

Draft Ideas for the University of Baltimore Academic Plan (November 6, 2012)

Purpose of Draft

This document is presented as an early draft of an Academic Plan for the Division of Academic Affairs at UB. It represents an effort of the academic deans to capture ideas and opportunities for the academic initiatives at UB. The intent is that it will serve as important focal point for discussion and reflection.

Summary of Major Initiatives

Innovation has been critical to the success of the most highly respected individuals, organizations, and countries. Our current environment is no different. The economic crisis, shifting and declining funding models, and increased competition are all driving the need for innovative thought and leadership in higher education. Universities can be a powerful force in leading constructive change for society and have the capacity to create a more stable foundation for our world—its wealth, health and happiness. With formation of an innovative mission and culture, the University of Baltimore (UB) can drive such a transformation.

Six major initiatives have been identified. The first three center on our students, our programs and the context in which students live and work. They focus on the importance of advancing student success; developing multi-disciplinary and integrative programs to ensure students are prepared for complex global challenges; and leveraging the powerful impact the digital revolution is having on student learning and their lives, work and culture. The remaining three initiatives build on our existing strengths. The focus is on advancing research and scholarship that has impact in our disciplines, classrooms, and respective practice communities; strengthening our engagement with the greater Baltimore community; and expanding our portfolio of programs to include continuing professional education. Each of these initiatives is highlighted below.

GOAL #1: UB will be recognized for advancing student performance and career success through its learner-centered focus and excellence in teaching.

Impact: UB faculty will embrace quality instruction as a hallmark of UB and of their work.

GOAL #2: UB will provide multi-disciplinary academic programs to ensure responsiveness to 21st century global challenges within and across professions and geographic boundaries.

Impact: UB will be recognized for integrated and interdisciplinary thinking, learning, and curricula.

GOAL #3: UB will launch a university-wide initiative to understand the profound effect of the evolving digital world on our lives and harness its power for learning.

Impact: UB will be internationally recognized as a hub for knowledge, learning, innovation and understanding about how technology and the digital world are impacting life and work.

GOAL #4: UB will advance research, scholarly, and creative activities that have impact and reflect UB's commitment to knowledge that works.

Impact: UB will be recognized for meaningful scholarly and creative activities unconstrained by traditional paradigms and inclusive of scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching.

GOAL #5: UB will strengthen its engagement with the greater Baltimore community in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Impact: UB will be distinguished among universities for its commitment and contribution to community partnerships and collaborations aimed at improving student learning, engaging stakeholders, and enhancing the quality of life in Baltimore and beyond.

GOAL #6: UB faculty will offer continuing professional education programs that advance knowledge and expertise in Baltimore and beyond.

Impact: UB will be recognized for its accessible, continuing professional education programs that grow enrollment, strengthen brand identity, and generate non-tuition revenue.

Setting the Stage

It is clear that in 2012 higher education is in a state of flux, even crisis; the future roles and contributions of universities have seldom experienced such uncertainty. To be relevant, the academy must reflect upon change and engage in transformation spurred by several realizations:

1. Higher education is being scrutinized today from many quarters. How do we increase the critical and creative thinking skills of our students? How do we engage them in the “process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and/or evaluation information gather from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasons, or communication, as a guide to belief and action?”¹
2. Competition is growing among providers of higher education as public, private and now, for-profit, institutions offer higher education degrees focused on both academic and professional learning. How do we differentiate ourselves in a crowded, competitive marketplace? How do we become *distinctive*?
3. Access to knowledge is increasing at an exponential rate as the digital world expands and provides information wherever and whenever the user wants it via the web. How do we use technology to improve access, customize learning, and improve student learning?
4. Modalities of learning are growing as we understand more about pathways to learning. How do we continue to transform the traditional lecture style format of learning into a more dynamic learning environment that embraces applied real world experience and practice, service learning, and strategies to promote critical thinking, creative problem solving, and communication skills?
5. Linking education to careers is increasingly seen as important to legislators, economic development proponents, students and parents. How do we leverage UB’s strong focus on professional programs to give us a strategic advantage in responding to the education-career connection?
6. At no point in time in our history has the cost of education been so scrutinized. Policymakers, legislators, parents and students are calling for greater accountability, increased access and lower costs. How do we innovate in cost-effective ways? How do we eliminate bottlenecks to graduation? How do we design programs that ensure students graduate with career-ready skills? How do we accelerate degree completion and time to graduation?

The world of higher education is being significantly challenged by realizations such as those outlined above yet, at the same time, colleges and universities have proven to be conservative when it comes to embracing new models for the academy, new strategies for effective learning, and new expectations for the relevance of higher education in advancing life quality.

It is certain that the pace of change in higher education will be sustained, if not increase, over time. Any response to this change, to be effective, must be more than a one-time plan. Instead, responsiveness to change (and the ability to take advantage of opportunities associated with change) requires an ongoing, sustained *commitment to a culture of innovation*. Such a culture recognizes the need for ongoing assessment and reflection, the ability to take risks, and changes in our customary organizational process, systems and reward structures. The culture of innovation further necessitates developing a level of comfort with dynamic and evolving programs of study, teaching pedagogy, expanded community partnerships, and more explicit attention to student learning and achievement.

