

**TO:** Peter Toran, Vice President of Planning and External Affairs, and the Members of the Strategic Planning Coordinating Committee

**FROM:** University of Baltimore Staff Senate  
Giordana Segneri, Chair

**DATE:** Oct. 13, 2013

**RE:** Feedback to the UB Strategic Plan – August 2013 Draft

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The University of Baltimore Staff Senate met during a special session on Oct. 11, 2013, specifically to discuss feedback to the strategic plan. The product of that session and of feedback solicited of all Senate members through our 11 Senators is indicated below, organized by each of the five goals proposed in the draft plan.

In addition, the Senate commends the authors of the plan for their careful attention to aligning the University's goals to UB's academic priorities, to the University System of Maryland in 2020 themes and to the Maryland State Plan for Postsecondary Education. We also very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss the plan thoroughly and to contribute this response.

Should you have any questions or require any clarification, please don't hesitate to contact Giordana Segneri, chair of the Senate, at [gsegneri@ubalt.edu](mailto:gsegneri@ubalt.edu) or 410.837.5773.

**Goal 1: The University of Baltimore will enhance student success and career readiness through programmatic innovation, ongoing assessment of student learning and expanding student support services.**

Our membership indicated—through their participation in the Senate's August 2013 survey—that staff growth has not been commensurate with recent student and faculty growth. The objectives under Goal 1 all require administrative support that goes beyond *academic* support staff, and this dependence on staff should be acknowledged and stated.

The draft plan highly emphasizes innovation, which is challenging without the appropriate staff; over the past half-decade, given the fiscal climate and the lack of human resources, departments have been innovative and will continue to do so, but their ability to do so without increased staff resources should be recognized and rewarded.

Success measures should include some sort of assessment related to measuring staff impact on student and faculty success.

We also recommend that student retention—so critical to the health and well-being of the University and so often a challenge, given our nontraditional student population—be included as an objective and not simply as a success measure.

Finally, we'd like clarification on Objective 1.4: Is the mention of a coherent co-curricular program indicative of a single, specific program that's being developed? Otherwise, we recommend indicating integration and coherence across programs, plural, as there's a

significant need for communication and collaboration across departments offering these types of initiatives.

**Goal 2: The University of Baltimore will strategically grow enrollment in support of student success and in response to market demand, consistent with Maryland's 55 percent college completion goal.**

We are confused about the concepts expressed in this goal, especially since growth in enrollment can be perceived as inversely correlated to student success; we're not sure why you would grow enrollment *in support of* student success. Can this concept be clarified?

Here, too, as in Goal 1, we'd like to see more attention on retention and not just on enrollment growth; we recommend retention be reflected in an objective.

The mention of "launching innovative, accessible and relevant continuing education offerings" as the final bullet in the strategies list seems like an afterthought, and since continuing education students would not actually be contributing to UB's enrollment, we feel this item is more appropriate in Goal 1 or, preferably, in Goal 4. If it's truly an area into which UB wants to expand, however, it should be listed as an objective and not simply as a strategy.

Finally, this goal is missing the ever-critical staff support necessary for enrollment growth, which should be included as a strategy or a success measure.

**Goal 3: The University of Baltimore will enhance its commitment to innovation across the institution.**

Innovation is difficult to achieve when constituents are constantly reacting, because of limited resources, rather than being proactive. We feel this goal needs to include a commitment to incentivizing innovation, and it also needs to take a more inclusive approach. Why should innovation be limited to pedagogy, which is not applicable to staff across the institution (as specified in the goal)? For that reason, Objective 3.1 needs to cast a wider net. We also need a success measure that supports this objective.

To further encourage innovation, we also need to be committed to celebrating our successes as an institution. An objective or strategy in support of this goal should reference publically recognizing, publicizing, celebrating and rewarding our innovative efforts. This could easily be added to the first bullet under strategies and also contributes to growing enrollment, as celebrating our innovations serves as a recruitment strategy.

We also need to support staff who are interested in being innovators; their path to success must be facilitated—and that includes offering time release (and release from responsibilities, so their work isn't just piling up in the interim) on par with what faculty receive—to truly take advantage of grant opportunities. Please consider this for the fourth bullet under strategies.

Given the emphasis placed on the University's digital initiative at convocation this year, that initiative shouldn't simply be a success measure; it should be an objective—especially since we've understood it's a multiyear undertaking—or, at the very least, a strategy.

We have concerns about the wording for Objective 3.4. Instead of developing more administrative processes (for whatever purpose), shouldn't we focus on being innovative in implementing our processes? Perhaps this objective should be rephrased "Encourage innovation and exploration when developing or refining administrative processes."

**Goal 4: The University of Baltimore will strengthen its role as an anchor institution in midtown Baltimore and be recognized for responsible stewardship of institutional resources.**

Much as with Goal 2, we're unsure how UB's role as an anchor institution is related to stewardship of institutional resources; perhaps this connection can be clarified.

We would like to see a strategy related to tracking, recognizing and publicizing faculty, staff, student and institutional engagement in Baltimore's civic endeavors. In addition, we recommend adding a success measure that specifies the number of UB community members engaged in Baltimore's civic endeavors and one related to the creation of new methods for promoting contributions to the community. Again, these types of activities can support enrollment growth, as publicizing our community engagement serves as a recruitment method.

We are interested in knowing more about Objective 4.6 and would encourage strategies and success measures that support it.

We'd also encourage a strategy of inviting all units to contribute to the president/provost's quarterly accomplishments report, as this will allow the University to understand and celebrate initiatives and efforts taking place University-wide and not just on the academic side.

**Goal 5: The University of Baltimore will be a preferred workplace and a destination of choice for students, faculty, staff and alumni.**

It's disappointing that in this last goal, which might be somewhat dedicated to staff (and faculty), staff receive third billing. We're unclear about why students are included at all in a goal about preferred workplace (although we recognize that students do make up a certain percentage of UB's workforce). Again, we perceive "preferred workplace" as being different from a "destination of choice," and trying to combine the two proves problematic.

We're hoping Objective 5.5 can be clarified. Does "enhancing" graduate assistantships refer only to increasing the number of them, as that's the only indication among the success measures?

For Objective 5.6, can the plan propose some strategies? In addition, perhaps consider applying the concept of a "safe, welcoming ... campus" to the idea of safe spaces and reflecting this among the strategies and success measures.

We'd like to propose a more encompassing Objective 5.7: Cultivate a community that understands, respects and values diversity, equity and inclusion. We'd also like to propose some additional strategies:

- Enhance recruitment and retention strategies in support of a diverse campus population among students, faculty and staff.

- Engage in best practices to facilitate organizational change leading to a more inclusive and equitable community.
- Transform learning experiences, curricular and co-curricular, to emphasize behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interactions in a variety of cultural contexts, global and local.

Finally, we'd also like to see strategies related to work-life goals and to defining staff career paths.

Thank you again for your attention and consideration.