

## **Undergraduate Education**

### **Vision**

The University will offer its students an outstanding and rigorous educational experience, as well as an environment and programs to support their social, moral, and intellectual growth. Graduates will have experienced an atmosphere of intellectual ferment and inquiry, will have participated in a diverse and inclusive community with significant engagement with different cultures and global issues, will have had the opportunity for involvement in cutting edge research, community service, public service, and the business world, and with work towards the solution of critical national and global problems. Students will succeed in completing their education in a timely manner, because they are expected to and prepared to, and because institutional support will be available where needed. Graduates will carry away with them knowledge, skills, habits of thought, and experiences that will enable them to continue to grow and thrive as global citizens, and will possess the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit to respond responsibly and imaginatively to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This latter expectation for all students is so critical that General Education, which emphasizes these skills for all, has been chosen as a major initiative in the strategic planning process. In addition, graduates will have fully achieved the goals of their academic major specializations.

The University will attract and enroll highly talented students from within the state, outside the state, and throughout the world whose academic achievements and life experiences will contribute best to the learning environment for their fellow students. The University will be a place where the most talented state students can fully achieve their educational goals in an accessible state-supported institution within Maryland. It will facilitate access for students with limited means. It will stem the outflow of talented state high school graduates to out-of-state institutions, thus increasing the chance that these students will continue to live in and advance the progress and well-being of the state and region.

To ensure that sufficient resources are available to provide an outstanding educational experience to our undergraduates and to become a magnet for attracting the brightest students, the University will adjust its undergraduate enrollment according to available resources.

### **Goals**

#### **1. Improve the quality of the educational experience**

Through a number of initiatives the University will place a significant emphasis on improving the quality of education offered to all undergraduates. Specifically:

- The University's new General Education program, through its innovative approaches and special focus, acting as a complement to disciplinary programs and other special experiences, will enable students to develop the knowledge, habits of thought, skills, and outlook that will prepare them to succeed and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Academic programs will set and maintain learning expectations that reflect the latest thinking in the discipline. Program graduates will have achieved or exceeded these expectations, and will have found that their programs were rigorous and challenging, matched or exceeded their learning goals, and served them well in the workplace, as a foundation for further study, or as a foundation for a more fulfilling life.
- All students will have ample opportunities and encouragement for close and productive interaction with faculty and staff members, and will take advantage of these opportunities.
- The University's special programs (Honors, College Park Scholars, Gemstone, Civicus, Hinman CEOs, etc.) and special opportunities (study abroad, research participation, service learning,

internships, etc.), as well as new programs and opportunities to be developed, will continue to expand the horizons and enrich the experience of its students and will stimulate, engage, and challenge all those who participate in them.

- The University will proactively encourage its students to become leaders who can succeed at securing prestigious national and international awards, prizes, and scholarships and fellowships (e.g., Rhodes, Fulbright, National Science Foundation).
- The university will provide outstanding and enriching international experiences, both on- and off-campus. These will include academic programs and courses, exchange programs, study abroad, and international experiential and service learning opportunities.
- Graduates will be highly competitive for challenging, rewarding, and prestigious career opportunities. Those choosing to continue their education will be successful in gaining admittance to advanced degree and professional programs of their choice.

Learning outcome assessment results, results of national surveys such as NSSE, systematic exit interviews, alumni and employer surveys, and comparisons against peer institutions will be used as indicators of the effectiveness and quality of the educational experience.

## **2. Enhance recruitment efforts**

The University will attract a large pool of applications from academically talented students, will enroll an increasingly stronger group of freshman and transfer students, and will become the school of choice for more of the highest achieving students graduating from Maryland high schools. Specifically:

- The University will make every effort to increase the number of the highest achieving Maryland high school graduates it enrolls. In five years, 33% of these talented students will enroll at Maryland, (now approximately 25% do) and 36% in ten years.

Furthermore, the University will continue to maintain the outstanding diversity of its undergraduate student population by enrolling students from different ethnic groups, national origins, and backgrounds, and with different life experiences, interests, and financial resources. This will include a special effort to enroll students from groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education.

Specifically:

- The percentage of students of color (African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic American, Native American, and multiracial) will rise to at least 35% (currently at 33%) of the total enrollment in five years and 38% in ten years.
- The percentage of international students will rise to at least 5% of total enrollment in five years (currently at 2.2%) and 8% in ten years.

## **3. Ensure the academic success of undergraduate students**

The retention and graduation rates for all students will continue to rise in the next 10 years. Furthermore, the discrepancy between the retention and graduation rates of underrepresented students of color and majority student groups will be reduced. Specifically,

- The one-year retention rate will rise to at least 94% in five years (currently at 92.6%) and 96% in ten years.
- The six-year graduation rate will rise to at least 83% in five years (currently at 79.8%) and 86% in ten years.
- The discrepancy between the six-year graduation rate of underrepresented students of color and that of all students will be reduced to 7% in five years (currently at 10.4%) and 5% in ten years.