¹ M. Scriven and R. W. Paul, *Critical Thinking as Defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking*, 1987.

GOAL # 1: UB will be recognized for advancing student performance and career success through its learner-centered focus and excellence in teaching.

Context

Never before has student learning in higher education institutions been as questioned as it is today. Universities can no longer rely on grade point averages as measures of learning success. Instead, they must create ongoing and sustainable systems to routinely assess student learning, teaching pedagogies, and program design in order to advance student learning outcomes to ensure that student learning is relevant to the 21st century. The ultimate measure of success is career readiness and placement.

Key Strategies

1. Develop and implement a master teachers program, in cooperation with CELTT and other professional organizations, through which faculty – including adjuncts – can develop strong, state-of-the art pedagogical skills.
2. Require that all academic programs which utilize extensive web-based instruction participate in systematic program where courses will be reviewed and, where appropriate revised, based upon the best practice of Quality Matters or a similar development program.
3. Enhance student learning through applied, experiential and service learning initiatives.
 - a. Require each student, undergraduate and graduate, to complete an applied learning experience (e.g., internship, global field study, service learning project, law school clinic, etc.).
 - b. Develop service-learning and experiential learning teaching expertise among the faculty.
 - c. Create campus infrastructure to support service-learning and campus-community partnerships organized around instruction.
4. Create and promote an array of accelerated programs (4+1, 3+2) to support student progress into graduate studies at UB.
5. Recognize and reward teaching effectiveness and innovation (define it, measure it, reward it) in annual performance reviews and establish new and expanded awards for teaching excellence in different forms of instruction (e.g., on-line learning, service learning, experiential learning, undergraduate research).
6. Create a culture of assessment that fosters ongoing continuous quality improvement in academic programs and in teaching practice, including mentoring and other initiatives not linked to performance review.
7. Substantially advance student retention, progression and completion through program specific admissions and orientations, early alert systems, and structured pathways and sequencing to graduation.

Impact: UB faculty will embrace quality instruction as a hallmark of UB and of their work.

GOAL #2: UB will provide multi-disciplinary academic programs to ensure responsiveness to 21st century global challenges within and across professions and geographic boundaries.

Context

The world's economies are increasing interconnected. The major problems facing the world—in economic, social and political realms—are multi-dimensional in nature. Therefore students must have the capacity to function in a global world where problems, issues and opportunities typically have geographic impact beyond the boundaries of individual nations and that transcend individual disciplines. To be relevant in the 21st century, higher education institutions must break apart disciplinary silos and create cross-disciplinary learning, scholarship, practice and problem-solving. No one discipline can offer the knowledge or expertise to resolve problems and build solutions.

Key Strategies

1. Require that any School or College proposal for a new academic degree program be reviewed by the academic leadership for the purpose of identifying opportunities for curricular and programmatic partnerships—with the intent of substantially strengthening cross-disciplinary learning.
2. Create and expand professional program array at UB, building interdisciplinary programs from a base of existing curricular offerings across schools and colleges.
3. Devise integrated learning that expands student learning pathways and multi-disciplinary learning opportunities using existing curricula.
4. Expand students' global awareness and cultural competencies through coursework in foreign languages, world cultures, and international disciplines. This includes providing a menu of international options for student by expanding global field study courses, student exchanges and global internships.
5. Increase international student enrollment to help drive enrollment, promote better cultural awareness and increase mutual understanding in the classroom. A related strategy is to increase the number of strategic partnerships with universities in other countries to promote faculty and student exchanges, collaborative programs, etc.

Impact: UB will be recognized for integrated and interdisciplinary thinking, learning, and curricula.

GOAL #3: UB will launch a university-wide initiative to understand the profound effect of the evolving digital world on our lives and harness its power for learning.

Context

Technological innovations are changing how we live, work, and use leisure time, and how we engage with one another. The evolution of technology in the past two decades has caused a deep cultural revolution changing all modes and patterns of our lives, and hence it is bound to lead to dramatic changes in education. The resulting change to our educational system is inevitable from how we understand this impact on our lives to how we teach, what we teach, and how we best prepare are students to respond to a fast-changing social-cultural-technological world.

Strategies

The pace of change is so fast that most sectors are in a reactive mode, trying to capture technological and digital change and adapt to it. Though the specific strategies have yet to be developed, the central questions to be examined in this focal area through scholarship, teaching and engagement will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Analyzing how the digital world is changing human communication and connectedness across time, geographic space, and other dimensions.
- Exploring how the digital world is changing opportunities and strategies for learning, sharing knowledge and creating new knowledge.
- Determining how the digital world is changing productivity, commerce and entrepreneurship.
- Studying how privacy, intellectual property, litigation, forensic science, national security and public policy are being transformed by the digital world.
- Examining how new technologies in the digital world will drive cutting-edge instruction and enhance student learning, retention, progression, graduation and job placement.
- Exploring how artistic and creative expression will change as the result of the digital world.

