

March 30, 2010

TO: The UMBC Community

FR: President Freeman Hrabowski
Provost Elliot Hirshman

RE: Focusing Our Resources for Results: Update on Initiatives to Advance UMBC

Strategic planning is an important and longstanding component of UMBC's culture. Our focus on planning reflects the fundamental optimism and entrepreneurial spirit of our campus. Through planning and implementation, we have identified numerous challenges, proposed approaches for addressing these challenges, and significantly advanced UMBC's educational and research programs, campus life, reputation, and contributions to the State and nation. We want to give you a mid-year update on continuing planning activity and key strategic initiatives discussed at the University Retreat in August in the context of the current challenging fiscal environment.

Our foundational planning document, [Strategic Framework for 2016](#) identifies two over-arching goals and proposes approximately 35 sub-goals for accomplishing these broad goals. These two goals are as follows:

Provide a distinctive undergraduate experience
Continue to build research and graduate education.

Since the creation of our strategic plan in 2003, UMBC has made substantial progress toward achieving its over-arching goals and specific sub-goals represented in the Strategic Plan. We have also implemented a select set of the initiatives proposed through academic cluster plans put forward by academic departments and units. While much work remains to be done, increases in student retention, graduate enrollment, applied learning experiences, applied professional programs, research facilities, and administrative staff (and in a number of other areas) reflect the impact of our planning processes.

The Current Context

A series of national financial crises, beginning in fall 2008, dramatically re-shaped the U.S. economy and the overall fiscal climate for higher education. In Maryland, sharply declining state revenues led to state budget cuts, which led to budget cuts for the University System of Maryland and UMBC. Recognizing the significance of these events, the President's Council and the Council of Vice Presidents and Deans undertook a number of steps designed to respond to the new economic landscape. The motivation underlying all of these actions is our strong belief that strategic planning and priority setting become more, not less, important when resources are limited.

These steps included the review and revision of our principles and approaches for cost containment, and the construction of planning scenarios for current and anticipated

budget reductions. In addition, the Council of Vice Presidents and Deans, in consultation with the President, conducted a review of our strategic plan and its goals/sub-goals.

First, and most important, the Council of Vice Presidents and Deans affirmed our dual goals of providing a distinctive undergraduate experience and continuing to build research and graduate education. While the Council recognizes that pursuing these dual goals creates certain financial challenges, we believe that these goals position UMBC strongly within Maryland higher education by re-affirming our role as a research university and an Honors University.

Second, the Council recommended that three over-arching themes guide our pursuit of specific priorities and initiatives. These themes reflect feedback received from the UMBC community, as well as the strong sentiments of the Council. The first theme is to increase faculty hiring, and the second theme is to increase staff hiring. These themes reflect our recognition that a number of departments need more faculty and staff. The third theme is to maintain and increase our historical commitment to diversity.

Third, we have agreed that four specific priorities be pursued in the coming two to four years:

- **Student Retention and Graduation Rates**
- **Infrastructure for Research and Creative Activity**
- **Environment and Sustainability (Academic Programs and Practices)**
- **Campus Safety and Security**

As much as the current budget stringency permits, we have incorporated these priorities and their associated initiatives in the FY2010 budget for planning and steps toward execution. Continued progress on strategic priorities has been possible through a combination of focused attention, proactive cost management, and development of new revenue. Cost-management strategies already in progress or being considered for FY 2011 include the following: a hiring freeze and hiring exception process; reductions in merit aid and facilities renewal funds; utility savings through new procurement contracts; a Blue Ribbon Commission developing recommendations regarding the future of the Library; a work group assessing strategies to increase efficiencies in IT support; an effort to identify and reduce low-enrollment classes; and encouraging saving FY 2010 discretionary funds to apply to strategic priorities. On the revenue side, FY 2010 enrollment growth will help support strategic priorities going forward. Other new revenue opportunities include growth in out-of-state enrollment, growth in selected master's programs and summer/winter session offerings, and increased student retention. Increasing revenues from research grants and contracts and from fundraising will also be very important to our continued progress.

Consultative Process

We engaged in a series of discussions across the campus throughout 2009 to solicit advice and guidance regarding our continuing commitment to our strategic goals, the three over-arching themes, and the four priorities for the next two to four years. Four joint meetings of the Vice Presidents and Deans and the Faculty Senate's Executive and

Academic Planning and Budget Committees were held. The Provost and the Chairs of the four priority sub-committees met with the Non-exempt Staff Senate, the Professional Staff Senate, and the Academic Affairs Directors. Vice Presidents and Deans were asked to share information and gather counsel about the priorities within their divisions/colleges. Invitations were also extended to the members of the Student Government and the Graduate Student Association to meet and discuss the sub-committee reports. In addition, the priorities were shared for information and feedback with the 180 participants at the annual University Retreat in August.

