**CONCEPT PAPER FROM INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE:**

**OBJECTIVE (A): Ensure a diverse campus community and welcoming environment.**

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Objective being addressed in this concept paper is how UD, in the context of administrative and infrastructure units, can ensure a diverse campus community and welcoming environment.

In an early meeting, the Infrastructure Committee worked to define key elements of an educational institution's infrastructure that could support (or hinder) a University's mission. The committee then established a list of infrastructure units in place at the University of Delaware and implemented a plan to solicit feedback from as many of the known "infrastructure" units at UD as possible. These meetings were held during the Fall 2014 semester and collected feedback and input from more than 1500 UD staff from 33 units as well as from Assistant Professors and College Business Officers from all of the Colleges. Supervisors and director feedback was collected separately to enable a more free flow exchange of ideas at meetings. Everyone was encouraged to share anonymous input and ideas by sending campus mail to the chairs of the infrastructure committee. The meeting format engaged participants to consider four questions about what UD can do to: A) Ensure a diverse campus community and welcoming environment; B) Systematically expand innovation and capacity for research; C) Recruit and retain the best faculty, staff, and students; and D) Enrich the undergraduate experience in and out of the classroom. Summaries of each of the specific ideas and suggestions coming from each unit were then shared back with the unit. The committee reviewed all of the input collected and identified common themes around each of the four topics. In reviewing all of the materials and considering the issues that were raised, the committee felt that the feedback was best presented as six (rather than four) objectives with a series of specific, often measurable tasks, that support each objective or that support multiple objectives (newly added topics are E) Improve campus climate by (breaking down silos and) fostering a culture of collaboration and creation towards a common goal; and F) Invest in physical facilities and information technology to foster community, creativity, productivity, and to inspire and enable excellence).

LESSONS LEARNED and COMMON THEMES

The goal of achieving greater diversity was supported by every unit and individual providing input to the committee. Where views diverged was in how successful UD has been in realizing this goal. Perhaps unsurprisingly, units with nondiverse demographics had a different view than other units in terms of the benefit of investing effort and resources to improve diversity. Many found the concept of diversity itself too general and ill-defined to speak in concrete terms about steps UD might take to address the issue. For example, does the concept include diversity of thought and political perspectives, in addition to race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion? There was a clear sense that UD limited its ability to attract students and employees of color as well as women so long as there remained few role models in positions of power at the most senior administrative and faculty levels. While there appear to have been recent improvement in the diversity of entering freshman, there was concern that support services for non-majority students remains uneven in quality and scattered across campus. In the absence of more centralized and coordinated support for minority and international students, individuals from these groups will feel less welcomed. The lack of a coherent plan of support for diverse individuals as members of a University community means that the promised benefits of a diverse campus (e.g., creating global citizens, fostering cross-cultural and racial collaboration, and challenging world views) are not being realized. Separately, all of the input regarding the physical beauty of our campus was positive.

STRATEGIC THEMES

Discussions on diversity coalesced around three major themes and action paths. First, conversations around diversity need to move beyond isolated offices tasked with addressing equity and inclusion. Many felt the need for on-going and campus-wide dialogue—initiated, supported and sustained by the president—that leads to a clear definition of diversity endorsed by all University stakeholders and the development of a comprehensive plan on how the pursuit of diversity might inform and impact every dimension of UD academic, administrative, and student life activity. Second, there must be improved outreach and recruiting to prospective students from diverse backgrounds and a mentoring structure to facilitate their success if they come to UD. The creation of a centralized facility to support student success and diversity (mentioned in our committee's recommendations related to Objective F: Facilities) would significantly improve UD's ability to create and support a diverse community of students. There was a sentiment that service learning (for students) and community-engagement (for faculty and staff) opportunities are an effective means to harness the enthusiasm among the current community to come together, learn about diverse perspectives, and support a greater good.

TASKS

**A.1) Establish a definition for diversity in the context of our campus community and society.**

**A.2) Create an ongoing and active dialogue among the entire campus community (through a range of activities initiated and attended by the President) regarding the role of diverse backgrounds, experiences, roles, and thought in supporting the University mission.**

**A.3) Increase outreach to regional secondary school students of all socioeconomic backgrounds, with a special focus on minorities and English Language Learners, through increased participation in information sessions and via the establishment of UD mentoring programs for their students.**

**A.4) Create at least five (over the next five years) service learning opportunities for students, and community-engagement opportunities for faculty and staff, through specific projects that tie UD to the all of the communities in Delaware.** *This Task also supports Objective C: recruiting and retaining the best people as well as Objective D: enriching the undergraduate experience.*