## Strategies

### For Goal 1:

- A. Every undergraduate program will be reviewed for currency, quality, and rigor through the regular unit review process. Program size, resources, faculty-student interactions, learning expectations, and student placement will be compared with those of peer institutions. Learning expectations will also be compared with the entry expectations of premier graduate programs. Results of learning outcomes assessment, National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data, student course evaluations, and in-depth interviews with student focus groups will be used to gauge overall program success as well as student achievement and satisfaction levels. As appropriate, the evolution, merging, dissolution, or transformation of academic programs will be encouraged and facilitated to address the findings of the review and to respond to the changing disciplinary areas and market demands.
- B. There will be a renewed emphasis on faculty excellence in teaching, advising, and mentoring of undergraduates, supported by a new institutional model for resource allocation. More core faculty will teach undergraduate courses and the amount and quality of interaction between students and faculty will be greatly increased.
- C. The University will adjust its overall undergraduate enrollment to an appropriate size and will work to create a better distribution of undergraduate students among major programs to avoid overcrowding and the resulting student dissatisfaction.
- D. Through revised priorities for faculty teaching assignments, the University will significantly reduce the number of classes with more than 200 students.
- E. The University will enhance, expand, and encourage experiences outside the classroom, including research participation, service learning, leadership experience, international exposure, on- and off-campus internships, and special opportunities inherent in the national capital area.
- F. All special academic programs, such as University Honors, College Park Scholars, Gemstone, Civicus, etc., will undergo periodic review to ensure that they remain relevant, include rigorous content, and engage the participation of faculty and high level staff as teachers and mentors.
- G. Discipline based task forces will be charged to develop new, engaging, and interactive instructional methods, especially using cutting-edge information technology.
- H. The University will expand its efforts on renovating and greatly improving classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and computing facilities. It will work to create additional departmental and community gathering spaces for informal meetings, study, and collaborative work. Finally, the University will make every effort to build a state-of-the-art University Teaching Center within the next five years.

### For Goal 2:

- A. The Admissions Office will drastically enhance and intensify its student recruitment programs. These programs will better inform prospective students about the academic quality of our programs and how they prepare students for the world while engaging them in socially relevant and enriching activities. Institutional publicity will be based on academic values and social relevance.
- B. These recruitment efforts will include focused and aggressive strategies to attract such special groups as academically talented students, non-resident students, students from underrepresented minority groups, students with different backgrounds and life experiences, and students with special academic or other interests that mesh well with our programs and location. We will follow up on admission with aggressive courting of outstanding students through faculty contacts and other means.
- C. The recruitment efforts will also include a significant emphasis on international students. These efforts will include on-site recruitment, contact with alumni groups in foreign countries, contacts with embassies and international organizations in the Washington metropolitan area, and special relationships with American and International schools abroad.

- D. The University will continue to increase the amount and flexibility of financial aid available to students, particularly for academically talented, transfer, non-resident, and international students, as well as for students from underrepresented minority groups. We will provide more on-campus work opportunities for students who need additional income.
- E. The University will work to increase the supply of acceptable housing for all students, including housing on campus for undergraduates. It will continue to upgrade the quality of existing housing.
- F. The University will transform its surrounding environment into a vibrant community that is significantly safer and more attractive for students than it is today. See the separate “Surrounding Community” section of this Plan for specific goals and strategies.
- G. The University will continue to work towards integrating students living off campus into the campus community. Furthermore, it will provide a student services infrastructure that is customer oriented and easy to use.
- H. The University will expand special junior (HS) year and summer programs to engage prospective freshman applicants early on. It will further develop partnerships with Community Colleges to help attract their most talented transfer students and to give them the tools to succeed and thrive at the University.
- I. The University will better manage enrollment, so as to optimize the use of facility and human resources while being responsive to state needs. Strategies will include marketing high quality programs that currently do not attract new freshmen, examining the impact of LEPs on recruitment and adjusting them as appropriate, and examining and fine tuning the mix of new freshmen, Freshman Connection, Shady Grove, and transfer students enrolled each year.

For Goal 3:

- A. Every academic unit will provide web-based, accessible, clear, complete, and consistent information about program requirements, course progressions, learning expectations, and the opportunities that are available following graduation.
- B. The University will continue its rigorous implementation of the Student Academic Success-Degree Completion Policy. Benchmarks for academic progress are established and will be kept current and applied comprehensively throughout the University. Students who are falling behind will be quickly identified and counseled appropriately. Academic advisement will be expert and readily available.
- C. The University will closely examine the reasons behind students’ lack of academic success and will develop mechanisms to systematically eliminate common causes leading to failure.
- D. The University will further strengthen programs of peer mentoring and professional tutoring and counseling to assist students in coping with academic and personal difficulties. The University will be creative and flexible in addressing financial hardship and other student crises.
- E. The University will develop tools, including state-of-the-art information technology tools, to help predict the demand for, and to manage the availability of, courses needed for students to progress in their programs.