Impact: UB will be internationally recognized as a hub for knowledge, learning, innovation and understanding about how technology and the digital world are impacting life and work, and creating dramatic change.

GOAL #4: UB will advance research, scholarly, and creative activities that have impact and reflect UB's commitment to knowledge that works.

Context

The faculty is the primary driver of success in achieving academic excellence. They are the experts, they are the teachers. They add significant value to our students and their respective employers with world-class teaching and mentoring. They advance our community at large by generating knowledge and providing leadership in this pursuit. Attracting and retaining a high-quality, diverse faculty requires fostering an environment that supports scholarships related to discovery, practice and pedagogy.

Key Strategies

1. Develop mechanisms where faculty can more regularly share **their research, scholarship and creative activity**. This would include opportunities to discuss research at all stages from conceptualization to reporting of results.
2. Create a system of **research support grants** for the purpose of assisting faculty to develop new lines of inquiry and preparation of proposals for extramural grants and contracts. Grant recipients will be expected to share their preliminary plans and then their research findings in a public research symposia setting.
3. Engage research **centers on campus as key leverage points** for research, ensuring that the resources, talents, and capacity of these centers can be utilized by a wider set of faculty and students to support research, scholarship and creative activity.
4. Expand **travel funds** for scholarship.

Impact: UB will be recognized for meaningful scholarly and creative activities unconstrained by traditional paradigms and inclusive of scholarship of discovery, integration, application, and teaching.

GOAL #5: UB will strengthen its engagement with the greater Baltimore community in teaching, scholarship, and service.

Context

The University of the 21st century cannot be an “ivory tower” operating remotely from the community and world in which it is located. Real learning today melds theory and practice, classroom and community, identifying problems and creating solutions. Communities and universities, when interconnected with effective partnerships, can yield powerful ideas and actions to transform people, their opportunities, and outcomes.

The University of Baltimore embraces engagement with our surrounding community, greater Baltimore region and the State of Maryland. Sometimes, our engagement is even broader, expanding to national and international arenas. Our university is committed to a sustainable strategy of engagement—what could be termed ***The UB Commitment***.

Key Strategies

1. Engage and integrate the practice communities in the design and delivery of academic programs to ensure relevancy, currency, and future orientation of curricula.
2. Expand community-based service learning as an element of significant number of courses across the disciplines and across the schools and colleges at UB.
3. Disseminate knowledge. UB faculty, along with centers like the Jacob France Center and the Schaefer Center for Public Policy, will regularly **create and disseminate practical knowledge** that informs community decisions and contributes to the revitalization of Baltimore.
4. Institutionalize focal points for university-community engagement.
5. Bring together diverse components of the greater Baltimore and Maryland communities to analyze the status of the overall health and vitality of our community, region and state, as well as to explore strategies to solve problems and take advantage of emerging opportunities.
6. UB will be a steward in its own neighborhood and community where through the growth and development of our campus infrastructure and the energy of our faculty, staff and students, UB can model and support community revitalization in a localized context.

Impact: UB will be differentiated from other universities in its commitment and contribution to community partnerships and collaborations aimed at improving student learning, engaging stakeholders, and enhancing the quality of life in Baltimore and beyond.

GOAL #6: UB faculty will offer continuing professional education programs that advance knowledge and expertise in Baltimore and beyond.

Content

UB has a few notable examples of continuing education programs that advance the skills and knowledge of practitioners. These would include the Ropers Victims Assistance Academy, the Certified Public Manager Program, and the newly launched partnership between the Merrick School and the Transnational Education Management Group. Yet despite these laudable programs, UB is far from maximizing its potential in delivering cutting-edge professional development programs. To advance itself, its visibility in the community and its relevance to alumni, UB must expand non-traditional yet robust offerings that focus on immediate learning needs of adult professionals who seek to remain current in their field and gain expertise in new fields of study.

Key Strategies

1. The four UB Schools and Colleges will create high powered continuing education programs to empower professionals to remain current in their fields and support community members to advance in their personal goals. These programs will strengthen leadership within the nonprofit, corporate, public and legal sectors our community and state.
2. UB shall develop and sustain ongoing virtual relationships with alumni in all of its programs with the intent of providing ongoing professional knowledge and support across their career span. Such relationships will encourage utilization of professional education opportunities offered at UB as well as strengthening the relationship between alumni, the university, and the school from which they graduated.
3. Create a campus “infrastructure” to support and advance continuing professional education programs, including functions related to marketing, registration, certification of attendance, award of certificates, and market studies to examine market demand for new continuing education programs.

Impact: UB will be recognized for its accessible, continuing professional education programs that grow enrollment, strengthen brand identity, and generate non-tuition revenue.