These discussions were robust, collegial, and wide-ranging, and they resulted in substantial changes in the sub-committee reports on each of the four priorities. The full reports can be viewed [here](#).

What follows is an overview of the actions underway this year to make progress on the four priorities cited above.

Student Retention and Graduation Rates

Diane Lee (Chair), John Jeffries, Philip Rous, Janet Rutledge, Greg Simmons, Jack Suess

Basic description of the priority: We are committed to student success and to continued improvement in retention, four-year and six-year graduation rates, and Ph.D completion.

FY 2010 Objectives and Progress

- **Create College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences Teaching and Learning Environment (CASTLE).** This active-learning environment, modeled on the highly successful [CHEM 101 Discovery Center](#) will support students in foundational math, physics, and biology courses essential to undergraduate success in STEM majors. Space in the University Center is currently being renovated and equipped for CASTLE. The space accommodates 93 students. The first course redesigned for the CASTLE environment is pre-calculus. A new math lecturer will be hired to support this course, which is being offered on a pilot basis in the Spring 2010 semester. In addition, a proposal has been submitted to HHMI for a grant that would provide \$600,000 for four years to make curricular changes in additional courses and to support graduate teaching assistants who would be dedicated to CASTLE.
- **Convert funding for part-timers to funding for full-time lecture positions to enhance retention.** The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences and the College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences are piloting conversion of part-time faculty funds to salaries for additional lecturers who will also be involved in such retention activities as advising, linking with an Introduction to an Honors University course, teaching in a Collegiate Summer Institute or First- Year Seminar, or mentoring in a Living-Learning Community. The pilot is initially focusing on the departments of English and mathematics.

Support Ph.D. student progress toward degree. A recently implemented graduate matriculation fee will support a Ph.D. Completion Coordinator, [the Dissertation House program](#), graduate orientation and Commencement, and upgraded computers for program directors and staff who need access to the Student Administration system. The Graduate School is also focusing on supporting the progress of UMBC staff in doctoral programs.

- **Expand and continue proven student-success initiatives.** Approximately \$200,000 from the Exceptional By Example annual fund campaign was directed by the Provost and Deans to programs that support student success and retention (http://www.umbc.edu/oir/Reports/FYE%20Presentation_web_072007.ppt), including expansion of Introduction to an Honors University and math supplemental instruction sections, living-learning communities, writing in the disciplines, the undergraduate research awards, and the dissertation-completion awards. These additional funds also helped expand the work-study program for students with demonstrated financial need, and supported a student investment lab in the Department of Economics.

Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

Geoff Summers (Chair), Philip Rous, Jack Suess, Greg Simmons

Basic description of the priority: The purpose of this priority is to enhance UMBC's reputation as a national research university by facilitating research, scholarship, and creative activity.

FY 2010 Objectives and Progress

- **Establish a Research Initiative Venture Fund providing seed support for faculty research, scholarship, and creative activity across the campus.** The Vice President for Research has allocated \$125,000 across the colleges to support proposal submission through course buyouts, support for collection of pilot data, proposal preparation assistance, and summer stipends, etc. Additional support was provided to the Proteomics Center to buy an Electron Transfer Dissociation (ETD) attachment for a mass spectrometer, and one-time funds were allocated to the [Dresher Center for the Humanities](#), the Center for Aging Studies, and the [Center for Urban Environmental Research and Education](#).

- **Continue to build core research facilities serving a wide range of faculty.** Additional technical support has been committed to the [High-Performance Computing Facility](#) to encourage greater faculty use of this core research facility. Funding has been committed for a Ph.D-level researcher to work collaboratively with faculty users of the facility. In addition, approximately \$200,000 from start-up packages and external research funds were invested to add 20 nodes to the equipment, making it even more powerful. Also during the past year, \$450,000 of specially designated State funding was used to renovate the Porter Microscope Facility and to purchase an atomic force microscope suitable for research in life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering. Finally, UMBC has also collaborated with the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center, located at Spring Grove, on an NIH proposal to purchase and install a 3 Tesla f-MRI

system which, if successful, will greatly add to campus research capability in life-sciences, neurosciences, social sciences, and computer science and information systems.

