

February 26, 2014

Dear University Colleagues:

When I came to Delaware last year, one of the things that impressed me most about the University was the Path to Prominence, which had so effectively distilled the University's values and priorities and outlined the way forward. Now it is time to build on all that has been accomplished and look ahead once more.

Today the challenges facing higher education-and the University of Delaware-are demanding and wide-ranging, such as improving college access and affordability, preparing a competitive workforce, and applying our scholarship in a way that has profound impact on the issues that demand our attention.

Today we launch the Strategic Planning Initiative for the University, with the appointment of an Executive Committee and the formation of three working groups. I am grateful to those individuals in our community who have agreed to take on this critical work, and I ask you to consider volunteering to be part of this important process.

Leading the effort will be an Executive Committee chaired by *Charles Riordan*, vice provost for research. Members include

*James Jones*, professor of psychology and director of the Center for the Study of Diversity;

*Debra Hess Norris*, Henry Francis du Pont Chair in Fine Arts and chair of the Department of Art Conservation;

*Ismat Shah*, professor of materials science with a joint appointment in physics and astronomy;

*Lynn Snyder-Mackler*, Alumni Distinguished Professor of Physical Therapy; and

*Donald Sparks*, S. Hallock du Pont Professor of Plant and Soil Sciences and director of the Delaware Environmental Institute.

In addition, working groups will address three major topics:

- **Sustaining and Accelerating the Advance**, to assess the current Path to Prominence and identify successes and unfinished initiatives. Co-chaired by

*Rick Andrews*, deputy dean of the Alfred Lerner College of Business and Economics, and *Bahira Trask*, professor of human development and family studies;

- **Great Debates, Grand Challenges, Big Ideas**, to identify areas of state, national or global consequence where UD is best positioned, now or in the future, to engage through research, teaching and service initiatives, as well as through new and existing alliances. Co-chaired by

*Paul Brewer*, professor of communication and acting director of the Center for Political Communication, and

*Nancy Targett*, dean of the College of Earth, Ocean, and Environment; and

- **Models for the New American Research University**, to reflect on best practices and emerging opportunities and to consider new, innovative and effective options concerning institutional organization, curriculum delivery and cost containment.

Co-chaired by

*Kristi Kiick*, deputy dean of the College of Engineering, and

*Matt Kinservik*, associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The Executive Committee will assign two liaisons to each working group who will be responsible for its overall process, coordination and success. Initially, the executive committee will meet with the Provost's office bi-weekly to insure a successful launch.



Domenico Grasso  
Provost

The timeframe for the Strategic Planning Initiative is an aggressive one. A draft plan is expected to be delivered to me and the president in January 2015, with final approval in February 2015.

For this project to be valuable and successful, we must have thoughtful, substantive input from individuals across this University. I invite you to consider volunteering to serve on one of the working groups or to nominate a colleague to serve. If you are interested or would like to suggest a candidate, please send an email to [ud-provost@udel.edu](mailto:ud-provost@udel.edu) and indicate "Strategic Planning Initiative" in the subject line and identify, in order of preference, the three working groups on which you are willing to serve.

I hope you'll dare to join us in this vital initiative that will help shape this great University's future.

With all best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Domenico Grasso".

**Domenico Grasso**  
*Provost*