

### **IIID. Threats and Challenges**

#### **a. Threats**

- The crime rate, but particularly the awareness of and concern about crime, is increasing in the area.
- High housing costs in area are making faculty and staff recruitment more difficult.
- The Legislature and the economy can be unpredictable, making the resources available for carrying out our mission uncertain from year to year.
- Traffic congestion, increasing time needed to get to and from the campus, works against recruitment of students, faculty, and staff.
- Although the University was designated as the State's Flagship institution, and promises were made concerning the appropriate level of support, this status has not been respected in the allocation of state support, greatly impeding the institution in its fulfillment of its mission.

#### **b. Challenges**

##### **i. Undergraduate Education and Living**

- About two thirds of the academically most talented Maryland high school graduates now leave the state for their higher education. We need to attract a higher proportion of these students as well as talented students from other states and from abroad to the University, thereby raising both the academic profile and the national diversity of our student body.
- As we continue to enroll a more talented student body we must ensure that all our academic programs maintain the appropriate level of rigor and intellectual challenge.
- We must work to ensure that our classrooms and teaching laboratories are fully able to support our academic programs.
- We need to improve enrollment management to better distribute students among major fields and to assure that our overall enrollment is commensurate with our resources.
- The community surrounding the university needs to be revitalized to make it a more stimulating environment for our students.
- The General Education program needs upgrading to make it appropriate for preparing our current student body to thrive in the contemporary world.
- Although student retention and graduation rates have improved significantly over the past decade, we need to improve the rates overall and to assure that differences among minority and majority students are greatly reduced.
- There is a need to increase the opportunities for student-faculty interaction.
- Although student housing stock has increased greatly in the past decade, increasing demand requires that additional housing be provided.
- Our special programs (Honors, Scholars, Gemstone, etc.) need to be reexamined to determine if they are appropriately coordinated, are of the right size, and if they

continue to continue to play an appropriate role in the total undergraduate experience of all our students.

- More emphasis needs to be placed on experimenting with innovative teaching methods, especially those that are information technology based.
- Means must be found to better support transfer students, especially as concerns housing and financial aid.

ii. Graduate Education and Living

- We must increase the amount of financial support available to graduate students.
- We must expand recruitment efforts in every graduate program and thereby raise the achievement profile of admitted students.
- We must greatly expand the amount and desirability of housing that is available to graduate students.
- We must work to ensure that program graduates secure desirable positions, in particular positions in prestigious academic departments.
- It is essential that all graduate students receive appropriate supervision and careful mentoring.
- We must greatly raise the success rate for students aspiring to doctoral degrees, and significantly reduce the average time to degree for both masters and doctoral students.
- We must ensure that all teaching assistants are given work assignments that are fair and appropriate.

iii. Faculty and Staff

- We need to find strategies to overcome the high cost of living in the area in order to facilitate the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff.
- We need to help develop an inviting and safe housing area near the University, with good schools and other amenities, as a means to attract faculty and staff who would like to live in a university based community. Having a faculty-staff club would also improve the sense of community.
- We need to provide other support such as partner benefits and assistance with spousal job searches in order to remain competitive in hiring outstanding faculty and staff.
- We need to find strategies to continue to reward outstanding faculty and staff already in place even while dedicating significant resources and offering special benefits for new recruits.
- The percentages of women and of members of minority groups in our faculty needs to be increased.
- The numbers of staff members assigned to many units needs to be increased in order to fully accomplish our mission without overburdening the staff actually in place.
- The level of participation of tenure track faculty in teaching undergraduate and graduate courses needs to be increased. There must be no tolerance for poor

teaching performance. Teaching excellence needs to be recognized appropriately in our reward system.

- We must assure that all academic units set expectations that faculty maintain active research programs of high quality. Faculty hired, retained, or promoted in the university must be outstanding, not simply "good enough."
- Post-tenure review must be made more meaningful and must be applied more uniformly throughout the University. In particular, the process must include real rewards and possible sanctions.
- We need to streamline our administrative systems to eliminate bureaucratic practices that impede, rather than facilitate, beneficial change.

iv. Support and Resources for Research, Scholarship, and the Arts

- We need to increase the amount of and improve the quality of office and laboratory space to support our research and education programs. We need a mechanism to reallocate space as needs and priorities change.
- We need a reliable source of investment capital to enable the startup or new programs or research efforts.
- We need to make more progress in eliminating the deferred maintenance backlog, to avoid safety problems and potential damage to critical equipment.
- Additional staff are needed to fully support our research efforts.
- Our IT infrastructure must be continually upgraded to keep up with current standards in order to support scholarship and research and to effect administrative efficiencies.
- We must ensure that the libraries provide adequate coverage for all areas of teaching and research, especially in areas of the highest priority. We need a mechanism for adjusting coverage to respond to priority changes. We need to be sure that the physical library facilities are adequate to handle the real needs of faculty and student users.

v. Resource Allocation and Administrative Efficiency

- We need a mechanism for the allocation of University resources according to institutional priorities and to the level of a unit's contribution to the institutional mission. This mechanism must be dynamic and must adjust as priorities and contributions change. It must move towards the elimination of inequities and unfunded educational mandates.
- We need to improve the responsiveness of administrative offices. In some areas administrative bureaucracy and cumbersome policies work against agility and responsiveness.
- We need to improve some academic approval processes that are overly cumbersome and require too many layers of approval.
- We need to find strategies to develop the capital funding required to support needed new construction, infrastructure improvement, and deferred maintenance.

- We need to find strategies to protect the University against the uncertainties in the allowed tuition level and the annual legislative appropriation that are inherent in the way higher education is structured and funded in Maryland.

vi. External Relations, Partnerships, and Outreach

- We must find ways to further strengthen the support for the University provided by business and community leaders before the governor and the legislature during the budgeting process.
- We must work to further increase the direct financial support of the institution by the business sector and the larger community.
- We must further increase the strong political support provided by university alumni.
- We must greatly strengthen our relationships with the media. It is essential that they give much more coverage to our major academic and scholarly accomplishments.
- We must more fully exploit our opportunities for partnerships with government laboratories and industries.
- We must more fully exploit our opportunities for relationships with international organizations (embassies, World Bank, etc.) in support of the university's academic mission.
- Although institutional expertise is offered in support of community needs, much more could be done in that regard. K-12 education, public safety, community planning, clinics, and support for youth activities are potential areas of collaboration.