPRESENTING THE EXPERIENCE YOU WOULD EXPECT TO HAVE AT ANOTHER LAW SCHOOL, U OF T, OR OTHER.

- DISCUSS COLLAGES. What is really unique?

B. OLYMPIC ATHELETES: Brainstorm - What distinguishes an Olympic athlete? LIST. [20 minutes]

In teams apply list to Osgoode Hall

- DISCUSS QUALITIES

2. Conclusion [15 minutes]

HAND RED DOTS.

Review lists on board of 5 things, collages, Olympic qualities – prioritize. What really matters for Osgoode and for Osgoode's future as you want to see it.

- DISCUSS
- Any other suggestions?

Interview Guide Faculty



Distinctly Osgoode Faculty Interview Guide

1. Introduction [10 minutes]

Purpose of Interview

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As you know, Osgoode Hall is in a period of renewal, a soon-to-be-completed newly renovated building and several new programs including two new academic chairs and a successful fundraising campaign. It is important to keep this momentum going by communicating effectively with all of Osgoode's audiences. Osgoode wants to communicate what differentiates the law school, where it is going and why. I want to explore with you today, what you see as unique about Osgoode Hall and what you see as its greatest strength as a law school, as a faculty, and as a community.

Background of respondent

Length of time as Osgoode
Previous experience
Role at Osgoode

2. Telling their stories of expectation [20 minutes]

Stories: What has brought you to Osgoode at this point in your life?

PROBE: Why did you choose Osgoode Hall?
What are the strengths of the Osgoode faculty?
What are the strengths of the student body?
The administration?
What role do you want to play within the Osgoode community?
What do you think being at Osgoode will mean for your career?
To you as a person?
Any other law school offer the same opportunities?
Challenges? Or offer other things as valuable or more valuable?
IF APPROPRIATE: How does Osgoode differ from your previous university?

1. Telling their stories of experience [15 minutes]

PROBE: OPEN ENDED: What were the surprises at Osgoode?

PROBE: Curriculum? Programs? Faculty? Students?
Culture?
Visions?

Have you changed? How?

What do you want your students to see as the value of a law school education?

What does Osgoode bring to that education that is unique?

What perspectives, skills, practices, attitudes from Osgoode do you want to be sure to impart to your students?
Any differences by year of study?

[10 minutes] Take a moment and think about Osgoode Hall and your experiences here -- LIST 5 things that you feel passionate about.

Review list of 5 things -- PROBE to be sure fully understood.

What do you think others think of Osgoode Hall ?

PROBE: Faculty at other law schools, corporations, government, not for profits, parents, others?

If you had to tell another law school professor what is distinctive about Osgoode what would you say? If the professor was considering Osgoode as a place of employment?
A parent? A student thinking of coming to Osgoode?

Conclusion [5 minutes]

- If there were one thing you could change at Osgoode Hall, what would it be? PROBE.

Thank you very much for your time and opinions.