

Foreword

This report summarizes the activities of the Open University during our first year on our new Raanana campus. Though the year began with complex budget difficulties and hardships associated with the move to Raanana and the adjustment to the new campus, it ends with hope for renewed growth and development of the University, on the path to fulfilling its academic and social goals.

As you may recall, this year we were forced to cut expenses drastically – we cut down on personnel, eliminated certain activities and invested in streamlining efforts while seeking sources to increase our income. A committee headed by Prof. Judith Gal-Ezer, set up to examine the University's organizational structure, proposed several changes. The recommendations of the Gal-Ezer Committee were accepted and most were implemented over the course of the year. The new organizational structure contributes to enhanced efficiency of the University administration and has engendered additional savings. As part of the new structure, we created a Strategic Forum whose task is to propose strategic plans for the OU with respect to its key activity areas. Four teams were established in the first stage to deal with the following issues: development policies pertaining to senior academic faculty, to programs of study and new courses, to distance education technologies; as well as a strategic plan for public relations and fundraising. In the near future, an additional team will be established to address strategic planning for OU teaching. In order to complete the university's organizational reform, the Gal-Ezer Committee recommended establishing a committee to address the structure of the academic administration. The committee, headed by Prof. Tamar Hermann, was appointed, and its recommendations have just been received. I therefore assume that next year we will discuss the Hermann Committee recommendations, along with those of the committee that is examining the status of the course coordinators that will be submitted shortly, and reach decisions regarding their implementation.

This year we continued our efforts to reach an agreement with the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC – *Vatat*) to base the OU budget on an output model. We proposed a new model; however, the issue is still being debated and agreement appears far off. At the same time, the PBC did partially respond to our budgetary needs by providing an addition to the ongoing budget as part of the current five-year plan.

As stated, this was our first year on our new campus in Raanana and extensive efforts were invested in completing the furnishing of the campus (that was significantly delayed because the major furniture contractor, who was on the verge of bankruptcy, fell severely behind in supplying the furniture), completing construction as well as procuring equipment. Fortunately, we received a \$1m donation from Mr. Stanley Chais that enabled us to complete the large auditorium which will be named for him.

In addition to activities centered on the physical aspects of the campus, we invested efforts in increasing academic and cultural activities with the aim of creating an active and vibrant campus. A team of faculty members headed by Dr. Joel Klemes volunteered to suggest ideas for activities. Most of these suggestions have been implemented and as a result we enjoy monthly concerts at noon and movies combined with lectures. There is also a sense of increased activity within the academic departments and at the Chais Center that





organized and hosted conferences, symposia and lectures on diverse topics. We also initiated cultural activities for residents of the area in collaboration with the municipality of Raanana.

This year several new programs of study were approved by various forums. The Council for Higher Education approved single- and dual-disciplinary undergraduate programs in History, as well as single-disciplinary undergraduate programs in Psychology and in Accounting with an expanded division of studies in Economics. The OU Academic Committee approved two graduate programs: in Social Psychology and in Cognitive Neuropsychology. In addition, a number of undergraduate programs were approved (listed under Teaching).

This year we continued our efforts to enhance access to the OU for Arabic-speaking students and the ultra-orthodox (*Haredi*) population. The Dotan Committee that examined the University's activities in the Arabic-speaking sector submitted its recommendations and we are preparing to implement them and hope to recruit the required funds. In addition, we have contacted a number of organizations that represent the ultra-orthodox population and in the near future we hope to sign an agreement to teach our courses to separate groups of men and women on the campus of the Or Yehuda College. We also signed an agreement with the Governmental Institute for Technology and Science Education (*Mahat*) according to which OU studies towards a degree in the Social Sciences: Emphasis on Management will be offered at ten *Mahat* colleges to enable their students to upgrade their degree to a Bachelor's degree.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish a happy and productive year to the entire Open University family and to express my hope that next year we will return to the path of growth and development that will enable us to best fulfill our academic role and our social mission.

Gershon Ben-Shakhar
President, The Open University