**Delaware Will Shine Concept Papers**

**Models of the New American Research University – Resource Analysis Subgroup**

**Connecting Resource Analysis to Mission, Vision and Values**

**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Resources at the University of Delaware are varied and complex. In addition to the obvious financial resources, we also include people (university staff, students and alumni), our facilities and infrastructure, our brand, our commitments of time, and community relationships. Resource choices should be driven by a collective understanding of our institutional mission, vision and values. As a university, we are continually making choices about faculty hires, teaching workload, class sizes, student support services, research support, and capital projects, among others. With limited resources, there are inevitable tradeoffs to be made among different highly-valued goals. A shared understanding of our goals and principles would allow for more consistent choices to be made throughout the institution, and make it easier to communicate the rationale for those decisions. However, during our discussions with stakeholder groups across the University, we have learned that many faculty and staff question choices about resource allocation. Behind this is a larger sense that we do not have a clearly articulated mission, vision or values that drive institutional decisions.

Our current mission statement describes a rather generic research university. Adding some specifics would allow us to describe what distinguishes UD from other universities. If we understand and can articulate what we are good at, and where we provide the most value to others, we can make resource choices that will serve to build excellence in those activities. These specifics may come through a combination of a vision statement, a set of institutional values, and a series of implementation plans that supplement the strategic plan.

Some questions that we need to ask ourselves:

* Do we want to focus on increasing our metrics for quality of the incoming class, or metrics for graduation rates of at-risk students after they arrive? To put it another way, do we aspire to higher rankings on the US News scale, or the Washington Monthly scale? If our priority is enrolling students with higher SAT scores, we need to devote more resources to merit aid and the Honors program; if it is to help at-risk students, we need to invest more in need-based aid and student support services.
* Do we want to be recognized as innovators in curriculum delivery? We have a reputation in active learning methods, and we value their impact on student outcomes, but this typically costs more than courses in traditional lecture format. How do we compare the value of innovative and traditional approaches?
* What role should we play for students from the State of Delaware? If we increase enrollment of Delaware residents, we can create more opportunity within the State, but we will reduce revenue, decrease average SAT scores, and increase expenditures on need-based aid.
* Should we be more involved with local communities? Several stakeholder groups discussed interests in greater community engagement, for example, through increased interactions with the K-12 system, or more emphasis on community-based research and outreach. However, it is not clear how broad or deep this interest runs, and whether it is a higher priority than more traditional teaching and research activities.
* What should be the relative emphasis on investments in buildings and spending on faculty or staff? Should we strive to live within the space we have if it means that we can redirect resources to hire more people?
* Do we want to set aside additional funding for research to strengthen core facilities, provide bridge funds, establish meaningful seed grants for new initiatives, and support development of large proposals?
* Can we identify programs or activities at UD that do not make important contributions to our mission? Should we stop investing resources in such activities?

All of these issues require agreement on our fundamental mission, a vision of what UD should look like in 10 or 20 years, and a set of shared institutional values. This concept paper includes feedback that we have received from stakeholder groups over the last several months, and lays out a path for continued effort to develop a shared understanding of our mission, vision and values that can help to guide resource choices.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

The Path to Prominence (P2P) established an institutional commitment to a set of goals and priorities that had broad faculty support, and there has been significant progress toward those goals. While it provided focal points for resource investments, P2P did not provide criteria for making choices between competing alternatives that fit within the focus areas. As we work to update P2P, we should aim to establish more specific plans and measures, and those will drive choices about resources. A statement of mission, vision and values cannot achieve this alone, but it can be the foundation for frequently updated implementation plans that demonstrate how our priorities are reflected in our budgets and our academic pursuits.

P2P says that our “overall path and destination” is “to fulfill the mission of the University and to be recognized around the world as one of the great public institutions of higher education in America.” To the degree that we measure our success in terms that traditionally define great universities, we may put ourselves at a disadvantage. For example, experience has shown how hard it is to make significant moves forward in total research funding, relative to other universities. The major state flagship universities, with substantially larger enrollments and research programs than ours, run on different models of teaching and staffing. It is not clear that we can maintain our traditions of student access to faculty, innovation in pedagogy, and discovery learning opportunities while also increasing our external funding and keeping student costs low.

