

## Sustainability and University Resources: Recommendations from Strategic Visioning Working Group Five

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Working Group Five was charged with considering the following question: What innovations in institutional structures, policies, practices, and partnerships will best promote sustainable stewardship of the University over the next 20 years and beyond?

Wishing to consider the term “resources” in a broad but not unmanageable sense, we divided our charge into three categories: financial resources, human resources, and campus environmental sustainability. We considered the question through these three lenses.

## Primary Observations

In addition to our own discussions, the group collected data from an in-person event held in Kennedy Union on Visioning Day, as well as from two online surveys of the university faculty and staff and one survey and in-person gathering aimed at students. From these data, we offer the following initial observations that serve to frame the theme and aspirations that follow.

- *Sustainable stewardship of the university must occur in the context of productive and trusting relationships between senior administration and university faculty and staff.*

If the university is to identify and develop strategic priorities, allocation of resources to those priorities must be done in a way that is well-understood by faculty and staff. In our research, terms such as “communication”, “transparency”, “process”, and “fairness” were used repeatedly. Most members of the university community understand the need to make difficult choices and that they may not agree with those choices. However, support for those decisions will require that constituencies feel well-informed by upper administration. Understanding that trust should be mutual, faculty and staff must trust senior administration to execute policies that are in the best interests of the university.

- *Sustainable stewardship of the university must be squarely focused on the Marianist guided mission of the university.*

“Mission consistent” or “mission driven” are themes that came up often from respondents to our surveys. No matter the type of resource involved, there is underlying concern that the university’s trajectory for growth has led to a drift away from our Marianist core. Priorities identified by the administration should be framed in ways that make compelling cases why investments in those priorities are consistent with the Marianist mission of the University.

An important corollary to this statement is that all UD stakeholders should have a common understanding of what constitutes UD’s Marianist mission. Our collective sense is that, while everyone in the University community agrees that Marianist principles must guide the allocation of valuable resources, the term may mean different things to different people. For the strategic plan that emerges from the visioning process to be widely accepted as consistent with the University’s core values, the administration (guided by the Marianists on campus) should articulate those values through the lens of the Marianist charism.

Neither of these observations came as a surprise, however, we want to emphasize ideas that were obviously of concern to many in the university community, evidencing a broad commitment to the University’s mission. Faculty and staff hold these values dearly and wish to make certain they are preserved.

## Overarching Theme: Institutional Agility

During the course of our Working Group meetings the phrase “Institutional Agility” emerged as a descriptor of what would be a desirable characteristic of UD. While the strategic visioning process is directed toward identifying bold investment priorities that can guide the University over the next twenty

years, it should also seek to make important incremental changes that will assure the University's future vitality. Visioning must also look toward cultural and operational characteristics of the university that can impede or enhance the University's ability to capitalize on opportunities it identifies or creates.

An institutionally agile university is one that provides a responsible and responsive infrastructure that permits faculty and staff to conceive, develop and pursue new ideas as they are conceived.

Acquiring and harnessing the resources necessary to sustain the University will require that faculty and staff "think boldly" every day, not just at the initiation of a strategic planning process. Little in the concept of institutional agility offers the tangible boldness that excites donors, however, we believe that institutional agility will ultimately be what fuels the University's success. We believe that institutional agility at the University of Dayton encompasses two broad and intersecting areas.

- *Culture. Although the word "agile" may suggest otherwise, stability is an important condition for agile institutions. Stability is built through a culture that engenders trust among all organization members, particularly where organizational and disciplinary boundaries are crossed.*

A culture that promotes agility. . .

requires regular communication among members. Opportunities and synergies, particularly those that exist outside of disciplinary silos, are more likely to be embraced if regular communication is the cultural norm.

rewards experimentation and encourages "fast failure" when experiments do not achieve the desired results.

unites around a common purpose beyond growth and revenue. The Marianist values that founded and guided the University provide this common purpose.

- *Operations. Effective operations refer to policies, procedures, and systems that allow faculty, staff, and administrators to focus on tasks that add value to achieving the university's mission.*

Operations that promote agility. . .

identify and reduce or eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic or non-value added tasks that divert employee attention from mission-driven work.

Seek out and build local, national, and international partnerships that advance the university's mission.

## Long Term Aspirations

*1. The University will cultivate and retain sufficient financial resources to sustain its long-term strategic priorities as well as near-term operational necessities, and do so in the face of flat or declining revenues from undergraduate student tuition. Examples might include:*

Transparent and flexible resource management practices that could include

clearly communicated and fully adopted practices of setting financial priorities with input from broad segments of the community where appropriate, understanding that true institutional agility may not always allow for extensive consultation

easily accessible and regularly updated information about the university's financial circumstances

Dedicated funding to promote strategic priorities, that could include

funding tuition and expenses for high-achieving students from underserved populations,

funding faculty chairs or professorships to attract highly qualified faculty from underrepresented groups

Alternative tuition models to attract groups not otherwise drawn to UD, that could include

advance purchase of tuition by undergraduate and graduate students

earnings-based post-graduation collection of tuition

More aggressive investment in alternative sources of revenue that could include

commercialization of university-developed technology

University-affiliated businesses or start-ups developed or located in the Dayton area

other investments outside the normal securities-based portfolio maintained by the university

*2. The University will develop resources and policies that attract and retain a highly qualified and motivated workforce based on best practices in human resources. Examples might include:*

Expansion of policies, grounded in Marianist values, focused especially on comprehensive family-friendly policies supporting a broad range of family structures and needs, including, but not limited to paid maternity and paternity leave, adoption leave and support, eldercare and affordable onsite childcare

Emphasis on policies that recognize the dignity of all workers, with special attention to lower-paid contractual employees and adjunct faculty

Practices that support the feeling of being valued as a member of the UD community, including equitable and competitive pay, meaningful mechanisms for showing recognition and appreciation, and stronger career development or advancement opportunities.