- **Begin the process of indentifying one or two new centers leveraging State or federal funding.** As a result of the USM restructuring of the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute (UMBI), the Institute of Fluorescence (IoF) and its resources have been assigned to UMBC. The UMBC Institute of Fluorescence will enable existing IoF faculty to continue work in leading-edge fluorescence- and plasmonic-based phenomenon, in collaboration with UMBC faculty and students, to address clinical, biological, and industrial questions of great State, national, and international interest. The IoF's current intellectual property portfolio has attracted more than \$11M in grants and contracts and more than 40 patents and disclosures. An IoF spin-off company is expected to locate in the incubator at bwtech@UMBC.

Environment and Sustainability

Lynne Schaefer (Chair), Geoff Summers, Warren DeVries, John Jeffries

Basic description of the priority: 1) Raise UMBC's profile nationally in areas related to the environment through an integrated, campus-wide approach involving academic and non-academic departments. 2) Engage the campus fully in efforts to move toward climate neutrality.

FY 2010 Objectives and Progress

- **Raise UMBC's profile in areas related to the environment.** As a result of the USM restructuring of the University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute (UMBI), UMBC is a partner in the newly-formed Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET), located at the Columbus Center in Baltimore's Inner Harbor. Building on current assets of the existing Center of Marine Biotechnology (COMB), IMET will utilize the research, training, and technology-transfer capabilities of the partner institutions to conduct marine and environmental research that supports development of technologies to address protection and restoration of coastal marine systems and watersheds, sustainable use of their resources, and improvement of human health. Longer term, the goal of IMET is to establish Baltimore as the home of an internationally preeminent center for marine and environmental technologies.

- **Continue to support the development of Ph.D. program in Geography and Environmental Systems.** As part of a multi-year plan to support the Ph.D. program in GES, the program budget was supplemented with \$64,000 to support graduate assistantships.

- **Develop and begin to implement a campus Climate Action Plan.** The Climate Change Task Force submitted a Climate Action Plan in September 2009, as required by the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment signed by President Hrabowski in 2007. This document describes the campus's plans to reduce its carbon footprint over time. Many of the actions called for in the plan are under active

development. An annual Greenhouse Gas Inventory is among the monitoring tools outlined in the plan. The FY 2009 Greenhouse Gas Inventory, our third, shows a decline in total carbon emissions of nearly 7.5 percent since FY 2008. The decline is attributable to lower electricity usage, an increase in renewable energy credits, and a reduction in air travel.

- **Enter into an energy performance contract to finance and complete energy conservation initiatives.** The final stages of negotiating an energy-performance contract are underway with the State Board of Public Works. Under the contract, the State will finance a total of nine major energy conservation projects on campus at a cost of \$16M, with debt repayment coming from energy savings over 10 years.
- **Identify and pursue strategies to improve public transportation and car/van pool opportunities for students, faculty, and staff.** The Transportation Work Group of the Climate Change Task Force is developing a number of strategies, including use of Zips Cars, incentives for carpooling, and more efficient public transit routes.
- **Attract new businesses to the incubator and research park with a focus on environment and sustainability.** Through a partnership with the Maryland Clean Energy Center and Baltimore County, bwtech@UMBC Research and Technology Park has established an incubator for clean energy start-up businesses.
- **Develop track in Engineering focused on Environmental and Resource Engineering.** A position for a lecturer has been allocated to begin the process for developing an engineering track focused in environmental and water resource engineering.

Safety and Security

Nancy Young (Chair), Warren DeVries, Lynne Schaefer

Basic description of the priority: 1) Implement best policies and practices related to safety and security. 2) Foster a campus culture of safety by training and providing resources to leadership, faculty, students, and staff.

FY 2010 Objectives and Progress

- **Update emergency preparedness and pandemic response plans.** These plans have been updated to meet State and federal guidelines and now guide the work of the University Emergency Preparedness Executive Committee. Senior campus leaders have been trained to administer these plans. Nearly 100 people will receive 16 hours of training in a Mental Health First Aid certificate program offered in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.
- **Create an emergency response guide for students, faculty, and staff.** The Division of Administration & Finance and the Division of Student Affairs funded a quick-reference, desktop guide that has been distributed across the campus.

- **Create emergency response signage.** Interior building signs with evacuation information have been designed and will be installed soon. The signage will be procured through a pilot reverse-auction website on which a project is posted and companies bid to drive down the cost.
- **Expand Counseling Center capacity through development of a supervised counseling internship program.** Funds have been allocated to establish an internship training supervisor position to mentor psychology graduates seeking training in counseling.

Conclusion

Finally, we want to thank everyone who has been involved in the campus's strategic planning process, and we invite your continued thoughts or responses. We will continue to keep the campus updated.