The alternative is to define our own terms of excellence. What are the strengths and characteristics that distinguish UD from other universities? Can we establish a vision for a mid-sized university that will be a model for others to follow? In our stakeholder and committee meetings, we heard many comments about strengths at UD that are sources of pride among faculty, staff, students, and the broader community. Identifying those strengths and building on them is our best opportunity for attaining recognition for what we do.

**NATIONAL and GLOBAL TRENDS**

The current stresses on higher education are well known, and any discussion of mission and vision must be held in this context. The threats to the traditional model come from changing student demographics, decreased funding at the state and federal levels, Baumol’s cost disease, and emerging competition from online courses and new institutions. The opportunities for the residential undergraduate institution are to offer learning experiences with clear value that cannot be obtained remotely. In a changing world, we should not place too much emphasis on comparisons with institutions that have achieved success in the past. We can learn from them, but we also need to think about new directions where we can lead.

**STRATEGIC THEMES**

A frequently heard theme in our discussions with stakeholder groups is that we have no collective vision of our priorities or what distinguishes UD from other universities. When asked what they believe UD does especially well, there are several repeated themes:

* High quality education at a moderate cost to students.
* Many excellent research programs that provide opportunities to students at all levels.
* Focus on students. We keep classes small, by comparison to most public flagship research universities; faculty are accessible to students; we provide many co-curricular learning opportunities such as undergraduate research and study abroad. Students are well prepared when they leave.
* Innovations in pedagogy and student support. We are nationally known as leaders in problem-based learning and active learning, and ISELab is a tangible expression of our commitment to innovation in pedagogy. NUCLEUS and living-learning communities are examples of how we integrate curriculum with student support.
* Statewide stature. UD is widely respected by residents of the state, and seen as a destination for students.

Areas where shortcomings were seen include:

* Diversity. We need to diversify faculty, staff and the student body, and establish a more welcoming campus,
* Service to the State and local communities, for example by doing more service activities in the community, and serving non-traditional students.
* Central support for research. Core facilities, bridge funding, seed funding, proposal support, and research development have been discussed as areas that need more support.
* Communication and transparency about resource choices.
* RBB. The system is not designed to align resource flow with mission, vision and values.
* Administration. There is a widespread perception that administration takes up more resources than it should.
* Positioning UD graduates as strong candidates for employment in all sectors.

**SHORT-TERM TASKS**

The University needs to define a mission and vision that clarifies our role as a leading mid-sized research university that places a high value on serving undergraduate and graduate students. Stakeholder meetings suggest that there is a great deal of pride in providing a high quality education with many features (innovation in teaching, access to faculty, strong mentoring) that are more typical of smaller schools, while also having resources and breadth of opportunity of a major research university. The questions to address will be how to allocate resources to build greater strength along each of these dimensions. Given that the total resources available are not likely to grow significantly, this must include a discussion of where we can eliminate or modify programs that are not well aligned with the vision and mission.

Resource decisions are made at many levels, by academic and administrative leaders and managers. A clear mission and vision is needed to ensure that these choices are aligned to support common goals, and to provide a framework for communicating the reasons for specific choices. There also needs to be a discussion of how RBB can be modified to direct resources to support the mission and vision. For example, the Honors program grew dramatically this year, but no resources were shifted to support the additional costs of teaching students in smaller classes. Algorithms alone cannot be relied on to capture the full complexity of these needs.

Measures of success must also be established. These should include both process and outcome measures, and they should reflect the full range of activities that we value. Thus, when we compare ourselves to other institutions, we should seek indicators of the student experience (class size, number of students in undergraduate research), as well as research funding. Some creativity will be needed to identify measures where we can obtain data, both to measure internal change and for external comparisons.

**LONG-TERM TASKS**

Continued evaluation of resource allocation will be essential. The measures developed are a good start, but qualitative reviews, and a review of the measures themselves, will be needed after some initial experience.