Practices that encourage a more measured pace of work, and a culture of excellence in the work we do, such as community building within and across departments.

### *3. The University will develop and continually strive to expand the culture of campus environmental sustainability.*

The UD campus, including the student neighborhood and our interactions with the broader community, should aspire to become a model laboratory for sustainable practices, research and experiential learning, including

a focus on behavioral changes for reduced energy consumption on campus. This could include the creation of a model to reward students living in on-campus houses financially for reductions in energy consumption as well as hosting energy reduction competitions between dormitories.

the development of infrastructure and policies to further support alternative transportation, such as expanding bicycle infrastructure on campus, constructing covered bicycle sheds, installing additional car charging stations, incentivizing the purchase of bus passes as a method of transportation around the city of Dayton, and creating prioritized parking spots for energy efficient vehicles.

a commitment to the completion of significant and meaningful renewable energy projects which serve a dual purpose as an instrument for experiential learning.

responsible management of waste streams, including reusable dine-in and take-out materials increased composting capacity, transparent communication about waste collection and sorting, design and installation of gray water and rain catchment systems, and setting the goal of zero waste.

sustainability oriented recruitment, NSO sustainability education, and streamlined process to involve undergraduate students in sustainability related research.

ecological restoration projects and policies supporting sustainable landscaping.

sustainable procurement, such as the local sourcing of food and elimination of single-use plastic water bottles.

Re-evaluating the current job of Environmental Sustainability Manager and creating a new position with much greater influence, This high-profile, sustainability 'champion' would provide vision and develop long-term plans for campus sustainability.

Currently, the University assigns perceived value to beautification projects. It is important for the campus community to understand that sustainability projects offer both real and perceived economic and environmental value. Additionally, decision-making should be considered with the goal of social and environmental justice in mind.

Improve the linkages between the academic, facilities, dining, residence life parts of campus and implement processes that encourage collaboration between administration, faculty, staff and students to establish priorities and implement sustainable practices on campus

Create and submit for use as a guiding document a quantifiable and verifiable Climate Action Plan as required for the University as signatory of the American College and University President's Climate Commitment to being carbon neutral by 2050. Input from faculty, staff, campus experts, students, and alumni is essential to the development of a successful CAP.

Work with the many UD alumni who own or work in companies related to sustainability. Many of these alumni are willing to work with the University and provide assistance in achieving its goals. UD must simply reach out and engage these entities.

### **Note on University Partnerships**

In achieving goals in the three areas of human resources, financial resources and environmental sustainability, UD should strengthen and enhance existing relationships and seek to establish new partnerships. These relationships and partnerships are and should be both internal and external, at the local, regional, state, national and international levels.

#### **INTERNAL:**

**Bombeck Center:** A demonstration school for the School of Education and Health Sciences's program in early childhood education, it is a source of childcare for UD faculty and staff. In creating more family friendly policies, UD Human Resources and the Bombeck Center could work together to strengthen the childcare offerings and ensure that they are convenient and affordable for faculty and staff.

**The Hanley Sustainability Institute:** As it develops, it can be an important partner with units and divisions throughout the university to promote sustainable policies and practices.

**Facilities management:** This office can aid in the efforts to not only make our buildings and grounds "green" but also to make sure we use them in the more financially efficient way (i.e. support alternative uses for campus facilities during the summer and interterm).

Health Center: The existing health center's clientele (now limited to students) could be expanded to include faculty and staff.

Other internal partners include and are not limited to the RecPlex, Fitz Center, DECA (diversity goals), Art Street, and Alumni Relations. UD should look for other such internal partners as we pursue goals in the areas of human resources, financial resources, and environmental sustainability.

#### EXTERNAL:

Broad and strong external relationships and partnerships are also key to reaching UD's goals.

City of Dayton: The University of Dayton and the city can continue to improve the area around campus. For example, economic development initiatives could create new affordable housing available for faculty and staff.

Premier Health: This partnership will not only factor in the development of the Fairgrounds (financial resources), but could also address issues regarding affordable healthcare options for faculty and staff.

Corporate Relationships : Our current relationships with General Electric and Emerson should provide models for future partnerships that could provide research opportunities for faculty and studies, aiding UD in attracting top people.

Governmental and Non-Governmental agencies: UD has an opportunity to become a leader in sustainability in Ohio and perhaps the nation. That leadership can be enhanced through strategic partnerships at the local, state and national levels.

Other examples of external relationships and partnerships (both existing and potential) include but are not limited to Marianist and other Catholic high schools (diversity), Montgomery County, State of Ohio, Dayton History, Culture Works, nearby neighborhood associations, Wright-Patterson AFB, Catholic Social Services, the China Institute, National Park Service, US Energy Department, and various United Nations agencies.

All such relationships and partnerships can help UD recruit top faculty and students (as well as more diverse faculty and students), provide them with an attractive and stimulating work/life environment, and help UD create a campus that is a model for sustainable practices.

In conclusion, discussions within our Working Group and with the University community have led us to the observation that core Marianist values can be used to guide sustainable stewardship of campus resources. In the end, the University would be making a transformation to more sustainable relationships within the University through better communication, with our employees through enhancing the attention paid to family and workplace policies, and to our natural environment by following the principles of reducing our impact now and for generations to come.